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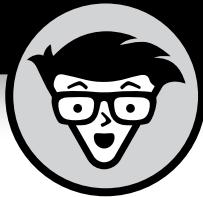
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Plan your stops at  
RV-friendly campgrounds

**Christopher Hodapp**  
**Alice Von Kannon**

Authors of *RVs & Campers For Dummies*





# RV Vacations

7th Edition

by Christopher Hodapp and  
Alice Von Kannon

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## RV Vacations For Dummies®, 7th Edition

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# Introduction

**C**ongratulations! 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.



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](http://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](http://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.

## IN THIS CHAPTER

- » 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.



REMEMBER

## Ignoring RVer stereotypes

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