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Newsletter

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HOW LONG CAN YOU BOONDOCK IN AN RV?

Unless you're planning on really roughing it, you probably want to boondock while still enjoying certain comforts like running water and electricity. Obviously, your resources are limited by the size and power of your setup and your personal camping habits. Your main limitations are your fresh water tank, gray water tank, black water tank, and batteries. Depending on your rig and personal habits, it's likely you'll find one of these normally runs out before the others. For some campers, the gray water tank is the first thing to fill up and require dumping. Others run out of fresh water. Still others have trouble making their batteries last. How long can you, personally, boondock in your RV? What's the average number of nights campers spend boondocking at a time? How can you make your camping trip last longer? Below, we'll give some example scenarios of a day in the life of a serious boondocker and what it looks like to conserve your resources. Let's get started!

Conserving Water While Boondocking Let's pretend that instead of a house with a faucet that supplies you with water anytime you like, you have to carry a bucket down to the nearest lake and haul it back home. You'd want to make this water last as long as possible, right? Well, your RV fresh water tank is your bucket, and you *will* have to abandon camp to get more water if you run out. So use it wisely. It's impossible to say exactly how long your tanks will hold out, but depending on your tank size, the number of people camping with you, and your personal conservation habits, you can usually expect your tanks to last anywhere from a few days to about two weeks. To give you an estimate, **many boondockers use about 3-1/2 gallons of water per person, per day**. A particularly conservative camper can use as little as 1-2 gallons, while a camper who does not conserve may use 6-7 or more on average.

Wasted Water = Wasted Waste Tank Space

Keep in mind that making your water tanks last is not only about limiting what comes *out* of the fresh water tank, but also limiting what goes *into* the black and gray tanks. In most cases, you'll fill your gray tank (for shower water, cooking, dishes, etc.) much faster than your black tank (where the toilet water goes). For fresh water, you can bring water bottles or other portable water container to supplement your fresh water tank. When it comes to your waste tanks, you can use a portable wastewater tank, but it's still good practice to limit the amount of water that ends up in your tank to begin with. By limiting the amount of water you use and recycling water when you can, you can postpone dumping your tanks for as long as possible and extend your camping trip without having to go find a dump site.

Obviously, you don't have to stick to every one of these religiously, but taking as many steps as possible to conserve water when you can will add up to significantly longer boondocking trips. To give you an idea how much water conservation can affect the length of your stay, and to help you gauge how much water you'll use per day, we've broken down two boondocking scenarios. The first scenario is an estimated length of your camping stay if you are heavily conservative with your water; the second scenario is the estimated length of your stay if you're less conservative.

Scenario 1: Careful Water Conserver

You have a 60-gallon fresh water tank, a 40-gallon gray tank, and a 40-gallon black tank. You are camping with one other person.

SHOWER Your low-flow shower head puts out 1.5 gallons of water per minute, and you both take 2-minute navy showers every other day for a total of 6 gallons on shower days. If you use the shower on 7 out of 14 nights, this is 42 gallons of water used from the fresh tank. Let's assume you offload a gallon per shower into the black tank, so you end up adding 7 gallons to the black tank and 35 gallons to the gray tank.

KITCHEN You avoid pastas and other foods that require a significant amount of water to cook, and you drink from water gallons purchased at the store. You use paper plates instead of washing dishes in the sink, so you only use about 1 gallon per day for kitchen use, including hand-washing and other quick sink uses throughout the day. You save the 1 gallon of sink water per day to use in the toilet. If you use 1 gallon per day for kitchen use for 14 days, this is 14 gallons from your fresh water tank. You offload these 14 gallons into your black tank.

TOILET You use public facilities or the great outdoors the majority of the time, so you don't need any additional water besides what you save from the sink and shower.

At the end of your 14 day camping trip, you've used about 56 of your 60 gallons of fresh water. You've added about 35 gallons to your gray tank and 21 gallons to your black tank (plus a minimum 1 gallon of water that should already be in the black tank as your liquid "base").

All in all, you can boondock for about two weeks before you need to refill your fresh water tank and dump your holding tanks. You may even be able to squeeze another day or so out of your tanks.

Scenario 2: Amenity Appreciator

We'll use the same setup: you have a 60-gallon fresh water tank, a 40-gallon gray tank, and a 40-gallon black tank. You are camping with one other person.

SHOWER This time, you're not as careful with your water consumption. Your shower head still puts out 1.5 gallons per minute. You and your partner take 2-minute navy showers, but you take them every night. This comes to 6 gallons per night. Five nights' worth of showers comes to 30 gallons of water used, which flows into your gray tank.

KITCHEN You boil pasta and wash vegetables in the sink (about 2 gallons per day). You each drink half a gallon of water per day from the sink. After 5 days, you've used 15 gallons for drinking, cooking, and washing up.

TOILET You save your recycled kitchen water to flush the toilet, so it goes into your black tank rather than your gray tank. You also use an additional 2 gallons per day from your fresh water tank to flush your toilet, so this is an additional 10 gallons used. Four gallons per day end up in your black tank. After five days, this is 20 gallons.

In this scenario, within 5 days you've used a total of 55 of your 60 gallons of fresh water. You've added about 30 gallons to your gray tank and 20 gallons to your black tank.

At this point, you have about 5 gallons of fresh water left but not enough to make it through a 6th day with the same habits.

Using Electricity While Boondocking As with your water tanks, your capabilities when it comes to electricity depends heavily on your power usage. When you're camping in the boonies, your power options are pretty limited. Without access to hookups, your options are a generator, solar power, or some combination of the two.

GENERATOR The easiest way to ensure you have power anywhere you go is by using a generator. Power needs can vary widely, so we suggest estimating your power needs with the simple calculation shown in our generator help article. Depending on the model and fuel type (diesel and propane are more efficient than gas), a generator can run anywhere from a couple of hours to a couple of days. If you prefer the "glamping" style of boondocking, you're probably going to want a generator to use devices like your hair dryer, espresso machine, and air conditioner. However, you may not like the noise, fumes, or limitations that come with a generator. Many campsites only allow generator use at specific times of day. Generators are also not designed for continuous use, so even if generator use is freely allowed, you can't run

one 24/7. Plus, the constant noise kind of ruins the postcard-perfect nature experience of boondocking. This brings us to our next option below.

SOLAR POWER Solar power charges your rig's battery bank (and does it silently) by converting power directly from the sun. Provided you have a large enough solar setup (read more about what that looks like here), solar power can last indefinitely if the weather is right. Solar panels don't require fuel, but they do require mild, sunny days to provide sufficient energy to power your camper. In fact, we recommend bringing along a backup generator even if you do have solar panels. It's a lifesaver on rainy days and those times you want to run the air conditioner or other high-power appliances. You may also want to consider a battery charger that can pull power from both solar panels and a vehicle alternator (such as Redarc's Manager30). Keep in mind, there is a LOT to know about solar power before you dive into it. Solar power can be a wonderful green source of energy that allows you to boondock to your heart's content. However, it can also be an ineffective setup that ends up wasting your money. If you're considering solar power, we highly recommend you check out our help articles on the subject to help determine if you're a good candidate for solar power, how much solar power you'd need, and what type of panels would be best for you.

How To Prepare Your Truck for Towing: 9 Important Tips

Before you go camping, you want to make sure that your truck is ready and well set. You will need to take care of a few things and make some considerations about your truck.

You will take into account modifications that are relevant to your type of camping and vehicle too. Here are some of the important things you need to look into while preparing your truck for towing a camper.

1. Your vehicle's transmission system. A shift kit will be needed for a truck fitted with automatic transmission. This makes your transmission system strong and more helpful for this kind of task. However, these shift kits as they are known in the market comes with a price. But no matter how pricey they are, for you to have a nice camping holiday you will definitely require one. If your truck is fitted with a manual transmission, then you are on the safer side as far as this is concerned.

2. Tires Your vehicle's tires are very crucial here. You will need to make sure that they are well inflated and that they are in good condition. Your tires were in good condition means that they have a good grip on the road. Do not use old or worn-out tires.

3. Braking system Additional weight means additional momentum and thus a greater braking force is required. You will need to make sure that your braking system is efficient enough and doesn't malfunction anyhow or else you run into problems. Make sure that additional or new braking shoes are fitted.

4. Sway controls. Trailer sway happens because of several reasons such as poor weight distribution and wind. You need to make sure you overcome this by installing sway controllers. These monitor the truck's motion and movements and apply precise braking and stop the trailer from swaying.

5. Modification of your suspension If you plan to be involved with towing, then you definitely have to consider this. You will need to upgrade your suspension especially if your trailer has to carry heavy loads to avoid straining your truck's main suspension.

6. Transmission cooling (additional) This is recommended for those that are planning to be involved with frequent and heavy towing. Make sure that your truck is fitted with a transmission cooler. This is important because towing strains the truck transmission system.

7. Truck's towing capacity This tells you how much load your truck can tow. You should never exceed your truck's optimal towing capacity. Adding more than the recommended capacity of your truck poses safety risks. It also might cause damage to your vehicle's engine and transmission.

8. Towing Mirrors If you are going to be towing, especially along with the trailer, you will require having big mirrors installed. Make sure they are extended beyond the truck's body.

This will enable you to see well beyond the trailer. If your truck has come with these large mirrors, you are set but if it doesn't, you can purchase some.

9. Kind of hitch needed The kind of hitch required is determined by how heavy your load will be. There is hitch class 1-5 and each has its weight range. Choose your hitch according to the weight of your trailer.

[5th Wheel Hitches](#)

[Receiver's](#)

[Gooseneck's](#)

5 Reasons Why We Chose a Travel Trailer over a 5th Wheel

Travel trailers are among the most popular types of recreational vehicles that are non-motorized. They offer exciting camping experiences for individuals who want to explore the world.

Travel trailers are usually towed by another vehicle and don't come with an engine like the 5th wheel. They also come with a wide range of sizes and models. You must understand the advantages or benefits of a travel trailer before investing in one. The following are some of the reasons that make a travel trailer a good option over the 5th wheel;

Affordability The cost of buying a travel trailer tends to be less as compared to the 5th wheel simply because they don't come with an inbuilt engine. A travel trailer is also very long-lasting and can be used for a very long time.

During your traveling, you will only need to fuel one vehicle instead of two if you had a 5th wheel. This makes the overall cost of buying a travel trailer to be much cheaper as well as the cost of running it. A travel trailer is very ideal for budget-minded individuals.

Easy to tow Travel trailers are generally easy to tow as compared to 5th wheels. Travel trailers are one of the recreational vehicles that are simply hitched on to a vehicle and one gets moving. Once they are properly hooked up, it is much easier to move around with them.

Most dealers of travel trailers provide their customers with essential tips that they can use to successfully hook them up to their vehicles.

Convenience This is one of the biggest advantages that comes with a travel trailer. They normally don't pose restrictions when it comes to luggage. Therefore, an individual can pack other extra items such as sports gear, games or even food.

On the other hand, once you reach your destination, you can always unhook the travel trailer and use your vehicle to tour around the area or even run some errands with it. A trailer also allows easier parking.

Low maintenance costs Unlike the 5th wheel that comes with their inbuilt engines, travel trailers don't require one. They simply rely on another vehicle to move around. This makes their maintenance to be easier since you will only need to fine-tune the other parts of the trailer such as wheels.

These parts only require maintenance due to the wear and tear process. Besides, most of these maintenances doesn't require engaging a mechanic and an individual can perform them on their own. This makes the general maintenance costs of a travel trailer to be very minimal.

Flexibility Travel trailers offer more flexibility when it comes to an individual's travel arrangements. It is an ideal choice for those looking for the most flexible holiday experience. They ensure complete freedom and one doesn't have to adhere to a strict schedule.

With a travel trailer, one can stop at any place and at any time they wish to. One is given the freedom to extend or shorten their stay in any place. Also, one can make destination changes at any time.

Travel trailers are a fun way of making your travel experience worthwhile.

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Overall towing safety, comfort, reduced wear and tear, fuel savings, on both vehicles towing independently is achieved thru the positive control of all transference.

With deteriorating road conditions any tow vehicle will produce negative transference thousands of times per mile. With a conventional standard lock down hitch all your transference is 100%.

Any trailer on its own produces and transfers 100% of all the same Omni-directional negative shock forces that is transferred to the tow vehicle because of the conventional hitch.

Colliding occurrence transfers and adds velocity between these 2 objects once a body starts in motion stays in motion until it is absorbed or transferred. With a conventional hitch both are the absorber/transform

When you properly configure a way to absorb all these negative Omni-directional forces, you eliminate/absorb 80% to 95% of these negative forces, allowing a more independent towing situation.

Most people are also compounding all the negative forces by overloading their truck and trailer. Trailer Life, writer Ken Freund stated: *"When you overload a vehicle, you are using yourself and your family as test pilots to find out what fails first. It also puts all other users of the road at risk."*

The bottom line is the ride. Enjoy an 90% smoother ride and a 75% safer tow. Driver fatigue is greatly reduced and your family, friends, and animals will enjoy the smoother, less bouncy ride. The wear and tear on your truck and trailer will be greatly reduced.

You can add air springs to the truck and to the trailer, but this will not fix the problem if you still have a hard connection hitch. Fix the problem at the source, with our Air Ride Trailer Hitches you do not need air suspension on the trailer or truck unless you just want all the comfort you can get and don't mind paying for it.

The Air Ride Hitch is a lasting investment as it can be easily transferred to a new vehicle and give you years and years of good service.

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

Tips for Conserving Electricity While Boondocking

1. Become One With Nature

- Take advantage of the brightest source of light—the sun. The closer you align your sleeping schedule to the sun's schedule, the more natural light you can take advantage of. For instance, if you usually read for an hour before bed, you might consider making this part of your morning routine instead.
- Park in the shade if possible on hot days.
- Avoid using high-power devices like hair dryers, coffee machines, etc. If possible, try preparing food and drinks the old-fashioned way—over a fire.

2. Embrace Low-Power Alternatives

- Replace inefficient bulbs with LEDs to save energy (how much energy? We answer that here).
- Avoid using your furnace or air conditioner if you can help it. Try a portable fan with low power consumption or a propane-powered heater.
- Try using battery-powered or power-efficient devices whenever possible. For instance, a tablet draws less power than a laptop and can easily be charged in your vehicle with a USB outlet. A flashlight only takes a couple of batteries, in contrast to a light bulb.

3. Power Up & Power Down

- Supplement your current battery bank with additional batteries. The more battery capacity you have, the longer you can rely on your battery bank to power your rig.
- If using an inverter to charge your laptop, phone, etc, turn off the inverter when you're finished.

Should a 5th wheel be level when towing?

The ideal when towing is to be absolutely level. But achieving that ideal is difficult when you are traveling through the hilly ground or the western mountain ranges. Sometimes you also run out of adjustment room on your pin box and can't reach level.

Being within a couple of inches, either way is not going to harm your tow vehicle or your 5th wheel. Besides towing the trailer your other concern is your appliances. Your fridge needs level to work properly but if the trailer is out of level for a short time then that appliance should not be affected.

Tips for Conserving Water While Boondocking

1. Keep Showers Short & Sweet

- Take navy showers. Step into the water, then turn the water off to soap up. Turn it on again to rinse off.
- Use a low-flow shower head. For boondocking, you'll want a showerhead that puts out 2 gallons per minute (GPM) or less. (Some put out 1.5 or 1.75 gpm, which is even better for conservation purposes.)
- Explore alternatives to daily showers, such as dry shampoo and wipes.
- Don't shave in the shower. Fill a bucket or the tub with a few inches of water, and use this water to rinse your razor when needed.

- If you're super serious about water conservation, you can cut your hair to make it quicker to wash. (This one takes some dedication—I can't say I'd go through with this one myself.)

2. Keep Water Usage Low When You "Go"

- Depending on how comfortable you are with this (and how much luxury you're willing to forgo for the sake of convenience), you can get conservative with your toilet flushing. Avoid flushing after each use of the toilet and live by the common boondocker's phrase, "If it's yellow, let it mellow. If it's brown, flush it down."
- Use a toilet with a hand-sprayer to further reduce the amount of water used for flushing.
- Use public restroom facilities when possible.
- You may even consider a composting toilet to replace your current setup if you plan on boondocking often. Composting toilets don't require any plumbing or water.

3. Recycle Running Water

- Use a dish pan to catch water from your kitchen sink when you do dishes, wash up, etc. Use a bucket to catch shower water (particularly the cold water that comes out before it heats up). Use this water to flush the toilet.
- Offload your gray water into your black tank to maximize the holding potential of both tanks. You don't want your black tank to dry up, so this has the added bonus of keeping things "liquified" inside the tank.

4. Change Your Kitchen Clean-Up Routine

- Wipe remaining food off your dishes with a napkin or paper towel prior to rinsing them in the sink.
- Limit dishwashing to once per day (bonus: this gives you a great excuse to put off doing the dishes).
- Depending on how eco-friendly you want to be, you can use paper plates and throw them away afterward, rather than using plastic or glass plates you have to wash.
- Try cooking foods that don't require much water to make (for instance, avoid boiling pasta, as this uses a lot of water).

Is there a green way to tow?

By: Jane McGrath

You may do your part every day to watch your step on the environment and avoid leaving a carbon footprint. But some days, going green is harder than others. Sure, you may recycle your grocery bags, ride the bus to work and buy organic, but when green guilt starts foiling your vacation plans, who's to say where to draw the line?

After waiting all year to take your new boat out, it strikes you that towing it for the long trip will effectively drop an anvil on your hybrid car's sky-high MPG. Not only do you feel your wallet shrinking by the second, but your green conscience is now burdened with the guilt that your vacation will now sap up gas and release carbon emissions.

Should you shed that shiny new boat from your vacation plans? Or is there a greener way to tow short of going Flintstones-style and literally pulling our own weight? The heavier the load on a vehicle, the more power, and therefore fuel, it will need to move. Nevertheless, although hybrid cars aren't known for their heavy towing capacities, you shouldn't necessarily feel pressured to forego the boat or the trailer for fear of green guilt.

In fact, as stellar gas mileage becomes more popular among consumers, companies seeking the green market are working to equip towing vehicles with higher MPGs. Ford, for example, promises about 20 MPG for its 2009 F-150 truck [source: Carty]. Likewise, companies seeking the blue-collar, boating and camping markets are working to equip hybrids with better towing capacities. For instance, GMC has come out with a 2009 Yukon Hybrid that can tow up to 6,000 pounds (2721.6 kilograms) [source: Edmunds]. These kinds of options are ideal for a

person who wants one vehicle to drive to work on a daily basis and economically handle towing a trailer on the annual road trip.

There's no reason you should feel powerless in the plight to save gas with that boat in tow. By becoming a smarter consumer and a smarter driver, your towing vehicle can be an efficient green machine. We'll go over some of the most important tips for better towing gas mileage next.

Fortunately, there are ways you can indulge your love of the outdoors or boating without sacrificing green ideals. Consider these tips to conserve gas while towing.

First and foremost, experts recommend to get rid of any excess weight you may be carrying in your vehicle you probably won't need. Tow more weight, and you'll consume more fuel. So go Thoreau and "simplify, simplify."

If you haven't yet bought either the towing vehicle or the towed vehicle, you have the advantage of shopping with an eye toward fuel economy. When buying a camper, the lighter the better. Dealers now sell **ultra-light trailers** with aluminum frames, which can also expand your towing vehicle options [source: CampingEarth.com].

While shopping for a towing vehicle, the most important thing is to make sure you get one with the appropriate **towing capacity** -- the maximum weight a vehicle can tow. Getting more tons of towing capacity than you need will most likely be a waste of fuel and make for an uncomfortable ride.

On the other hand, if you need to handle a very heavy load like a fifth-wheel trailer, you might consider a diesel truck. In some circumstances, a diesel-powered vehicle could prove to be about 15 to 20 percent more fuel-efficient [source: Arrais].

Another aspect to consider when searching for a towing vehicle is the **axle ratio**. This refers to the number of revolutions the driveshaft makes in order to make a wheel revolve once [source: Jeep.com]. An economy axle ratio will be low (3:1 or lower), and a performance axle ratio will be high (4:1 or higher) [source: ConsumerGuide]. You'll want to look for a moderate axle ratio that's neither very high nor very low as a compromise for both fuel economy and towing performance.

It'll also help to consider the most aerodynamic options. Even if you have a light load and a fuel-efficient vehicle, wind and air resistance can still do a number on your fuel economy. You can do things to minimize this effect as much as possible. For instance, if you're towing a boat or an open platform trailer, putting a cover on it will reduce aerodynamic drag.

Not only what you drive, but the way you drive can also have a significant impact on your fuel economy. For instance, sudden stops and accelerated starts will always hurt your gas mileage. When towing heavy loads, it's wise not to put the pedal to the metal anyway. Sticking with moderate speeds will improve fuel economy and be safer all around, considering that towing will increase your stopping distance. Not only that, but if you need to brake hard in an emergency situation, you could cause your vehicle to skid and possibly jackknife. Depending on the make, your vehicle could have an overdrive gear -- shifting out of this into a lower gear over hills and rough terrain could improve fuel efficiency as well [source: Neura].

Top off your curiosity about fuel economy with the links on the next page.

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