

LEARNING MADE EASY



7th Edition

RV Vacations

for
dummies[®]
A Wiley Brand



Follow the most popular
RV travel routes

Explore must-see landmarks,
historic sites, and attractions

Plan your stops at
RV-friendly campgrounds

Christopher Hodapp
Alice Von Kannon

*Authors of RVs & Campers For
Dummies*



RV Vacations

7th Edition

**by Christopher Hodapp and
Alice Von Kannon**

**for
dummies®**
A Wiley Brand

RV Vacations For Dummies®, 7th Edition

Published by: **John Wiley & Sons, Inc.**, 111 River Street, Hoboken, NJ 07030-5774, www.wiley.com

Copyright © 2023 by John Wiley & Sons, Inc., Hoboken, New Jersey

Media and software compilation copyright © 2023 by John Wiley & Sons, Inc. All rights reserved.

Published simultaneously in Canada

No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, scanning or otherwise, except as permitted under Sections 107 or 108 of the 1976 United States Copyright Act, without the prior written permission of the Publisher. Requests to the Publisher for permission should be addressed to the Permissions Department, John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 111 River Street, Hoboken, NJ 07030, (201) 748-6011, fax (201) 748-6008, or online at <http://www.wiley.com/go/permissions>.

Trademarks: Wiley, For Dummies, the Dummies Man logo, Dummies.com, Making Everything Easier, and related trade dress are trademarks or registered trademarks of John Wiley & Sons, Inc. and may not be used without written permission. All other trademarks are the property of their respective owners. John Wiley & Sons, Inc. is not associated with any product or vendor mentioned in this book.

LIMIT OF LIABILITY/DISCLAIMER OF WARRANTY: WHILE THE PUBLISHER AND AUTHORS HAVE USED THEIR BEST EFFORTS IN PREPARING THIS WORK, THEY MAKE NO REPRESENTATIONS OR WARRANTIES WITH RESPECT TO THE ACCURACY OR COMPLETENESS OF THE CONTENTS OF THIS WORK AND SPECIFICALLY DISCLAIM ALL WARRANTIES, INCLUDING WITHOUT LIMITATION ANY IMPLIED WARRANTIES OF MERCHANTABILITY OR FITNESS FOR A PARTICULAR PURPOSE. NO WARRANTY MAY BE CREATED OR EXTENDED BY SALES REPRESENTATIVES, WRITTEN SALES MATERIALS OR PROMOTIONAL STATEMENTS FOR THIS WORK. THE FACT THAT AN ORGANIZATION, WEBSITE, OR PRODUCT IS REFERRED TO IN THIS WORK AS A CITATION AND/OR POTENTIAL SOURCE OF FURTHER INFORMATION DOES NOT MEAN THAT THE PUBLISHER AND AUTHORS ENDORSE THE INFORMATION OR SERVICES THE ORGANIZATION, WEBSITE, OR PRODUCT MAY PROVIDE OR RECOMMENDATIONS IT MAY MAKE. THIS WORK IS SOLD WITH THE UNDERSTANDING THAT THE PUBLISHER IS NOT ENGAGED IN RENDERING PROFESSIONAL SERVICES. THE ADVICE AND STRATEGIES CONTAINED HEREIN MAY NOT BE SUITABLE FOR YOUR SITUATION. YOU SHOULD CONSULT WITH A SPECIALIST WHERE APPROPRIATE. FURTHER, READERS SHOULD BE AWARE THAT WEBSITES LISTED IN THIS WORK MAY HAVE CHANGED OR DISAPPEARED BETWEEN WHEN THIS WORK WAS WRITTEN AND WHEN IT IS READ. NEITHER THE PUBLISHER NOR AUTHORS SHALL BE LIABLE FOR ANY LOSS OF PROFIT OR ANY OTHER COMMERCIAL DAMAGES, INCLUDING BUT NOT LIMITED TO SPECIAL, INCIDENTAL, CONSEQUENTIAL, OR OTHER DAMAGES.

For general information on our other products and services, please contact our Customer Care Department within the U.S. at 877-762-2974, outside the U.S. at 317-572-3993, or fax 317-572-4002. For technical support, please visit <https://hub.wiley.com/community/support/dummies>.

Wiley publishes in a variety of print and electronic formats and by print-on-demand. Some material included with standard print versions of this book may not be included in e-books or in print-on-demand. If this book refers to media such as a CD or DVD that is not included in the version you purchased, you may download this material at <http://booksupport.wiley.com>. For more information about Wiley products, visit www.wiley.com.

Library of Congress Control Number: 2023937593

ISBN 978-1-394-16498-1 (pbk); ISBN 978-1-394-16499-8 (ePDF);
ISBN 978-1-394-16500-1 (epub)

Contents at a Glance

Introduction	1
Part 1: Getting Started on RV Vacations.	7
CHAPTER 1: All the Best Reasons to Take an RV Vacation	9
CHAPTER 2: Deciding Where and When to Go	23
CHAPTER 3: Managing Your Money	39
CHAPTER 4: Eating on the Road	55
CHAPTER 5: Finding Campgrounds and Boondocking	79
Part 2: Exploring the East.	107
CHAPTER 6: The Coast of Maine: Lobster Land	109
CHAPTER 7: Western New York: Cooperstown to Niagara Falls	131
CHAPTER 8: The Blue Ridge Mountains: Skyline Drive and Blue Ridge Parkway.	153
Part 3: Seeing Sights in the South	177
CHAPTER 9: The Gulf Coast: Tallahassee to New Orleans	179
CHAPTER 10: The Natchez Trace: Natchez to Nashville	207
Part 4: Meandering through Mid-America.	231
CHAPTER 11: The Heart of Ohio: A Circle around Circleville	233
CHAPTER 12: The Ozarks and Branson: Hot Springs to Springfield	259
Part 5: Wandering the Wild West	283
CHAPTER 13: Montana and Wyoming: Tracking Buffalo Bill	285
CHAPTER 14: New Mexico: Billy the Kid Meets E.T.	315
CHAPTER 15: California's Central Coast: Malibu to Monterey	345
CHAPTER 16: Route 66: OK to L.A.	375
CHAPTER 17: The Oregon Coast: California to Washington	403
Part 6: The Part of Tens.	433
CHAPTER 18: Ten Cool Factory Tours	435
CHAPTER 19: Ten Zany Museums	443
Index	453

Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION	1
About This Book	1
Foolish Assumptions	3
Icons Used in This Book	4
Beyond the Book	4
Where to Go from Here	5
 PART 1: GETTING STARTED ON RV VACATIONS	 7
CHAPTER 1: All the Best Reasons to Take an RV Vacation	9
Who's RVing These Days?	10
Ignoring RVer stereotypes	10
Noting the interest from various groups	10
Counting the Benefits of RV Travel	11
Containing costs	12
Enjoying maximum convenience	13
Controlling the destination	13
Finding your rhythm on the road	14
Having room for extras	15
Being close to events	15
Easing mobility issues	15
Bringing your pets for free	15
Keeping a clean living space	16
Embracing the RV Lifestyle	16
Trading traditional living space for an RV	16
Working and staying connected on the road	17
Adding variety to your RV stops	17
RVing as an eco-friendly alternative	18
RVing as a kid-friendly way to travel	18
Finding Temptations for Everybody	19
Reaping the Essential Rewards of RVing	20
Understanding the Romance of the Road	21
The ultimate Airstream romance rally	21
Romancing the Badlands	22

CHAPTER 2: Deciding Where and When to Go	23
Revealing the Secrets of the Seasons	24
Selecting summer for your RV jaunt	24
Watching out for winter	24
Opting for RV trips in spring and fall	25
Scoping Out Your Perfect RV Vacation	27
Taking the road less traveled	29
Creating an RV itinerary all your own	29
Show Us Yours	37
CHAPTER 3: Managing Your Money	39
Add Up the Savings When You Go by RV	39
Calculating the Cost of Essentials	42
Figuring the cost of gasoline or diesel fuel	42
Charging electric vehicles costs money, too	44
Planning out your campsites	46
Saving on Attractions and Activities	50
Finding city passes	50
Picking up passes for parks	50
Loving the local entertainment	51
Testing the Waters: RV Rentals	51
Traditional rental companies	52
Private RV-sharing rentals	53
CHAPTER 4: Eating on the Road	55
Setting Up Your Rolling Kitchen	56
Getting Ready to Roll	57
Keeping it simple	58
Taking only the appliances you use	60
RV doodads and helpers	61
Shopping for Food	63
Where did my grocery store go?	63
Recognizing national chains and their aliases	64
Big-box hypermarket stores	65
Membership warehouse chains	67
Farmers markets	67
Cooking Adventurously	69
Cast-iron cooking	69
Grilling and chilling	71
Using a portable grill	71

Practicing safe grilling	72
On the road again, and again, and again	73
Food spoilage and contamination	75
Dealing with pests (the flying and crawling kind)	76
CHAPTER 5: Finding Campgrounds and Boondocking	79
Knowing the Big Names in Campgrounds	80
Recognizing national campground chains	80
Camping associations and networks	82
Using campground apps and directories	85
Comparing Public and Private Campgrounds	85
Assessing the amenities	87
Scoring a season-sensitive campsite	89
Making reservations and paying	89
Choosing the Right Site	90
Embracing Boondocking	92
Understanding a 12-volt kind of life	94
Foregoing some electricity drains	95
Water, water everywhere (or not)	97
Finding a safe place to stop	98
Locating specific parking-lot spots along your route	101
Ah, wilderness! Looking into dispersed camping	102
Making Good Use of Government Land	103
Federal agencies that offer camping opportunities	104
Getting the campsite you want	105
PART 2: EXPLORING THE EAST	107
CHAPTER 6: The Coast of Maine: Lobster Land	109
Planning Ahead for a Maine Stay	110
Reserving a campground and packing	110
Allotting sufficient time for your visit	111
Driving the Coast of Maine	111
Great stops north of Kittery along U.S. 1	113
Around the Portland and Freeport areas	113
North and east of Freeport	114
Rockland and surroundings	115
Rockport, Camden, and on northward	115
Finally, to Bar Harbor	116
Must-See Maine Attractions	116

More Cool Maine Activities.	120
Camping Along Maine's Roads	122
Finding Good Eats in Maine	124
Lobster central	125
More than just lobster: Markets and meals.	128
Maine supermarkets	128
Finding Maine's Farmers Markets	128
Fast Facts for Maine Travelers.	129
CHAPTER 7: Western New York: Cooperstown to Niagara Falls.	131
Planning Ahead for a Western New York Tour	132
Meeting the campground and weather challenges	132
Dealing with unique issues of the drive	133
Engaging the New York phone apps.	133
Taking the Drive through New York	134
Leaving Cooperstown and heading north	134
Moving on to Syracuse and Ithaca	134
Heading toward Corning and back north.	135
Turning south again and meandering	135
Exploring west from Jamestown and back north	136
Finally, turning toward Buffalo	137
Must-See Western New York Attractions	139
More Cool Things to See and Do in Western New York.	144
Our Favorite Western New York Campgrounds	147
Good Western New York Eats	150
Fast Facts about Western New York.	152
CHAPTER 8: The Blue Ridge Mountains: Skyline Drive and Blue Ridge Parkway.	153
Planning for Your Skyline and Blue Ridge Trip	154
Minding your seasons and your daily schedule	154
Preparing to enjoy history, nature, and recreational activities	155
Driving Skyline Drive and Blue Ridge Parkway	156
Starting off in Front Royal.	157
Picking up the parkway in Virginia	160
Making it through the ups and downs	160
Heading into and through North Carolina.	161
Finding the end of the parkway at Great Smoky Mountains National Park	162
Must-See Skyline and Blue Ridge Attractions	164

More Cool Things to See and Do along Blue Ridge Parkway	166
Our Favorite Campgrounds along Skyline Drive and Blue Ridge Parkway	168
Shenandoah National Park campgrounds	169
Blue Ridge Parkway campgrounds	170
Great Smoky Mountains National Park campgrounds	172
Good Eatin' along the Blue Ridge Route	173
Shopping along Blue Ridge Parkway	174
Blue Ridge Fast Facts	176
PART 3: SEEING SIGHTS IN THE SOUTH	177
CHAPTER 9: The Gulf Coast: Tallahassee to New Orleans	179
Planning Ahead for Your Gulf Coast Drive	180
Driving the Gulf Coast	182
Fabulous Florida history	182
Starting the Florida Panhandle trek	183
Traveling west from Apalachicola	184
Making your way to Pensacola	186
Crossing Alabama	187
Moseying across Mississippi	189
Last stop: Louisiana	190
Weekend wandering	190
Must-See Attractions along the Gulf Coast	195
More Cool Things to See and Do along the Gulf Coast	198
Our Favorite Campgrounds along the Gulf	200
Good Eats along the Gulf Coast	202
Gulf Coast markets	203
Seafood markets	204
Snacks and full-meal deals along the Gulf	205
Fast Facts for Gulf Coast Travelers	206
CHAPTER 10: The Natchez Trace: Natchez to Nashville	207
Planning Your Natchez Trace Adventure	208
Favoring early spring and fall	208
Taking it easy	208
Driving the Natchez Trace	210
Characteristics of the route	210
Taking in the first 20 miles	212
Noting the history that runs deep	212
Making it to and through Vicksburg	213

The Jackson interruption at milepost 87	214
Rejoining the parkway's attractions	214
History and celebrity near Tupelo	215
Crossing into Alabama	216
Ending your drive in Tennessee	217
Must-See Natchez Trace Attractions	217
More Cool Things You Find along the Natchez Trace	220
Sleeping along the Natchez Trace	222
Good Eats along the Natchez Trace	224
Enjoying veggies and drinks Southern-style	225
Minding your carbs and portions	225
Finding fun regional cooking	225
Stocking the pantry for your trace trek	227
Fast Facts	229

PART 4: MEANDERING THROUGH MID-AMERICA 231

CHAPTER 11: The Heart of Ohio: A Circle around Circleville233

Planning Ahead for an Ohio Excursion	234
Watching for weather and traffic	234
Reserving a spot and packing	235
Touring the Buckeye State	236
Heading from Dayton to Cincinnati	236
Cruising along the Ohio River	238
Turning toward Columbus and Zanesville	238
Appreciating Amish country	239
Exploring Zoar and on to Cleveland	239
Enjoying a couple of side trips	240
Must-See Ohio Attractions	241
More Cool Things to See and Do in Ohio	248
Visit neighborhoods and nature	248
Discover famous Ohio folks	249
Weekend wanders	251
Campgrounds in Ohio	251
Good Eats along the Ohio Route	253
Chili, sauerkraut, and Amish cooking	253
Snacks of chocolate, cheese, and ice cream	255
Finding Ohio's supermarkets and farmers markets	255
Shopping along the Ohio route	256
Fast Facts for the Ohio Route	257

CHAPTER 12: The Ozarks and Branson: Hot Springs to Springfield . . .	259
Planning and Packing for the Ozarks	260
Making the reservations you must	261
Packing the right clothing and gear	261
Anticipating Ozarks driving challenges.	261
Exploring Ozarks Country in Your RV	262
Starting at Hot Springs	262
Hotfooting it hill-ward.	264
Turning west from Harrison and meandering.	264
Heading east and north to Branson and Springfield	265
Circling back to Arkansas	266
Taking alternate routes.	266
Must-See Ozarks Attractions	267
More Cool Things to See and Do in the Ozarks.	272
Our Favorite Ozarks Campgrounds	275
Good Eatin' in the Ozarks.	277
Dining Ozarks style	278
Farmers markets	280
Ozarks supermarkets	280
Fast Facts for Your Ozarks Vacation	281
 PART 5: WANDERING THE WILD WEST	 283
CHAPTER 13: Montana and Wyoming: Tracking Buffalo Bill.	285
Planning your Montana–Wyoming Trip	286
Prepping for your Yellowstone visit	286
Gearing up for potentially bad roads	288
Packing and taking along preventatives.	289
Driving Buffalo Bill's Montana and Wyoming	289
Trekking from Billings to Yellowstone.	291
Heading for Cody and on east.	291
Enjoying the charm of Buffalo	293
Completing the circuit.	293
Alternative weekend wanderings	294
Must-See Montana and Wyoming Attractions.	294
More Cool Things to See and Do in Montana and Wyoming	302
Camping Out in the Wild West.	304
Camping in Yellowstone National Park	307
Booking with the right operator	308
RV size does matter.	308

Good Eatin' in the Wild West	310
Finding a few good restaurants	310
Stocking the pantry and fridge	311
Fast Facts about the Buffalo Bill Route	313
CHAPTER 14: New Mexico: Billy the Kid Meets E.T.	315
Planning Ahead for a New Mexico Jaunt	316
Keeping seasonal weather in mind	316
Packing smart and allotting time	317
Exploring the Land of Enchantment	317
Entering Billy the Kid country	319
Exploring the atom, the air, and outer space	320
Following Billy the Kid National Scenic Byway	321
Moving on to bear and alien encounters	322
Getting back to Billy the Kid	322
Completing the route	323
Weekend wonder	323
Must-See Attractions in New Mexico	323
More Cool Things to See and Do in New Mexico	334
Camping in Southern New Mexico	337
Good Eatin' — New Mexico style	340
Some like it hot (or not)	340
Finding good local food	341
Stocking the pantry	342
Fast Facts for the New Mexico Route	344
CHAPTER 15: California's Central Coast: Malibu to Monterey	345
Planning for the California Coast	346
Driving California's Central Coast	347
Startin' your surfin' safari	349
'Ventura Highway in the sunshine'	349
Finding Neverland, a bit of Denmark, and fields of flowers	350
Searching out mission bells and barbecue	351
Rolling toward Big Sur	353
Coming up to the castle	354
Entering Monterey and Steinbeck country	355
Making a weekend jaunt	356
Must-See Attractions along the Central Coast	356
More Cool Things to See and Do in Central California	361
Sleeping along the California Coast	363

Good Eats along the Central California Coast	367
Santa Maria barbecue	368
Finding a supermarket	370
Specialty markets and meals	371
Fast Facts for Coastal California	373
CHAPTER 16: Route 66: OK to L.A.	375
Planning Ahead for Your Route 66 Kicks	376
Checking out the seasonal elements	377
Reserving camping spots and packing	378
Plotting Your Route 66 Itinerary	379
Driving Route 66 in Oklahoma	380
Traipsing through Texas	383
Taking on the New Mexico stretch	384
Arriving and thriving in Arizona	386
Taking it easy and looking ahead	386
Going for the grand view and Route 66 guardians	387
Camping near London Bridge	388
Ending the trek in California	388
And yes, another Route 66 museum	388
Must-See Mother Road Attractions	390
More Cool Things to See and Do on Route 66	394
Sleeping along the Mother Road	396
Good Eats on Route 66	399
Fast Facts for the Route 66 Drive	402
CHAPTER 17: The Oregon Coast: California to Washington	403
Planning Ahead for Your Oregon Trip	404
Adapting with the weather	404
Bringing the extras you need	405
Driving Coastal Oregon	405
Choosing the route direction	406
Heading northward from California	408
From Brookings to Gold Beach	408
Humbug! But not bah	409
From Bandon and berry bogs to Coos Bay	409
Onward — North Bend to Cape Perpetua	411
Making it from Yaquina Bay to Depoe Bay	412
Halfway to the North Pole and on to Tillamook	413
From Cannon Beach to Columbia's banks	414

Crossing the Columbia into Washington	415
Taking a weekend coastal drive	415
Must-See Oregon Coast Attractions	415
More Cool Things to See and Do in Coastal Oregon	420
Camping along the Oregon Drive	424
Good Eatin' on the Oregon Coast	427
Finding a fun local haunt	428
Regional specialties	428
Oregon cheese, please!	429
Supermarkets	430
Farmers markets	430
Fast Facts for the Oregon Route	431
PART 6: THE PART OF TENS	433
CHAPTER 18: Ten Cool Factory Tours	435
Ben & Jerry's Ice Cream (Waterbury, Vermont)	435
Original American Kazoos (Eden, New York)	436
Crayola Crayons (Easton, Pennsylvania)	437
FAST Fiberglass Molds (Sparta, Wisconsin)	437
Jelly Belly Jellybeans (Fairfield, California)	438
Louisville Sluggers (Louisville, Kentucky)	439
PEZ® Candy (Orange, Connecticut)	439
TABASCO® Sauce (Avery Island, Louisiana)	440
Winnebago RVs (Forest City, Iowa)	440
Virtual Factory Tours with Mr. Rogers	441
CHAPTER 19: Ten Zany Museums	443
Harland Sanders Café/Museum (Corbin, Kentucky)	443
International Circus Hall of Fame (Peru, Indiana)	444
International Cryptozoology Museum (Portland, Maine)	445
International UFO Museum and Research Center (Roswell, New Mexico)	446
Miss Laura's Social Club (Fort Smith, Arkansas)	447
Musical Instrument Museum (Phoenix, Arizona)	448
National Museum of Funeral History (Houston, Texas)	448
Rancho Obi-Wan (Petaluma, California)	449
SPAM® Museum (Austin, Minnesota)	449
The Super Museum (Metropolis, Illinois)	450
INDEX	453

Introduction

Congratulations! After seeing all those motorhomes and travel trailers rolling down the highway and wondering what driving one would be like, you've decided to find out for yourself. Maybe you've had the road trip of a lifetime percolating in the back of your mind for decades and just never got around to actually taking it. Maybe it's a bucket list of "100 Places to See Before I Turn 30." Or 50. Or 70. Or maybe it's just a random itch to discover some new places over a long weekend. Whether you want to get away for the weekend, vacation for a few weeks, host the world's greatest tailgating parties, or hit the road full-time to fulfill a lifelong dream, it's easy to do in an RV.

About This Book

RV Vacations For Dummies, 7th Edition, is the book you need after you've already picked out, bought, or rented a trailer or motorhome. Now it's finally time to contemplate some of the many routes and destinations you can discover by traveling in your RV.



REMEMBER

Our companion book, *RVs and Campers For Dummies* (Wiley), tells you all about choosing, buying, owning, and operating a trailer or motorhome. If you're hunting for that kind of detailed information, we humbly suggest you procure a copy.

In this book, we tell you about places with no airports — places off the interstate exits you won't, or can't, see by traveling any other way than by land vehicle. You find the book organized this way:

- » **Parts 1:** If you're inexperienced, you should be armed with some specialized information that only RVers need. So, the first part of this book helps you figure out when (and where) to go, strategies for managing your money, and how to find and stock the right stuff for eating well on the road. You also get practical advice about discovering the perfect stopping spots for you and your rig — informed by our own experiences after living with various types of RVs for travel, work, and play.
- » **Parts 2 through 5:** The meat and potatoes of this volume are the chapters you find in these parts. Throughout our suggested travel itineraries — 12 in all — you get a look at some all-time favorite routes that you might hear about around the campfire: Route 66, the Blue Ridge Parkway, and the Pacific Coast Highway. We believe these treks through the U.S. explore the most diverse,

beautiful, and exciting travel venue in the world. (We stick with the Lower 48 in this book. With more than 3 million square miles, that should keep you occupied until we come up with an Alaskan, Hawaiian, and Canadian sequel.)

For each RV itinerary, we suggest the roads to take and point out the best sights, fun spots, interesting museums, local shops, and more. We highlight some of our favorite campgrounds, and because you've got your own kitchen on board, we also try to steer you to places where you can pick up local produce, regional farm-to-table foods, or one-

of-a-kind carryout meals. Each chapter also has a "Fast Facts" quick reference section where you find info ranging from fuel taxes to speed limits, as well as numbers to call if you get in trouble on the road.

- » **Part 6:** Check out this part when you're looking for more places to go. The Part of Tens highlights attractions (museums and factory tours) beyond the itineraries in this book.



REMEMBER

All travel information is subject to change at any time. This state of flux is always true for prices and operating dates and times, and it's *especially* true in this post-COVID-shutdown world. While we really did contact every business mentioned in this book before press time, we strongly urge you to e-mail or call ahead to confirm details when making your travel plans. And *never* just trust a website, particularly if you're planning your whole day around getting to a single, special attraction or restaurant.

To keep this book from being longer and less understandable than the unabridged version of *War and Peace* (in the original Russian), we use these abbreviations for road names in the driving chapters:

- » **I-#:** Denotes an interstate highway, which is usually a high-speed divided roadway with no traffic lights or stop signs, no driveways or side roads, and a limited number of exits and on-ramps.
- » **U.S. #:** Refers to roads in the U.S. Numbered Highway System. These are often considered secondary to interstates, but some are built to interstate highway standards. U.S. roads comprise an older federal highway system that predates the Eisenhower administration's interstate system. They can be 2- or 4-lane roads, divided or not divided. And they may have side roads, driveways, traffic lights, and stop signs.
- » **SR #:** Indicates a state road or state route. In most states, a state road is actually designated by the state's abbreviation (for example, NY 30 is New York state road 30; IA 25 is Iowa state road 25, and so on). Other states just use SR, particularly on their maps. Once you get to state roads, all bets are off on uniformity.
- » **CR #:** Signifies a county road.

In our campground lists, we include general pricing information to help you decide where to camp. The following system of dollar signs is a guideline only and denotes the range of prices for one night in a campground:

Designation	What it means in dollars
\$	\$25 or less
\$\$	\$26 to \$50
\$\$\$	\$51 to \$75
\$\$\$\$	\$76 to \$100
\$\$\$\$\$	\$101 or more

Foolish Assumptions

As we wrote this book, we made some assumptions about you and your needs as an RVer. Here’s what we think might be true about you. You may be:

- » A brand-new RVer hunting for some inspiration about places to visit in your new vacation cabin on wheels. Whether you buy your own rig, or just rent one for a single trip, your next step is to decide where to go.
- » An inexperienced RVer looking for ideas to help you plan your future adventures.
- » A veteran RVer looking for new experiences, new attractions, or new roads to travel.
- » Someone hunting for a book that clues you in on trip itineraries to places you may not have known or thought about before.

And you’re *not* looking for a full-blown directory that provides detailed lists of every single campground, attraction, photo op, or restaurant on the route. If you fit any of these criteria, *RV Vacations For Dummies* gives you the information you’re seeking!

Icons Used in This Book

In the margins of this book are helpful icons intended to focus attention on certain kinds of information. Here's what the icons mean:



BARGAIN
ALERT

This icon points out bargains and money-saving tips for your RV vacation, so you don't quickly blow through your hard-earned simoleons.



KID
FRIENDLY

This icon lets you know when something special is available for the younger set. It helps cut down on "Are we there yet?" syndrome.



REMEMBER

This icon highlights information worth taking note of.



TECHNICAL
STUFF

This icon points out interesting details or information that's not necessarily essential to understanding the subject at hand. If you're in a hurry, you can skim over anything marked this way.



TIP

For hints, tips, or insider advice to make your trip run smoother, look for this icon. The real point of any travel guide is to serve as one gigantic tip from cover to cover, but this icon singles out nuggets of information that may be new to you.



WARNING

Accompanying this icon are special alerts for RVers, whether you face a low bridge ahead or a difficult parking situation. We probably learned it the hard way, so do as we say, not as we did.

Beyond the Book

There's never enough room to cover everything in a book like this. To help fill in the whole picture, we've rendered up some more tips for readying your RV for travel. To access the Cheat Sheet for this book, visit www.dummies.com, enter **RV Vacations For Dummies Cheat Sheet** in the Search box, and click the link that appears in the search results. There we pass along a little more background on some of our tour locations or favorite sites, offer questions to ask yourself when choosing to purchase an RV, and more.

Where to Go from Here

There are a couple ways to use *RV Vacations For Dummies* as a reference guide. You can start at the first page and read our dazzling prose all the way through to the end — we always recommend buying a copy for every bathroom. Or, if you're a more experienced RVer, you can flip straight to a travel route that intrigues you and check out our recommended destinations and campgrounds. This way, you can move from chapter to chapter, picking and choosing information that interests you, sort of like the book version of an all-you-can-eat sushi bar. **Remember:** The table of contents and index will always help you find that particular piece of information you're looking for.

If you want to interact with us, that's great! We love hearing about readers' own RV experiences, your trips, your escapades (good and bad), and best of all, your special discoveries on the road. Visit our Facebook page at www.facebook.com/rvsfordummies for updates, videos, tips, tricks, and anything else we can think of.

Ready? It's time to bask in the freedom of the open road! With an RV, home will always be where you park it.

1

Getting Started on RV Vacations

IN THIS PART . . .

Get to know the many benefits of vacationing by RV and why it's perfect for *you*.

Choose the perfect time of year to visit the best places in America in your RV.

Create a realistic travel budget for your RV adventures.

Equip your personal chuckwagon so you can chow down on the move.

Select the perfect campgrounds along the road, from national chains to national parks and chain store parking lots.

- » Meeting the RV crowd
- » Realizing the travel advantages
- » Living and working your way
- » Making your travels an adventure for everyone
- » Looking beyond the daily pleasures of RVing
- » Taking romance on the road

Chapter **1**

All the Best Reasons to Take an RV Vacation

You can find all kinds of reasons to support the idea that traveling and vacationing in recreational vehicles (RVs) is more convenient and pleasant than other methods. Perhaps, as you read this book, you can come up with some of your own ideas to add to our list of the best reasons to go by RV when you travel.

In reality, there are just as many different RV lifestyles as there are RVers. We often take RV vacations just to spend time alone with each other; that's important for every couple. But the world is also filled with single people who crave solitude and families who crave togetherness; they're all hunting for a new vacation experience or challenge.

In this chapter, we offer an overview of RVing as a wonderful transportation option, including its benefits (cost, convenience, control, and so on) and its unique adaptability for living and discovering the world around you. There's a special romantic attraction for the open road that comes with vacationing in an RV, and we'll give you lots of ways you may discover that remarkable kind of romance for yourself.

Who's RVing These Days?

When we discovered RVing, we loved how perfectly it fit our personalities and desire to live a slower, downsized lifestyle. We were surprised by how comfortable, convenient, and liberating this type of travel is. And we soon began to savor the rewards of having new adventures and meeting new people around every turn.

Ignoring RVer stereotypes



REMEMBER

Sadly, clichés about RVers turn off some people who've never experienced this kind of travel. If your only image is of Cousin Eddie in *National Lampoon's Christmas Vacation*, dressed in a bathrobe with a beer in his hand, emptying his Winnebago's sewer tank into the neighborhood storm drain, try to set aside that impression.

You may think that RVers are mostly aging, melancholy retirees who sit around smoldering campfires sipping twice-baked Folger's coffee or Bud Lights while swapping tedious tales of their latest mechanical breakdowns and comparing regional prescription drug prices. Or that RVers routinely caravan to group-gawk at the local cultural hot spot — say, the Museum of Frontier Spleen Pills — and then rush off to the closest all-you-can-eat buffet. Although plenty of people enjoy doing the kitschy stuff (which can have its merits), they make up a tiny sliver of the whole RVing pie.

According to the RV Industry Association (<http://www.rvia.org>), which keeps track of these things, 67 million American travelers planned on taking an RV trip in 2023. That's a sizable platoon of folks — almost 40 percent of all Americans. The top reasons given include a chance to explore the outdoors and the ability to work or attend school remotely from almost anywhere in the world.

Noting the interest from various groups

The biggest interest in RVing these days comes from younger travelers. Forty-nine percent of Generation Z and 48 percent of millennials planned to take an RV trip in 2023. Their buying intentions were also higher, with 41 percent of Generation Z and 35 percent of millennials planning to buy an RV during the following year.

RVing isn't just a passing whim, either. Among people who already own an RV, half planned to buy a different rig in the next year. That was up 14 percent over the previous year, in what was already a massive increase in RV ownership in the U.S. after the COVID pandemic lockdowns.

OUR OWN JOURNEY TO THE JOYS OF RVing

We've always loved to travel: Our life together began with a 10-day driving and sightseeing trip as we moved all our worldly possessions to California for school. We started vacationing overseas in our late 20s, just as soon as our paychecks made it possible. Our first truly major trip together was a 10-day guided tour of Egypt and its most stunning antiquities, taken aboard planes, buses, boats, taxis, and trains. We convinced ourselves we'd never get the chance to take such a trip again, so we had to see *everything*. Every single day began before sunup and ended at midnight, leaving us as wrung out as the dishcloth at a Chinese *smörgåsbord*. Instead of loving our trip of a lifetime, we took hundreds of photos just so we could enjoy the trip *after* we got home. That was typical of our trips then — no matter where we went for vacation, we were almost always guilty of trying to see and do too much.

A few years later, during a grueling three-week vacation, we were exhausted the whole time, and it didn't help that we both caught the flu, while several crew members on a ship we'd been on had come down with hepatitis and had to be quarantined. Two weeks into the trip, going home looked very attractive. Late one particularly miserable evening, Alice put into words what we both were thinking: "I wish we could just go home for a day or two, just to recharge our batteries!"

Years later, that seems like the ideal praise for RVing: You can always go home for a while, because you've always got a bit of home with you. Every night you're wrapped up in its comforts, and if things come unglued for any reason, you have the freedom to take a couple days, park somewhere nice, and just chill out. You can indeed recharge your batteries, just as you would at home. And *then* it's on to Glacier National Park!

As RV rental options become more common, it's easier than ever to discover the RV lifestyle without jumping in and investing in an expensive trailer or motorhome (see Chapter 3). Something we've noticed on the road in the last ten years is the dramatic increase in the number of international travelers who rent an RV and hit the road to discover "the real America." It's not unusual anymore to walk past campfires in RV parks at night and hear conversations in Spanish, German, Arabic, Russian, Chinese, or Japanese.

Counting the Benefits of RV Travel

Freedom. If you want to sum up RV travel in one word, that's it: *freedom*. Anyone who's ever been barked at by a flight attendant for running to the bathroom knows why that word has meaning, because when you're flying, you're giving up

a great deal of personal autonomy, not to mention personal space. To an airline, you're often treated like troublesome cargo, whereas in an RV, no TSA agent is going to paw through your luggage and demand you throw away your shampoo bottle, along with the nail clippers and contact lens solution you packed.

And if you bought this book, you've probably at least toyed with the dream of RV ownership, so the fun of the lifestyle is something you've already thought about. But a few obvious — and some not so obvious — benefits of traveling by RV may not have occurred to you.

Containing costs

Saving money comes down to control, the control RVing gives you over food and lodging costs, and yes, even over fuel costs. It's the kind of control that just isn't possible when you're flying to a destination and then staying in hotels and eating in restaurants for every meal. RV vacations won't strain your travel budget to the screaming point. An RV trip costs half of what a typical hotel-and-plane trip will set you back, and a third less than driving your car and staying at hotels.

Have you ever been on vacation at an all-inclusive hotel or on a cruise ship, or bought some other “package” vacation, and realized you're paying for all sorts of things that don't particularly interest you? You don't care about the 18-hole championship golf course; you don't want a full English breakfast with baked beans, kippers, and black pudding at 7:00 in the morning; you get nauseated by the heat in a Scandinavian sauna; the “entertainment” in the lounge is anything but entertaining; and you don't want any of the “complimentary” snacks in your room. But you're paying for all these things, and many more besides.



REMEMBER

On an RV trip, you're paying for what matters to *you*, period. You're in complete control of the campgrounds you stay at, the food you eat, the places you see, and the things you do. You can *boondock* (camp without external water, power, or sewer hookups) for free on a piece of federal wilderness land, or you can pony up for a luxury RV resort with its own Scandinavian sauna, and to hell with that nausea. You can take in the entertainment you enjoy anywhere along the route. Without even thinking about it, really, an RV trip ends up being completely tailored to what you want to pay for and experience.



TIP

Check out Chapter 3, where we talk in depth about managing your vacation money. In that chapter, you discover the many ways to save money on an RV trip, and why RVing is the best vacation choice for families on tight budgets.

Enjoying maximum convenience

The little things really do matter; where travel is concerned, they create either a placid experience or an anxious one.

When you're traveling and you or the kids need to use the restroom, it can be a real hassle, and a thoroughly unpleasant ordeal, in airplanes and trains, in gas stations and fast-food places, or, worse, in a Porta Potty. That one alone can make you long for the nearest shrubbery. You may love street fairs and wine festivals and historical reenactments, but as the hours pass, you can start to dread having to "go." The relief of being able to slip into your own home on wheels and use your own bathroom, as well as grab a drink or change your shoes, is hard to overstate.

You may contend that RVing puts you at the mercy of traffic jams, but that's a tough argument to make with a straight face to anyone who's been parked on a runway in an Airbus 330 for five hours with no air-conditioning in the cabin. At any rate, on the rare occasions when jams and roadblocks occur, you can deal. We were once trapped on the highway in Arizona in a 14-hour traffic stoppage caused by a chemical spill. We began to feel downright guilty over our comfort level with an onboard kitchen and bathroom, compared to everyone else scrounging for stale crackers in the glove compartment or running for the bushes.

Controlling the destination

Freedom translates to being in control of your own direction and destiny. If you like to go with the crowd on a trip, do it. Go ahead and join the throngs for July 4 at Mount Rushmore, the Albuquerque balloon festival, or the Bonnaroo music festival. In a crowded situation — when it's difficult to get simple things like a seat in a restaurant or a bed for the night — you can never be more comfortable than in an RV, where you've got both at your disposal. (No seat is better for a NASCAR event than one of the infield RV parking spaces in the middle of the track!)

On the other hand, if you like out-of-the-way places — if you want to go into the backcountry and see Promontory Summit, where the last golden spike in the transcontinental railroad was driven — getting there in an RV ensures that you're far more comfortable than you'd be in a car. You can even choose to boondock nearby, staying the night and watching the stars come out in the Utah sky. If out-of-the-way exploring is your thing, RVing should be your ticket there and back again.



TIP

Not every getaway has to be a two-week expedition. The U.S. is loaded with national, state, and county parks, historical preservation sites, conservation areas, famous landmarks, festivals, shows, sporting events, and lots more. Consider the aspect of vacation flexibility. Loads of people dream of faraway destinations while ignoring the wonder and excitement of what's in their own backyard. Your state doubtless has a tourism board that publishes annual guides to give you vacation ideas. An RV lets you visit places you've never seen just an hour or two away, and it becomes your own private hotel room and refuge.

Finding your rhythm on the road

RV travel can help you leave the rush-rush of the everyday world behind the minute you turn the key in the ignition. But it's a good idea to *know thyself*, as the saying goes, when making your travel plans. Some people who travel in RVs consider driving 250 miles a day to be enough; you're on your own schedule, and it's time to mellow out. Others take 600 miles or more in stride. Your route, days allotted for travel, and temperament all come into play when you get on the road.

It's also good to know your traveling companion's taste or tolerance for road miles before you hit the asphalt. For example, after two major knee surgeries, Alice can no longer handle endless hours of riding in our SUV, where the legroom isn't much better than a car. So, we began breaking up long trips, taking a few more days on the road and a few more breaks during the day.



REMEMBER

Of course, if it's just a question of staying fresh, you can break a long trip into legs that vary in distance and time. Think in terms of short, long, and medium stretches of travel for each day on the road. You usually have so much to do the night before the journey and the morning of departure that making the first day's ride a short one makes sense. Go long the next day. Again, RVing expands and contracts to fit your temperament and your needs. Planning your travel tempo can eliminate the urge to rush — *you're* in control, not anybody else.



TIP

When you're making your travel plans, pay attention to speed limits. California has a 55 mph speed limit statewide for all trucks and other vehicles towing trailers or cars. Speed limits do impact the number of hours it takes to finish your miles for the day. For example, following historic U.S. 41 to Florida is going to take more time than traveling I-75, but it's very pleasant additional time.

You'd be surprised at how quickly you can still get to your destination when you choose state roads or vintage "through the towns" federal roads like old Highway