

# March 2021

Newsletter

3/1/21

## JD Power's 2020 Review Reflects Health of the Industry

The RV and travel trailer industry benefited from the shift from air travel to road travel in 2020, according to JD Power's year-end report. Every segment of the industry saw values increase in 2020, with most segments not seeing any seasonal pullback in values.

Looking at travel trailers, standard hitch units brought 7.4 percent more money in 2020 than 2019, and that gap widened in the second half of the year. Fifth-wheel units had already started the year strong before COVID hit, and really took off as the year progressed, averaging 13.7 percent more money year-over-year.

Motorhomes beat 2019 by a notable margin, with Class A vehicles coming in 4.9 percent higher year-over-year, and Class C units were 5.4 percent higher.

Smaller vehicles were also stronger in 2020, with camping trailers averaging 2.6 percent more money in 2020, and truck campers 7.1 percent ahead. Both of these segments saw values continue to increase through the fourth quarter, with no traditional seasonal pullback.

In the 2020 Year-End Review RV Market Insights, analysts from J.D. Power Specialty Valuation Services said that used RV pricing increased overall as more consumers entered the RV market amid air travel restrictions. Used values are also being pushed up due to lack of new inventory.

"Every segment of our industry saw values increase in 2020, with most segments not seeing any seasonal pullback in values," said Lenny Sims, vice president business development and strategy at J.D. Power Specialty Valuation Services. "Standard hitch units brought 7.4 percent more revenue in 2020 than in 2019, and that gap widened in the second half of the year. Fifth-wheel units had already started the year strong before the pandemic hit, and the segment really took off as the year progressed, averaging 13.7 percent more revenue year over year."

"The RV industry continues to benefit from the shift to experience-oriented road travel," the report concluded. "2021 begins on strong footing."

## 10 Travel Destinations for RVers in 2021

Let's not sugar coat it, 2020 was a less than ideal year in terms of, well everything, including travel. If your RV plans were altered or put on hold, you're not alone. While we're not yet in the clear of Covid-19, 2021 is already looking much brighter. With that in mind, we wanted to give you a guide to **RV travel** throughout 2021, in the hope of inspiring and encouraging you to start planning your new getaways.

Below we've outlined 10 desirable destinations that will keep you away from the crowds and doing what RVers do best, exploring. Remember to continue to practice social distancing and follow CDC guidelines while traveling. Enjoy our list of epic locations across the U.S. and Canada.

- 1. Southern Arizona**  
2021 is the perfect time to visit the southern region of Arizona. Here you can find something for everyone: national parks, wild west history, challenging golf courses, and phenomenal food. Make your visit a long weekend or stay for a few weeks. One thing is for certain, you will not run out of spectacular landscapes and exciting adventures in Arizona!
- 2. Beaches of 30A in the Florida Panhandle**  
While choosing your RV destinations this 2021 don't skip Florida. You may have noticed the ever popular 30A decal and wondered, "Where on Earth is this magical place?" The round, blue sticker is nostalgic for millions of travelers (yes, millions), and has become a staple in representing one of America's most beautiful coastal drives in Florida – Highway 30A. This coastal road stretches 28 miles along the Gulf of the Florida panhandle and is riddled with stunning white beaches, emerald waters, and small local towns, each unique with its own personality.
- 3. Olympic National Park, Oregon**  
In 2021, feast your eyes on Olympic National Park – arguably the most diverse and alluring of all the protected spaces in the United States. With its remarkable range of elevation, ecosystems, old-growth, temperate rainforests, coastline, and glaciers, and nearly a million acres of wilderness, there is literally something for every type of RVer to explore.
- 4. Route 66**  
Of all of America's highways and byways, Route 66 is arguably the most iconic and historic in the United States. The 2,500-mile road originated in Chicago, Illinois, and ran southwest to Santa Monica, California. The original route, once known as America's Main Street as well as The Mother Road, was decommissioned in 1985 and turned into a modern interstate, but that doesn't mean you can't recreate this classic American road trip of the American West on your own. Route 66 is still riddled with adventure. Discover quirky stops, off the beaten path gems, iconic museums, folk art, RV parks, diners and so much more while you embark on an RV road trip of your own making. Step into the past and get your kicks (we had to) on today's Route 66.
- 5. Spend Summer 2021 in Canada**  
So long as there are no restrictions to international travel during summer 2021, the terrain of our neighbor to the North is the ideal destination for RVers. Summer will quickly be upon us and this season is the best time of year to explore Canada. From Ontario to British Columbia, Alberta to Newfoundland, there is a spot for every type of motorhome enthusiast.
- 6. Denver to Steamboat Springs, Colorado**  
Epic winding mountain roads, breathtaking scenic views, and miles of untouched wilderness that is so overwhelmingly beautiful it makes you want to stick your face in the dirt and cry... this is Colorado. The Rocky Mountain state is an explorers dream, an adventure enthusiasts Valhalla. Dive into where to find natural hot springs, the best RV campgrounds, as well as where to eat and hike along this awe-inspiring route from Denver to Steamboat Springs and start planning your 2021 Colorado road trip.
- 7. Joshua Tree, California**  
Southern California is a land of enchantment. There is an alluring oasis where Colorado and the Mojave desert meet, full of outdoor adventure, stunning vistas, and artistry. If you haven't already guessed, we're talking about the iconic town known as Joshua Tree. We've spent many years discovering the **Top RV Campgrounds**, the **Best Places to Dine**, which art installations to check out and so much more in the land that is an RVers dream.
- 8. New Mexico**  
There is a state in the contiguous United States that is highly underrated. A land of enchantment, culture, natural hot springs, stunning vistas, and undeniably good weather, New Mexico is the hidden gem of our country. In fact, writing about it almost feels like we're giving away a well-kept secret. If you're an explorer who desires terrain that is crowd-free and full of outdoor adventure, White Sands, Sandia Peak, and Albuquerque are some of our most RV-friendly places to go in New Mexico.
- 9. Port St. Lucie to Miami Florida**  
Ready to take Florida by RV in 2021? Any time of the year is the perfect time to load

up your motorhome and head to South Florida where the weather is sunny and breezy, but we especially recommend you plan your RV road trip in spring, fall, or winter. If you're looking to explore the sunshine state for 6-10 days, we've got a list of the best of the best -from coffee to beaches and everything between. Enjoy our road trip guide from Port St. Lucie to Miami and start planning your own RV trip.

10. **Summer in San Diego, California**

Nothing screams summer like an RV trip to southern California. Who doesn't love fish tacos, miles upon miles of pristine beaches, boardwalks, suntans, and best of all, RV camping with epic views? From exploring tide pools at La Jolla Cove to watching bathing sea lions and eating your way through one of the tastiest cities on the West Coast.

## We bought an RV! Should you?

Freedom to go anywhere. An ability to be totally self-sufficient. The potential for nonstop adventure. These are just some of the reasons Michaela Sherer had spent years fantasizing about owning a Recreational Vehicle, or RV.

She and her husband always had found reasons not to get one. Then, earlier this year, when the coronavirus pandemic effectively grounded the airline industry and crippled most other means of travel, the 41-year-old mother of two raised the question: Why not now?

The Sherers discussed the idea. They did some research and settled on a travel trailer they could tow. They spent hours after hours scrolling options online -- first looking at pre-owned units and then at new ones. The duo checked their calendars and saw a whole lot of nothing on the agenda for the rest of the summer.

"Finally, after all of this back and forth, we just thought, 'Let's do it,'" said Sherer, who lives near Omaha, Nebraska. "For us it made sense because it's pretty much the only way to get out there and take a vacation right now without giving up something you really love."

Ultimately, the Sherers ended up with a 23-foot Wolf Pup model from Forest River. It has an onboard bathroom and shower, a bunk bed for the kids, and more. The price tag: Roughly \$17,000.

"Americans love the freedom of the outdoors, the enrichment that comes with living an active outdoor lifestyle, and the ability to go where you want, when you want."

### Record-breaking demand for RVs

This Nebraska family certainly isn't the only clan to join the ranks of RV owners during this pandemic.

Across the country, RVs are selling almost as quickly as Clorox wipes. Some dealers report long wait lists. Others report units flying off lots within hours of arrival from the factory. Put simply, the industry can barely keep up with demand.

To put this surge into context, look at the numbers. A recent report from the Reston, Virginia-based RV Industry Association indicated that wholesale shipments of RVs in June exceeded 40,000 -- the highest total since October 2018.

The same report indicated that the monthly tally represented a 11% increase from the same time last year.

Monika Geraci, the organization's senior manager of marketing strategy and operations, said these sales are driven by people like the Sherers -- folks who want the freedom to travel, but also want to be able to control their environment and adhere to social distancing guidelines as they explore the country.

"Americans love the freedom of the outdoors, the enrichment that comes with living an active outdoor lifestyle, and the ability to go where you want, when you want," Geraci wrote in a recent email.

"RVing also allows more control over your environment. RVers are able to sleep in their own (beds), use their own (bathrooms), bring groceries and cook their own meals, and control when, how, or if they are exposed to crowds. And RVing has always been a fun way to travel and connect with family."

#### Anatomy of a surge

Perhaps the most notable aspect of the recent boom is how quickly it all happened; nearly all RV manufacturers and many RV dealers were closed from late March to early May, but as the country began to reopen RV sales accelerated like a Lamborghini.

RV Trader, for instance, an online classifieds website for buying and selling recreational vehicles, reported that visitor traffic for July 2020 was more than 80% higher than it was in July 2019.

Executive Vice President Paige Bouma said the site recorded 5.4 million unique visitors in June, the first time since the Norfolk, Virginia, company was founded in 1989 that it had passed the 5-million threshold.

"There are so many people asking or trying to figure out how to get into RVing right now," Bouma said, noting that demand for rentals has been just as strong. "In addition to RVing being safer during the time of Covid, most vehicles have WiFi capabilities, which means they're easy to park and set up as remote offices, too."

#### Luxury RV sales also on the rise

Even luxury RV brands are seeing record-breaking sales.

Ken Goss is owner of Goss RV Motorcoach Sales, which sells some of the most high-end motorhomes, and he said his sales figures rose 211% between June 2019 and June 2020.

Bob Wheeler, CEO and president of Airstream, reported that his company set an all-time sales record for the month of May, then beat that record in June. As of press time, Airstream did not have data for July, but in mid-July, Wheeler predicted it likely would be just as strong.

"We have enough demand right now to carry us through for a long time," said Wheeler, whose company is based in Jackson Center, Ohio. "Our goal now is building a foundation: We want to take these people who have come to the Airstream lifestyle because of the pandemic and turn them into lifetime Airstream buyers."

#### Meeting demand

You don't need to be Adam Smith to understand that this kind of soaring demand necessitates consistent supply. Since factories reopened this spring, manufacturers have been churning out RVs at breakneck speed. There's still a backlog.

For buyers, this has required patience. Some have had to wait weeks for their RV, complicating travel plans that already were postponed or rescheduled due to Covid. Others have had to travel simply to pick up their RV -- essentially jumping head-first into their new lives as RV owners with epic road trips they'll never forget.

The Sherers, for instance, found theirs on RVTrader.com and drove six hours to Minnesota to get it.

Shana Bull, a marketing consultant in Concord, California, also is a new RV owner. Like the Sherers, she and her husband had contemplated purchasing an RV for a while. When the coronavirus pandemic began, they felt an RV would be the safest way to travel with their 4-year-old son, who has cystic fibrosis and therefore has a compromised immune system.

One day in June, Bull and her husband visited a local Camping World to shop for RVs. The good news: They fell in love with a new 23-foot Coleman Light travel trailer for roughly \$26,000. The bad news: The nearest one was 200 miles away.

"We knew exactly what we wanted and the nearest one was in Fresno," she said. "So, we put \$1,000 down to reserve it and a few days later (my husband) drove there, picked it up, and came back."

#### What to look for

Buying a new RV is a lot like buying a new car -- the process is way more complicated than it might seem. New or preowned? Drive-aboard or trailer? Luxury or basic? These are all

questions that the Bulls and Sherers asked themselves in the early stages of the process. They're also questions that all new buyers need to ask.

Another key decision revolves around what type of RV to buy. According to the RVIA, there are several different options, including motorhomes, campervans, caravans (also known as travel trailers and camper trailers), fifth-wheel trailers, popup campers and truck campers.

Each of these RVs has pros and cons. Prices range from a few thousand dollars for a small pop-up trailer to millions of dollars for mansions on wheels.

"There truly is an RV for every lifestyle and price point," Geraci wrote. At the end of her email she directed first-time buyers to a site the association has built to help simplify the process: GoRVing.com.

"At one point we got stuck on a road in the middle of nowhere and had to do a 27-point turn to get out."

#### **Jessica Moreau, new RV owner**

Travelers who decide to purchase something they can tow must address an entirely separate set of questions about the towing capacity of the vehicle with which they intend to tow it, and the need to invest in a tow hitch.

Many travelers are getting hitches when they buy new trucks. Mike Betts, test operations supervisor at Nissan Proving Ground in Stanfield, Arizona, said the sale of tow hitches at Nissan dealerships across North America has increased 20% from June of last year -- a fact that means more people are buying trucks with the intention of towing something big.

Betts cited results of a recent survey commissioned by Nissan indicating that 28% of 1,004 survey respondents said they were considering getting a vehicle with towing capabilities at some point in the next three months.

"We can't say for sure people are getting the hitches for RVs, but drive anywhere, and you see way more RVs and travel trailers on the road these days than ever before," Betts noted.

The Sherer children, Hendrix and Lennon, enjoy pancakes inside the family trailer.

Michaela Sherer

#### **Learning on the fly**

Of course, once a family buys a new RV, they get to break it in by taking it on the road. Bull, from California, started small -- her family spent their maiden voyage at a KOA campground about 75 miles from their house, in Petaluma.

Overall, the family loved the trailer experience. The Bulls were able to bring their two small dogs, who are 18 and 17 years old and are very clingy. Their son loved collecting pine cones and lining them up on the steps. Bull noted that her husband took full advantage of the onboard kitchen and made tortillas for tacos one night.

"For us (RVing) was the perfect opportunity to get out of the house and do something new while feeling safe in our own home away from home," she said.

Jessica Moreau, a new RV owner in Paradise Valley, Arizona, had a similar first experience.

This June, she and her husband bought a 27-foot Keystone Passport travel trailer and christened it with a 17-day road trip to Utah, Wyoming, Idaho, Montana and Arizona.

Together the duo and their two young daughters camped in national parks and explored the country between them. Every now and again the family even "boondocked," which is what RV owners call it when they camp for the night in the middle of nowhere, or at a location without amenities hookups.

Moreau described the journey as "a real escape," but noted that it wasn't all unicorns and rainbows.

"At one point we got stuck on a road in the middle of nowhere and had to do a 27-point turn to get out," she said with a chuckle. "It seems like part of this is accepting that you're going to learn new lessons every time you go out."

The Sherers, the family from Nebraska, certainly are up for learning lessons.

Within two weeks of getting their new RV, the Sherers took it to camp at Branched Oak State Recreation Area, about 30 minutes from their home. The following weekend they were planning to take it to Lake McConaughy State Recreation Area, about five hours away.

Michaela Sherer said she looks forward to taking advantage of the new ride as often as possible.

"Like everybody else, I've been stuck in my house with my kids for six months," she said. "Any ability to use (this RV) to get a change of scenery at this point will be great."

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[Click to check out the benefits of an air hitch vs a rigid hitch.](#)

## Road Recipe: The Best Campground Pizza

This ancient dish is a favorite among cultures across the world and as **RVers**, we're 100% here for celebrating a day where we are encouraged to indulge in one of the best foods ever created.

What is more enticing than a cast-iron creation of doughy-cheesy-saucy-goodness topped with ANYTHING one's heart can desire? I don't really know if there is. We've got our favorite campfire pizza recipes outlined below so you can start buying your ingredients now and not miss out on Tuesday's festivities. Be warned, you might feel some stomach rumblings after checking out the details below.

### THE CAMPFIRE PIZZA

Oh, the campfire pizza. There's nothing quite like cooking your food over an open flame. If you're feeling real tenacious, you can make your own dough before you begin. For easy, homemade pizza dough directions, we suggest this simple to follow recipe from **Food Network**.

### MAKING A CAMPFIRE PIZZA

#### Ingredients:

- Olive oil
- Pizza dough
- Any pizza sauce your heart desires
- Mozzarella cheese
- Your choice of toppings (more on that below)

#### Items You Need:

- Campfire
- Cast iron skillet
- Cast iron lid or aluminum foil
- Grill grate
- Pizza cutter or knife
- Spoon for spreading sauce

#### Directions:

1. Start your fire and burn for 30 minutes to get hot coals cooking.
2. Oil your cast iron skillet with a thin coat of olive oil.
3. Knead the dough and spread it out so it fits evenly on the skillet.
4. Place your skillet on a grill grate or if you don't have one, directly over the campfire.
5. When your dough starts to turn a light brown, remove it from the heat. Cook time is dependent on how hot your coals are and the size of your skillet so be sure to keep your eye on it.
6. Flip pizza crust and immediately add pizza sauce, cheese, and desired toppings.
7. Cover the cast iron with a cast iron lid or aluminum foil and place it back into the campfire (this helps to better melt the cheese).
8. Check in on your toppings every so often and when your pizza has been cooked to your liking, remove from the fire.
9. Slice and enjoy!

## “The Long, Long Trailer” – An enjoyable must-watch movie!

By Gail Marsh

If you've never seen this hilarious, charming, classic movie, or haven't viewed it in a while, it's time to break out the popcorn! “**The Long, Long Trailer**” takes the best (and worst) parts of RV life and makes them all laugh-out-loud funny.

In this movie, Lucille Ball and Desi Arnaz star as newlyweds. They decide to purchase a trailer to live in as they travel the United States, following Desi's civil engineering job. Sounds reasonable and eerily familiar to today, right? Well, just like in real life, things do not go as smoothly as planned.

I think every RVer wannabe should see this movie. It humorously portrays the very real challenges to owning and operating an RV. These include backing up, maneuvering tight corners, encountering bad weather, driving up and down steep grades, and dealing with all the other stresses of RVing.

### Some behind-the-scenes facts

For those of you who've enjoyed this classic movie for years, here are a few behind-the-scenes facts that you may not know:

- "The Long, Long Trailer" movie is based on a novel written by Clinton Twiss (1951). Turns out, this author and his wife sold all their belongings and traveled the country, much like the characters in the movie. Twiss used many of his own experiences in the book.
- The RV featured in the film was a 36-foot Redman New Moon model. It sold new for \$5,350 in 1953.
- A 1953 Mercury Monterey convertible pulled the trailer. This car featured a 125 HP flathead V8 engine.
- To pull the trailer up Whitney Portal Road (leading to Mount Whitney), producers had to replace the original car with a beefier Lincoln Capri (205 HP V8). Watch closely as the car makes the curve. You'll see the iconic Lincoln grille.
- Many scenic places are featured in the movie. As you watch, see if you can spot a tunnel view of Yosemite Valley, Yosemite Falls, and panoramic views of Bridal Veil Falls, El Capitan, and Half Dome.
- Rumors claim that Desi Arnaz bet producers the movie would gross more than the highest-grossing comedy of the day, "Father of the Bride." Arnaz won the \$25,000 bet.

If you need a break from nightly news and sitcom reruns, rent or stream "**The Long, Long Trailer**". You won't regret it! Who knows? Maybe the movie will remind you of some of your own RV misadventures.

## 3 items you MUST remember to leave at home

By Gail Marsh

You've probably seen the many different RV packing lists. Maybe you've even made your own. "Must Pack" lists are long! My "Must Leave" list is much shorter. In fact, I've found only three items that you really should *leave at home*. Every time. Just three items! How easy is that?

### Here are my three "Must Leave" items:

**1. Contact information** I know, I know! Part of the fun of RVing is getting away from \_\_\_\_\_ (fill in the blank). But it's important to leave basic information that tells how a family member or a neighbor can reach you in case of an emergency. Cell phone numbers are good (when you have service). The RV camp office number or ranger station phone number can be backups. If traveling for work, leave behind a company phone number. The boss will always know how to track you down, right?

**2. Travel plans** Again, it's freeing to tell friends that you will "just go wherever the road leads." But the truth is that things can happen – both at home and on the road. It's important that a trusted family member or a friend knows your general plans, like when you will return and the route you plan to take. If you have an accident or become incapacitated in some way, folks will know to call for help on your behalf. If your kids know when you plan to return, they'll know when to start worrying, right? (But if your travel plans change, be sure to let someone know.)

**3. Extra house key, home key code, or garage opener** If you plan to be gone from your sticks-and-bricks home for a while, you've probably asked someone you trust to watch the house while you're away. Give this person a key or some other way to get into your home. There may be a good reason for that person to get inside or enable a first responder to do so. Smoke could indicate a fire. A broken window might indicate a break-in. The list goes on and

on. Our next-door neighbor heard water running in our home. Knowing we were gone, he used the key to get into the house. Upon checking, he discovered that a pipe had burst because of the unusually cold temperatures. Was I ever glad that I'd given him a key! He turned off the water and the damage was minimized.

So, whether you leave for an overnight, a weekend, or a month or more, remember these three "Must Leave" items. Can you think of anything you'd add to the list?

## Black ice driving tips for RVers

By Rene Agredano, LiveWorkDream

Winter is a challenging time for RVers to be on the road. Even if you don't experience a snowstorm, sudden freezing temperatures can create one of the most hazardous driving conditions for RVers: black ice.

This unsafe road condition can happen during any time of day but is most prevalent when the air temperatures approach freezing. As moisture accumulates on a highway if the road surface freezes before the moisture does, you're in for a slippery ride.

**How to recognize black ice** You can recognize black ice by watching for patches of road that appear dry but are darker than the rest of the pavement. You'll also see it in low-lying areas, in shaded areas, and on bridges, which usually freeze before the rest of the road. If you're driving at night you know you're on black ice if your headlights don't reflect off the ground.

Should you encounter black ice, try not to steer or brake. Keep your rig pointed in a straight line while making gentle, non-aggressive steering corrections. If you must brake, don't apply too much braking power or you will slide. For RVs with anti-lock braking systems (ABS), gently touch the brakes and keep your foot on the pedal to keep the ABS activated and stay on course. If you're towing, your trailer brakes should be turned down low enough so that the wheels are still rotating as you come to a stop. Finally, don't exit the highway since an off-ramp can create accelerating speed while descending the ramp.

The best way to avoid black ice is to only drive during good weather in daylight hours. But if you must drive during hazardous conditions, remember these black ice tips to stay safe and arrive at your destination in one piece.

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