

# October 2023

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## 6 tips for scoring a national park campsite

By Julie Chickery

September 21, 2023

National parks are among the most popular places for RV travelers. The National Park Service reported that it had more than 312 million visitors in 2022. Add record-breaking RV sales and rentals over the last few years, and you have a huge demand for national park campsites. Unfortunately, that makes it even harder than ever to actually get a coveted reservation.

Here are some tips for scoring a national park campsite:

### Plan ahead

The first recommendation is the most well-known. You will have a better chance of securing a site if you can book your reservation in advance. How far ahead you need to plan will depend on the national park you are planning to visit. For example, the window to make [campground reservations in Yosemite National Park](#) is five months in advance. This reservation varies by park and sometimes even by campground, so be sure to check as soon as you know where you want to travel.

### Avoid prime tourist season

If you have any flexibility in your RV travel schedule, then you'll have a better chance of securing a reservation when you avoid the prime tourist season. The "Big 5" national parks in Utah are jam-packed every spring and summer, but we were able to secure a [campground reservation in Zion National Park](#) right after the campground opened in early March.

Be willing to move around

Another way to snag a coveted national park campsite is to be willing to move around. What I mean by that, for example, is for a one-week stay you might be able to get two nights in one site, one night in another, and four nights in a final site. These might also be in different campgrounds within the park, which can actually make it easier to enjoy sightseeing in various parts of the park.

First-come, first-served sites

Many national parks leave a certain number of sites open on a first-come, first-served basis. In this case, the early bird gets the worm. The [Lewis Mountain Campground in Shenandoah National Park](#) has 30 first-come, first-served RV campsites.

Consider dry camping

If you are willing to forgo the water and power hookups, many national parks have dry campgrounds – these are campgrounds that have no hookups but often provide potable water and dump stations. In addition, some national parks allow boondocking in dispersed areas within their boundaries. While it's not free, since you'll need to pay for a permit, there is some spectacular backcountry camping to be had in these parks.

Alternatives to national park campgrounds

When all else fails, don't skip the trip! Instead, explore some of the alternatives to national park campgrounds. From state parks to private RV resorts, there are many other options near popular destinations.

## **Blowing in the wind: Truckers' tips for safe driving**

By Nanci Dixon

September 20, 2023

Several interstates are notorious for wind, particularly in the spring and fall. I-40, I-10, and I-8 have all sidelined us at one time or another. I-40 near Winslow and Flagstaff, Arizona, periodically reports that semi-trucks have literally blown over in the wind along the interstate. So if trucks have a hard time in a windstorm, what about RVs? What do the truckers do to stay safe while the wind blows?

Truck trailers are measured in "sail" area, the area that can catch the wind. A 53-foot tractor trailer has about 500 square feet of area that can be pushed, create thrust or be

disrupted by high winds, similar to having a sail. RVs have “sail” too – just, thankfully, less.

The tips below are ones that long-haul truckers know about driving during a windstorm, but they are also very useful for RVers.

**Know how your rig performs in the wind.** The “sail” area can cause an RV to move out of its lane and out of control. There are after-market parts that can improve handling for RVs in the wind.

**Reduce speed in the wind.** Don’t let the vehicles behind you force you to drive at unsafe speeds.

**Check existing wind speeds before setting out.** There are several apps available to check the forecast and existing winds. Windy, WindAlert, and Windfinder are all good apps that we use consistently. Check out both the prevailing wind and gust speed. The gusts are the ones that can unexpectedly cause an accident.

**Check out the weather reports.** A wind advisory or a red flag warning are both indications of windy weather. Arizona weather reporters tend to say “breezy,” when in Minnesota they would say it is “windy”. If we hear “windy” in Arizona, Oklahoma, or Texas, we take in the chairs and tables, fasten down the patio rugs and stay in place. Winds have been so strong at times we have had to pull in the slides.

**Keep both hands on the wheel and avoid distractions.** A sudden gust of wind during a windstorm can jerk the wheel out of your hands. Avoid distractions. Rubber-necking, reaching for something, even turning on the radio can be enough to lose attention on the road conditions.

**Watch the signs on the road.** They are there for a reason. Wind socks, gusty winds ahead, dust storm area are all signs to be cautious. Bridges and open mountain ridges are all the more prone to gusts that can cause loss of control.

**Watch the road, too.** Flags flying straight out, grass laying horizontal and trees moving back and forth not only give an indication of the amount of wind but also the direction.

**Pull over and stop when wind speeds are too high to drive safely.** Find a campsite or spot to wait it out. We once spent four days in Oklahoma waiting out gale winds.

For a trucker, when it is determined that an accident is due to high winds, that trucker or company could be charged with negligence. Truckers have dispatchers that do the route

planning for them. RVers are on their own determining the safest routes, particularly when high winds are expected. **Don't let an accident happen to you.**

And as the old Irish blessing goes, **“May the wind be always at your back.”**

## Liquid Propane on the Decline

For years, RVs have relied on Liquid Propane (LP) for many of their needs, especially for refrigerators. Josh had sensed changes on the horizon months ago, and it seems the industry is now echoing his foresight.

It's becoming clear that two-way fridges, called “two-way” because they can run off of AC power and LP gas, seem to be nearing the end of their popularity. Several suppliers are halting their production in North America, meaning imports will not only become more expensive but also slower in arrival. Parts like circuit boards, vital for running these units, are becoming more challenging to source.

This shift away from LP can potentially reshape the RV market in significant ways. RV owners who have grown accustomed to the convenience of LP may need to adjust to new systems and mechanisms, such as 12-volt refrigerators.

Additionally, manufacturers will likely have to innovate more rapidly to fill the LP void, which could either lead to price spikes or the introduction of more efficient energy solutions. As with all industry changes, adaptation will be key for both manufacturers and consumers.

## Record Numbers Expected for Fall Camping

September 2023 RV Industry Update and News

Check out Josh the RV Nerd's RV Update on YouTube!

The world of RVs is always changing. What's hot one season could be a big stinker the

next. Looking at 2023, RV sales have been slow, and now that summer is ending and the kiddos are back in school, RV sales are starting to slow even more.

But there's good news in September! This is the time of year when the RV manufacturers roll out their new 2024 RV models and we get to see some great new campers.

Let's get into all the news for September with this month's RV industry update! My good friend and RV expert extraordinaire Josh the RV Nerd has been visiting RV manufacturers, checking out the latest and greatest camper models, and – probably his best source of information – talking to people like you about what *you* are seeing happening in the industry. What he told me got me fired up.

Let's dive in and see what's trending in September...

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# The Camping Conundrum: New RV Parks and Campsite Demand

As the RV industry continues to flourish, one question invariably arises: with so many RVs hitting the road, where are all these travelers going to camp?

With new RV enthusiasts joining seasoned road warriors in their love for the great outdoors, the demand for campsites is reaching new heights. While some might worry about the diminishing availability of camping spots, there's good news on the horizon.

Historically, constructing an RV park has been a significant endeavor, often taking a few years from conceptualization to completion. However, it seems we're on the precipice of a tidal wave of new campground opportunities.

As the lack of available RV parks becomes evident, entrepreneurs are stepping up to capitalize on the opportunity, recognizing the potential for lucrative returns. It's a slow and steady race, but we're beginning to see the fruits of these efforts as several new camping facilities emerge.

## RV Parks Coming in the Near Future

In my recent research, I came across several new campsites and RV parks that are either in the pipeline or have recently opened their gates, adding hundreds of new spots for RV enthusiasts. This is an encouraging sign for the industry and those who love the camping lifestyle.

### New US RV Parks in the Works

#### **Overton, Nevada**

New park development

90+ sites available

Comes with various amenities|

#### **Canyon City, Colorado**

New Loves Stop introduced

Offers 100+ sites for visitors

#### **Caldwell, Idaho**

New luxury RV park under construction

\$30 million investment

Spans over 30 acres

Boasts 225 stalls

Described as "Like no other"

### **Luray RV Resort, Virginia**

Under new ownership

Massive expansion undertaken

Site count increased from 73 to 350

Resort-style amenities including:

Swimming pool

Pickleball courts

Unique RV Car Track!

However, it's essential to approach this with a balanced view. While some of these locations offer newly renovated amenities, this might come at a premium.

The surge in demand, combined with the cost of upgrades, has led to a noticeable uptick in camping fees in some areas. More camping spots don't necessarily equate to budget-friendly options, especially with the current demand significantly outstripping supply.

This imbalance has further propelled the interest in boondocking and the adoption of solar solutions by campers who seek off-the-grid experiences. While this shift might not be everyone's cup of tea, it's heartening to know there are multiple ways to enjoy camping.

While the road ahead to completely alleviate campground congestion remains long, there's evident progress. Campers, new and old, can remain optimistic that the industry is working hard to cater to their needs and expand opportunities for memorable outdoor adventures.