

# September 2021

Newsletter

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## 8 trending RV Features in 2021

By JEREMY & STEPHANIE PUGLISI

When it comes to advances in technology, luxury, and off-the-grid capability, the RV industry has been innovating at a blistering pace—and in my humble opinion, there has never been a better time to be an RV owner. If you want an RV that is tricked out with high-tech gadgets and dozens of features that are controllable from an app, then that RV is out there waiting for you. If you want an RV that has all of the comforts of home and the fit and finish of a high end luxury apartment, then that RV is waiting for you too. Or if you want to get off grid and camp underneath the stars and #roamoutside, then you will also find plenty of suitable RVs that are ready for your next rugged adventure.

**Solar Goes Mainstream** Adding a solar system to your RV used to be complex, cumbersome, and expensive for the average RV owner. But that is simply no longer the case. In the last few years solar has gone mainstream. This is because many of the solar companies are now partnering with manufacturers to make the process of adding solar significantly simpler and more affordable, especially for RV owners that may be less handy. Now many rigs come prepped or “pre-wired” for solar and the panels, batteries, and inverters can be easily added by the manufacturer, the dealer, or the consumer. This is such good news for RV owners because having a solar set up is absolutely awesome for dry camping, boondocking, and driveway surfing. Campgrounds are great, but having the power to camp anywhere is practical and on trend for 2021.

**Going Big With Outdoor Kitchens** Outdoor kitchens have been around for many years now, but they are on trend for 2021 because they are becoming more impressive and “blinged out” for today’s luxury loving campers. Yesterday’s camp kitchens had a fridge and a sink with running water if you were lucky. Today’s camp kitchens have flat screen TV’s, USB chargers and speakers, microwaves, spice racks, built in grills and griddles, and much more. Many of the RV owners that we know use their outdoor kitchens more than they use their indoor kitchens—and that’s a testament to how well-equipped so many of them are these days.

**Luxurious Features in Affordable RV’s** Over the past few years a number of features that are typically associated with higher end RV’s have become common in budget priced RV’s. Five years ago, if you wanted heated theater seats in your new RV you would have to buy a luxury fifth wheel or motorhome. Now you can find features like this as options in travel trailers that cost significantly less. Luxurious “grounded” steps with strut assist and handrails also used to largely be available on high end RV’s, now they can be seen on a variety of rigs at affordable price points. We all deserve a little luxury when we Go RVing, right?

**Lighter Interiors and Stripped Down Graphics** Many RV consumers have been asking for lighter interior decor options and more stripped down exterior graphics. Manufacturers have responded to consumer demand in both of these cases. More earthy interiors are still available, and so are elaborate graphics packages, but now consumers have more choice. More choice means that your new RV can be more personalized and more distinct—and

what's not to love about that?

**TPMS Systems for Safety** Tire safety can make or break your RVing experience. Routine tire maintenance, proper inflation, and correct weight distribution will eliminate most of the emergency tire issues that happen on the road. However, no matter how diligent you are, you can't control everything, including nails and other random road debris. Investing in a Tire Pressure Monitoring System (TPMS) can help you avoid getting a blowout to begin with. More and more RV manufacturers are including these types of systems as standard equipment—and we applaud them for doing so. But they are also widely available in the aftermarket and easy to install.

**Off-Grid Capabilities** This might be the most exciting RV trend for 2021. As mentioned earlier, more and more manufacturers are offering solar options that can be added at the factory, making off-grid camping more comfortable than ever before. We are also seeing off-road tires, raised axles, and larger holding tank capacity that will make boondocking and dry camping more comfortable for longer periods of time. With these kinds of amenities, you can be ready to roam wherever your sense of adventure leads.

**Smart RV Capabilities** RVs have been getting smarter every year, but 2021 RVs have more tech features than ever before. Many models now offer shoppers the ability to control RV systems straight from a smartphone or tablet. Simply download an app and you can dim the lights, extend the slides and awning, and check your tank levels while never leaving the recliner. RVers will appreciate being able to check on the interior temperature of the rig, even when they are away from the campground. Imagine opening your slide outs with an app while standing outside so you can check for obstacles like trees that may get in the way and do damage. Smart, practical, and convenient, right?

**Pet-Friendly Features** More than half of all RVers travel with their furry family members, and manufacturers are taking note. Many 2021 RVs come with features like leash latches on the exterior, and hidden dog bowl drawers that can be extended during feeding times and tucked away for the rest of the day. Some RV models came with dedicated doggie bed and kennel space. One manufacturer has removed all carpeting from their pet-friendly rigs and also moved heating vents from the floor to the walls. Clearly, today's RV's have become more comfortable and convenient for pets and their people.

## Tip of the Day

Zoning in your brake controller for optimum trailer braking **By Russ and Tiña De Maris**

**Question:** "I have a question about brake controllers and travel trailers. How do you adjust them? How do you know if they are too tight or not adjusted correctly?"

**Answer:** The job of the brake controller is to send the appropriate amount of current flow back to the brakes. You could send a full jolt of electricity back to the brakes, and they'd respond by jamming the brake pads into the drums, locking up the brakes. That's converting kinetic energy from rolling wheels into heat way too fast – skidding the tires, making vehicle control difficult or impossible, and wearing out the brakes in a hurry.

Set properly, the brake controller also pairs up the tow vehicle and the trailer in the sense that both are braking for themselves. Too little power to the trailer brakes, and slowing or stopping the trailer falls to the tow vehicle's brake system. Too much power to the trailer brakes, then the trailer brakes get the job of slowing or stopping the tow vehicle. If the controller is not set properly, you'll be needlessly wearing out the brake system of one or the other, and that's a costly and unsafe proposition for sure.

It's important to set the brake controller settings for the job at hand. For some, this will mean doing the initial setting, and tweaking the system to get everything honed to "towing perfection." However, if you use your tow vehicle to tow different trailers – for example, using your pickup to haul your travel trailer, and then on other occasions using it to haul a utility trailer – the different trailer weights will require adjusting the controller more often. Different brake controllers require different approaches to settings. It's critical you know what brake controller you have installed in your tow vehicle, and have the manufacturer's instructions on setup. Don't have the documents? Get the manufacturer name and model number, hit the Internet, and look for it. If your controller is old enough not to have a presence on the Web, then it's high time you got a new brake controller.

Here's a situation with Tekonsha's Prodigy P2 controller. A snowbird friend of ours was concerned that her brake controller needed adjusting – she had changed rigs since her last adjustment. We obliged, and one of us jumped in her rig with a spotter along.

Tekonsha recommends setting the power setting for its unit at “6” for a starting point. With the trailer attached and the engine running, pull the manual override lever on the controller all the way to the left – maximum brake. Holding the lever, adjust the power control knob until the digital setting shows a 6 on the display. We did that and also turned off the “boost” setting on the control.

**How to test the brake controller** Now locate a flat stretch of pavement, bring your speed up to about 25 miles per hour, and pull that manual override lever on full – don't step on the tow rig's service brakes, just pull the lever. If the trailer brakes lock up, stop, pull the override lever on full, and reduce the power level down a notch. Repeat until the brakes no longer lock up. If the trailer doesn't respond with a lock up, up the power a notch. Repeat until you hit lock up, and then back it off slightly, and your power level is set.

In our case, we dialed all the way up to the maximum level and never got any notion at all that the trailer brakes were doing anything. An inspection revealed the trailer brakes had to be manually adjusted out – the lining was worn down enough that the brakes weren't making contact with the drums. That can happen – the vast majority of trailer brakes, unlike those on cars and trucks, are NOT self-adjusting. They need to be adjusted “out” as lining wears down.

Adjustment done, we made another controller adjustment run. We started at level 6, and worked our way up – almost all the way to the top of the scale. We never could get the brakes to lock up, but the brakes definitely did their job. Why no lockup? Very heavy loads can be more than the system allows for a lockup. Her 40-foot (and probably overloaded) trailer just couldn't be locked up. We recommended she run the trailer across a scale, and begin the job of tossing out excess baggage.

Some observations apply to all brake controllers Regardless of brake controller make and model, some observations apply across the board. Brake temperature can make a big difference. It's not unwise to pre-warm your brakes prior to dialing in the right setting. Your manual will tell you how to do that. Then it gets dicey. In our case, the manual advises to engage the manual brake lever on the controller while cruising down the road “at 25 miles per hour or less.”

By the use of the manual engagement lever on the controller, you'll be using the brakes on the trailer, not the tow vehicle. All very well and good, but if too much power is routed back to the trailer brakes and you're cruising along at 25 miles per hour, you may have a BIG mess to clean up back in the trailer should the brakes lock up. At least one expert recommends checking your brakes in your driveway at say, 5 miles per hour. The objective is to see to it that the power setting of the controller will slow the rig down – NOT lock the brakes.

Here's some other advice you may not find in the manual. Doing an initial test in a gravel lot may give a lot more feedback than on pavement. You'll hear that gravel if you lock up, and the skid marks are a clear indicator that you'll need to back off the gain adjustment on the controller. Once we know where things sit on gravel, then fine-tuning on pavement ensures we've got the controller set where it needs to be.

**Trivia** Do you have valuables hidden in your sock drawer? According to Metro Bank, this is the most common place that people hide things and the very first place that burglars check. Time to find a new hiding spot...

**Leave here with a laugh** If you're American when you go into the bathroom, and you're American when you come out, what are you when you're in the bathroom?

European.

## HOW MUCH TRAILER CAN I REALLY TOW?

## RV Dealers Could Sell You the Wrong Rig—Read This Before Buying

When it comes to RV and vehicle dealerships, the salespeople are usually knowledgeable about—well, selling you an RV or vehicle. But most lack experience in towing these massive trailers the way you'll have to. That is, across distance, over time, and in real-world conditions. This means that no matter how well-meaning your dealership is, they often gloss over some of the finer points of towing. The typical exchange when you go to an RV dealership is they ask about your tow vehicle; you give them a year, make, and model; and they give you a general weight capacity and trailer length to stick with. Or, you go to the vehicle dealership and say you want to tow a 9,000 lb trailer, and they sell you a truck you'll max out in no time. When my cousin was shopping for a camper for family road trips, she experienced this firsthand. She was told her Jeep could pull a 25' long, 10' tall camper. This information was technically true—she could tow a 25' camper. But would it be comfortable? Would it be safe? Not so much. The Jeep's short wheelbase would not be sufficient to haul a 25' camper—at least, not safely, at full highway speeds, over long distances. Any bounce or sway from the trailer could end up pulling the Jeep or even result in her losing control of the vehicle.

The truth is, there's more to choosing a vehicle/trailer combo than matching a vague idea of your max tow capacity to the largest trailer within this limit. Below, we'll go over a few important factors your dealership probably didn't mention: your vehicle configuration, your payload, and your wheelbase ratio. All of these factors are just as important in determining how big of a trailer you can safely tow.

**Tow Vehicle Configuration** One of the first questions RV dealers will ask you is *what are you going to tow with?* Most times, you'll give them your year, make, and model, and they'll give you a rough estimate of what you can tow. The important thing to remember here is that this is indeed a rough estimate—you can't pin down an exact weight capacity with this basic information. This also means if you're in the market for a new (or used) tow vehicle and need to know the tow capacity, you want to do more than take the dealer's word for it or run with the first number that pops up on Google. Why? Because not all vehicle models are created equal. Take the 2020 Ford F-350, for instance. If we look at Ford's trailer towing guide, we can see that two Crew Cab F-350 pickups can swing between 12,000 and 20,000 lbs depending on engine type, axle ratio, wheel base, etc. Don't overlook the fact that a "properly equipped" vehicle (which typically includes a tow package and available towing upgrades) can tow much more than a base model vehicle. The internet is chock full of stories of disappointed trailer enthusiasts who bought a tow vehicle or camper on the advice of a dealer who failed to get into the nitty gritty reality of vehicle weight capacities. The question should never be limited to "what can a [vehicle] tow?" but rather "what can this [vehicle] tow?" For a more accurate idea of how much your particular vehicle configuration can tow, follow these simple steps.

**Payload vs Towing Capacity** There is often some confusion between the concept of payload and towing capacity. So which one do you need to pay attention to when it comes to towing? The answer is both. Your payload is defined as the load weight a vehicle can carry, including people, cargo, tongue and hitch weight, and vehicle options. Think of towing capacity as how much your vehicle can *pull*. Payload, on the other hand, is more about the downward force of your cargo in your vehicle; how much can your vehicle *hold*? Many vehicles these days (particularly trucks) have some truly monstrous towing capacities. However, even if you could tow a T-Rex, you're much more likely to reach your payload long before you reach your weight capacity. This is something many RV and car dealerships don't mention, and something many new towing enthusiasts don't consider. Most vehicles now list the payload capacity on the yellow sticker inside the door jamb (also remember to subtract any aftermarket options you've added, such as tonneau covers or bed liners). RAM also provides a VIN lookup and indicates the payload capacity of each individual truck. If for some reason you can't find your payload capacity this way, you can always figure out by subtracting your curb weight from your GVWR. Your **curb weight** is the weight of your fully fueled vehicle with no cargo or people. To find your curb weight, take your fully fueled vehicle to a commercial scale and weigh it.

**Vehicle Wheelbase Ratio vs Trailer Length** Something else most dealerships overlook when selling you a camper or tow vehicle is the wheelbase ratio—that is, how long your vehicle's wheelbase is in relation to your trailer's. Why does this matter? It matters because a vehicle with a short wheelbase will have a much tougher time towing a long trailer. You need to make sure your tow vehicle can steer and maneuver your trailer—however, what happens when your wheelbase is too short is just the opposite. It's all too easy for your trailer to catch the wind or hit a bump and end up tugging your tow vehicle around the road. Not only is this a terrifying feeling, it's also extremely unsafe. There is no hard and fast rule when it comes to wheelbase ratios. However, a typical estimate is that you'll need a tow vehicle with at least a 110" wheelbase to tow a 20' trailer. For every foot of trailer you add after that, add about 4" to

your tow vehicle wheelbase. For reference, my cousin's Jeep has a wheelbase of 114.8". Based on the chart above (which is backed up by our towing experts at etrailer.com), the Jeep can safely handle a trailer about 21' long. As I mentioned above, she was initially told that she could tow a 25' camper. It's possible that she could have found a trailer this size within the Jeep's tow capacity and payload. However, weight capacity alone fails to take into account the sheer size difference between the Jeep and a camper. To safely pull a 25' trailer, she'd be much better off with a tow vehicle wheelbase of about 130" (which is getting into large SUV/truck territory). If you're not sure what your wheelbase is (and let's face it, you've probably never had a reason to wonder about it before), you can either check that handy door jamb sticker or measure the distance between your front and rear tires (center to center).

## [AirSafeHitches.com](http://AirSafeHitches.com)



### Why Use an Air Hitch?

AirSafe is committed to giving you the safest and most comfortable ride possible. We offer the largest selection of air hitches in the industry, including 5th wheel hitches, gooseneck hitches, and receiver hitches for trailer hitches for trucks.

Our hitches utilize the most innovative engineering and design available on the market today. With a fully height adjustable design, AirSafe hitches are easy to use and don't cause any headaches.

Air Safe Hitches also delivers the ultimate in safety.

With only 10% trailer inertia, our hitches make your vehicles sway a lot less. By evenly distributing the weight between the trailer and the tow vehicle, you will have more ability to brake and steer safely.

AirSafe Hitches are the safest way to tow anything, and they provide the most comfort of any ride. If that isn't enough to convince you, these hitches are also affordable. With AirSafe Hitches, you get safety, comfort, and savings all in one.

**5th Wheel Hitches** - Omni-Directional 4 air bag vs competitor 2 air bag system. A four-air bag hitch is designed to allow the hitch head to move on the air bags in any direction based on articulation from the trailer itself. The result of such continuous motion results in a smooth ride and decrease chucking and surging forces from the trailer on the truck. In addition to the movement from the trailer, the 4-airbag hitch support 100% of the pin weight, increasing the effectiveness of the air springs. This results in a smooth and controlled motion for the trailer on the truck.

**Receiver Hitches** – If you want a smoother ride and the ultimate in control, then you need the advantage provided by Air Safe Hitches with the Receiver Hitch by AirSafe™. With an Air Safe Receiver Hitch you will get a 90% smoother ride than with a traditional hitch, which can save you money. Glide across the highways and roads avoiding the constant bouncing, which leads to a decrease in gas mileage and early wear and tear on your tires. Our Air Safe Receiver Hitches also reduce stress on your truck and trailer suspension and help eliminate breakages inside the trailer. Our design allows total air ride vs the Shocker Hitch with the hinged approach.

**Gooseneck Hitches** – Air Safe offers the industry's largest selection of air hitches. Innovation and engineering insures you receive the safest and smoothest ride. "Enjoy the ride, arrive alive." With AIRSAFE™ you stop the flow of shock flow between the tow vehicle to the trailer and greatly reduce the explosion of energy when these two forces meet. The patented

AIRSAFE™ hitches are engineered so the connection to the trailer is separated from the connection to the tow vehicle by an industrial strength airbag. Air Safe Gooseneck Hitches by AIRSAFE™ are simply the best air product money can buy. They are engineered with you and your precious cargo in mind. Simply remove your existing gooseneck tube and coupler and replace it with the AIRSAFE™ system. Available in round and square necks.

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

## 5 Must-See RV Destinations that are Perfect for Fall

by Jamie Cattanach

Oh, fall. How do I love thee? Let me count the ways.

When you arrive, it's once again acceptable to wear leggings as pants under a long, cozy sweater. School's back in session, which means my daytime errands are that much less noisy and crowded. The holidays are quickly approaching, and pies of all varieties are finally back on the menu. And soon, pumpkins will be here — along with pumpkin bread, pumpkin spiced lattes, and all the other wonderful ways our love of that gourd manifests itself.

Fall, there are a whole lot of reasons to love you. But we still haven't touched on my favorite one: what a perfect time you are for traveling.

**Fall Travel Ideas** When you think of the great American road trip, fall might not be the first season to come to mind. That honor belongs to summer, when the long break from school and consistently warm weather bring families onto the highway in droves.

But fall travel is actually super underrated, both in the United States and internationally. For one thing, it's a "shoulder season" in most areas, which means you're likely to find many of your travel expenses will be priced more affordably, from restaurant meals to accommodation fees.

Furthermore, the very fact that summer is so much more popular than fall for travelers does the latter season a favor: even popular destinations will be much less crowded come September and October.

Of course, if you've got kids, fall travel can be a little bit complicated. You'll have to either find a sitter who can bring them to and from school, or possibly take them out of school for a few days. (Hey, traveling is educational!)

But if you're child-free and have some time to spare this autumn, here are some incredible fall travel destinations that are perfect for an RV road trip.

### Fall Camping Destinations

So, where are the must-see stops this fall? Here are some of our favorites.

**1. Destin, Florida** "What?" you may be thinking. Floridian beach

destinations just *scream* summer, right?

But when you think about it, fall beach vacations actually make a lot of sense. Some of the very best beaches will be blissfully devoid of crowds, meaning you'll actually get to relax in the sunshine and enjoy the crashing waves without the un-asked-for addition of someone's boom box. Plus, it won't be quite as hot and humid as it is in a Floridian July, when just existing can feel exhausting. (But if you're looking for warm places to visit in October, Florida's going to be one of your best bets in the USA!)

This northeastern beach town is perfect: it's got soft sand, emerald waters, and a great balance of city perks and quaint beachside quietude. It's also far enough north that it's fairly easy to get to over a long weekend or short fall break... as opposed to the six-hour drive south to the Keys!

**2. Savannah, Georgia** Whether you're looking to fill your fall travel roster with family destinations or romantic getaways, Savannah fits the bill. It's full of history, so it's definitely educational if you're bringing the kids along... but the Spanish-moss-swathed oaks make a fantastic backdrop for a just-the-two-of-us weekend.

While you won't see quite as much in the way of changing leaves, you'll get to enjoy this city's southern charm, walking from square to square without sweating through your clothes.

Besides, who doesn't want a helping of comfort food as temperatures start to dip? From fried chicken to sweet tea to delicious southern barbecue, Savannah's definitely got you covered! They're even home to one of the most famous ice cream parlors in the world, Leopold's.

Fall Foliage Destinations For some of us, fall is all about the leaves. We totally get it! Here are a few fall getaway destinations if you're looking to do some foliage travel.

**3. White Mountain National Forest, New Hampshire** Everyone knows the northeast is one of the best September and October vacation destinations if you're looking for fall foliage. The leaf change there is second to none.

This large swath of New Hampshire is perfect if you're looking for a cheap fall break destination, as there are multiple campgrounds within the park open for dispersed camping, or boondocking, well into the fall months. Just sit back, relax, and enjoy the beautiful view!

**4. Denver, Colorado** Denver is rumored to have more sunny days per year than many areas of Florida, so if you're looking for a fall destination that combines temperate weather with stunning fall scenery, you can't do much better than the Mile High City.

Plus, you've got lots of time to enjoy the beautiful foliage changes in Denver — according to Denver.org, the city "has one of the longest periods of fall colors of any city in the country."

"That's because there are five different climate zones within a two-hour drive of downtown Denver," the site goes on. "Pick your elevation and you can find yourself at the height of fall colors from mid-September to mid-November."

Best Places for Fall Travel Some of the best fall vacations in the US might not be what you think.

**5. Your Favorite National Park** Think about it. The summer crowds are gone, the weather is still temperate, and you'll even get to see whichever park you choose all decked out in fall splendor.

Really, visiting the National Parks in fall is a total travel life hack. Whether you go for Yellowstone, Yosemite, Glacier, or any of the others (there are almost 60 to choose from!), you're sure to have just as great a time as you would have had over the summer... if not better.

Just be sure to check the weather and campground openings before you hit the road. Some National Parks have seasonal closures in anticipation of foul weather... but even many northerly climes usually don't see snow until well into October!

So, where will you travel this fall? Which must-see fall destinations did we miss? Let us know! We're always on the lookout for more beautiful, colorful destinations.

## The RV Lifestyle Is Exploding Due to COVID. Is It Right for You?

The culture around recreational vehicle travel encourages connection, volunteerism, adventure

by Stacey Freed, AARP

As most Americans hunkered down in their homes to avoid COVID-19, Dawn and Roger Haas hopped in their RV to make a 1,100-mile trip to see family in the Ozarks. Instead of staying at

campgrounds along the way, they spent nights at orchards, wineries and ski areas where they were able to pick apples, sip chardonnay and hike through beautiful scenery.

In the recreational vehicle, the couple had all the technology they needed to stay connected, a safe way to travel and a socially distant place to stay when visiting. Those options are making RV life more attractive than ever — especially to retirees — during the pandemic.

The “lifestyle is exploding mostly due to COVID,” says Mike Wendland. He and wife Jennifer Wendland, both retired journalists, are on the road about three-quarters of the year. The Wendlands blog, host a podcast and YouTube Channel, and manage a Facebook group for 45,000 RV-enthusiast members.

There's more to traveling in a recreational vehicle — sometimes called a motor home — than just driving a house on wheels and hooking up at a state campground. A whole culture and lifestyle has been built around the practice. With today's technology you're not too far from answers to any of your questions about the best places to stay, where to find a laundromat in a particular town, or how to fix a flat tire.

Whatever your interests or reasons for taking to the road, you can find an RV group to join. On an adventure with your children? Link up with others who are “roadschooling” their kids along the way. Many RVers are on the road doing service projects and charitable works. There are communities for 55-and-older and retiree RVers, luxury resort-style communities and of course the traditional camper communities.

“Every night at a campground a whole new community forms; people build a fire, set out their chairs. The hunger people have for positive community, that's what brings so many people to this lifestyle,” Mike Wendland says.

### **Explore the RV lifestyle**

The Haases got interested in the RV life after Roger, now 56 and a retired engineer, survived a severe heart attack about 20 years ago. The couple decided they would retire early.

Dawn, 53, who worked in instructional design, wanted to pare down their lives. Roger spent a year researching RVs before buying. “We went to a lot of RV shows,” he says. They opted for a “fifth wheel,” a trailer-type RV, which is hitched to a pickup truck or other large vehicle. They bought a diesel-powered Ford F250 in order to “leave a smaller carbon footprint.”

Their rig, Dawn says, has 13-foot ceilings, lots of windows, a bedroom with a closeable door, a kitchen with a double sink, plenty of counter space, an island, two pantries, and slides that push out so the 37-foot RV has about 400 square feet of livable space.

With their three children grown and moved away, the Haases sold their five-bedroom house in 2019 and purchased a small ranch house in Macedon, New York, with an RV pad. This way, Dawn says, if the coronavirus is an issue, they can move into the RV and “isolate if people visit.”

Although the Haases had traveled in RVs before, they're relatively new to the lifestyle. They became members of Harvest Hosts — a network of people who allow RVs on their property at no cost. Now when they travel they can choose to stay at participating orchards, farms, wineries, breweries and attractions rather than a state park or camping area. Dawn reminisces about spending a night on a Missouri farm, “looking at the stars and listening to distant coyotes,” and another at a ski hill in Ohio where they took in the view as they went up and down on the lift.

Eventually, Dawn says, they want to be able to work together as a couple to supplement their retirement income and have been looking at workingcouples.com, a website with job listings located all around the country. They like the idea of running a campground one day.

**Travelers who are mission driven** Some RVers become roving volunteers through religiously affiliated groups or other organizations that connect them with communities in need.

Anne and Max Armstrong, retirees from ReMAP, Alabama, didn't want to “spend our retirement waiting for happy hour every day. We needed a purpose,” Anne says. She's a retired nurse practitioner and he's retired from heading up emergency management efforts for their home county. Through their Methodist church, they joined Nomads On a Mission Active in Divine Service, which connects volunteers with community service projects around the United States. In January 2020, the Armstrongs were in the Florida Keys working on homes damaged by

Hurricane Irma, and in November they headed to Hattiesburg, Mississippi, for post-tornado disaster relief.

"We want to help make life a little better for someone else because we've been so blessed," Anne says.

Mary, 67, and husband Dave Vandeveld, 81, have been RVing for 22 years. She was an obstetrician and gynecologist and he was an entrepreneur and social worker before they retired and began working as administrators for Care-A-Vanners, a program from Habitat for Humanity International which "helps local Habitat affiliates accelerate their building programs and do post-disaster rebuilds," Mary says. They do their office work from their RV.

**Get up to speed on RV lingo** You don't have to restrict yourself to campgrounds, and many places to park can be had for free. (Search for apps that will help you find those locations.) The more interesting spots where RV bloggers Mike and Jennifer Wendland have stayed include an alpaca farm, an alligator ranch and a golf course. Turns out some parking practices have their own names:

- **Mooch docking:** staying in a friend or relative's driveway and plugging into their electricity.
- **Crack docking:** Staying at a Cracker Barrel parking lot.
- **Wal docking:** Staying in a Walmart parking lot.

## Safety Tips For Virus-Free Stops During COVID-19

By Chelsea Gonzales

We all know that in order to keep everything as virus-free as possible, travel isn't recommended during this time. That said, some RVers will find themselves in situations that require it. Whether you need to head back to family or find a more comfortable place to park your rig for a bit, you could very well find yourself on the road before this pandemic has ended.

If that's the case, you will not only need to deal with all the usual travel-day challenges, but the COVID-19 emergency has presented new challenges as well. In particular, you will need to find ways to stick to your own space and avoid public spaces and interaction with other people as much as possible. This is easy enough when you're in your vehicle, but becomes much more difficult when making stops along the way. Below are our top tips for virus-free stops while traveling during the pandemic.

### Use your own restroom

Public restrooms are perhaps some of the most unsanitary places we visit on our travels. It only makes sense to avoid them as much as possible during this time of avoiding germs.

While many people prefer to head into gas stations and rest stops along their route to use the restroom and stretch their legs, it's better to use your RV restroom for the time being. Doing this will allow you to avoid being exposed to the germs of others, and you can rest easy knowing just how clean your own space is.

Don't usually use your restroom while traveling? Just put a small amount of water in your fresh tank before hitting the road, and you should be able to use your pump to flush and wash your hands for the duration of your trip.

### Cook your own meals

Like using your own restroom, we also recommend using your own kitchen as much as possible right now. Not only is cooking your own food a safer route, but you may not have many options anyway (aside from carry-out) since many places have closed their dining rooms, and most RVs won't fit in drive-thrus.

Of course, if you're going to be making your own meals along the way, you will want to stock up on groceries. We recommend buying easy-to-make meals such as sandwiches and one-pot

stovetop meals like pasta.

To be extra safe, order these groceries online and pick them up, or have them delivered just before your travel day, so you won't have to go into the store. Keep in mind this is not always a viable option and you may not end up getting all of the groceries you ordered depending on availability.

### **Wipe everything clean & use gloves**

While you can use your own restroom and kitchen, there are some instances that will require you to use public spaces. For instance, you may need to let a pet out to use the bathroom or you may need to get out to pump gas.

When these things come up, in order to keep things as virus-free as possible, wipe the gas pump, cart handles, and any door handles with sanitizing wipes before touching them and sanitize or wash your hands often. Another option is to slip on a pair of disposable gloves for the duration of the stop and throw them away before getting back into your vehicle.

And of course, leave at least six feet between you and other people whenever possible and wear a mask if you have one.

### **Pay at the pump**

In addition to wiping the gas pump before getting gas, you will also want to pay at the pump if possible. This saves you from touching things as you head into the gas station like the door handle and the counter. It also removes the need to queue up at the register and speak with the person working the register—both things that put you in relatively close proximity to other people.

### **Pay for parks online and ask questions on the phone**

If you're staying in an RV park, see if they will allow you to pay and "check-in" online or over the phone. Ask for your site number and find out if there's anything you should know, such as a gate code, bathroom code, or the latest time you're allowed to arrive.

Doing this online or over the phone removes yet another interaction and even more time spent in public places, but may not be possible at some parks.

### **Plan your route wisely during COVID-19**

It's important to be very aware of what's going on in the world as you plan your route. Many counties and areas are completely closed to anyone who is not a current resident. Some places also have curfews in place, meaning driving at night is not ideal. Most essential stores will be closed earlier than usual, so any stops for food and/or other needs may need to happen earlier in the day. Additionally, some states have set up checkpoints that could fall along your route.

Knowing what is open and closed along your route is essential right now. Thankfully, Campground Reviews has been contacting over 20,000 campgrounds and RV parks to list the most up-to-date information on campground closures across the US and Canada. They have also integrated this vital information into RV Trip Wizard and the RV LIFE App to make it easier for RVers who are still on the road to find out where they can stay amid all of this chaos. RV LIFE also put together a very useful state-by-state guide on campground closures and has kept it updated on a daily basis with the most current information.

By using these tips, you should be able to get from point A to point B in comfort and with minimal contact with others. This will help ensure you arrive at your final location safe and sound, and can ride out this time wherever you most prefer.

## **Funny Clean Jokes**

1. A man walks into a library and asks the librarian for books about paranoia. She whispers, "They're right behind you!"
2. Want to hear a roof joke? The first one's on the house.
3. What should you do if you're attacked by a group of clowns? Go straight for the juggler.
4. Why don't koalas count as bears? They don't have the right koalafications.
5. A cement mixer and a prison bus crashed on the highway. Police advise citizens to look out for a group of hardened criminals.
6. I couldn't figure out why the baseball kept getting bigger. Then it hit me.
7. I saw a movie about how ships are put together. It was riveting.
8. A man walks into a library and orders a hamburger. The librarian says, "This is a library." The man apologizes and whispers, "I'd like a hamburger, please."
9. Why did the taxi driver get fired? Passengers didn't like it when she went the extra mile.
10. What do you get when you pour root beer into a square cup? Beer.
11. A group of crows was arrested for hanging out together. The charge? Attempted murder.
12. How do you look for Will Smith in the snow? Just follow the fresh prints.
13. Which rock group has four guys who can't sing or play instruments? Mount Rushmore.
14. Why does Humpty Dumpty love autumn? Because he always has a great fall.
15. Where do hamburgers take their sweethearts on Valentine's Day to dance? The Meat Ball!
16. What time does a duck wake up? The quack of dawn.
17. Some people eat snails. They must not like fast food.
18. Have you heard the one about the skunk? Never mind, it really stinks.
19. It's always windy in a sports arena. All those fans.
20. How do mountains stay warm in the winter? Snowcaps.
21. What happens to a frog's car when it breaks down? It gets toad away.
22. What do you call a pile of kittens? A meowntain.
23. Is this pool safe for diving? It deep ends.
24. What is worse than raining cats and dogs? Hailing taxis!
25. What did the nose say to the finger? Quit picking on me!
26. What is the best day to go to the beach? Sunday, of course!
27. What bow can't be tied? A rainbow!
28. How many tickles does it take to make an Octopus laugh? Ten-tickles.
29. How does a dog stop a video? By hitting the paws button!
30. People think "icy" is the easiest word to spell. Come to think of it, I see why.
31. My teachers told me I'd never amount to much because I procrastinate so much. I told them, "Just you wait!"
32. Comic Sans walks into a bar. The bartender says, "We don't serve your type here."
33. What's the easiest way to get straight As? Use a ruler.
34. A grasshopper sits down at a bar. The bartender says, "We have a drink named after you!" The grasshopper replies, "Who names a drink 'Steve?'"
35. What's a balloon's least favorite type of music? Pop.
36. I went into a store to buy some books about turtles. "Hardbacks?" asked the shopkeeper. "Yes," I replied. "And they have little heads, too."
37. What does the world's top dentist get? A little plaque.
38. I used to be addicted to not showering. Luckily, I've been clean for five years.
39. Have you heard about Murphy's Law? Yes. Anything that can go wrong will go wrong. How about Cole's Law? No. It's julienned cabbage in a creamy dressing.
40. What did the green grape say to the purple grape? "Breathe, man! Breathe!"
41. What's the difference between a hippo and a Zippo? One is really heavy, the other's a little lighter.
42. How does a farmer mend his overalls? With cabbage patches.
43. Why was the tomato red? Because he saw the salad dressing.
44. I got my husband a fridge for his birthday. His face lit up when he opened it.
45. Why were they called the Dark Ages? Because there were lots of knights.
46. How does NASA organize a party? They planet.
47. What did the big flower say to the little flower? Hi bud!
48. What's sticky and brown? A stick!
49. Why is no one friends with Dracula? Because he's a pain in the neck.
50. What did one toilet say to the other? You look flushed.

## Contact Us

Air Safe Hitches  
264 Lincoln Ave  
Island arkh, New York | 11558  
Tel. 321-939-2132  
Fax. 866-201-3391  
[airsafehitches.com](http://airsafehitches.com)

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