



THE BEST

FREE ←

CAMPING



AND EVERYTHING YOU
NEED TO KNOW ABOUT
BOONDOCKING

Written by Drivin' & Vibin'
Published by RV Masterclass

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This book is written to help you understand the art of boondocking and free camping. It's your responsibility to verify the campsite access and legality on your own.

Free camping spots often change status over the years. While we keep this book updated, we can't guarantee that all the spots are currently free or accessible.

The most important lesson: verify spots by multiple sources (many of which we'll cover in this book).

LET'S DISCUSS AND ANALYZE

SECTION 1



We'll discuss the many types of free camping, the legality of it, and the ways to find it.

01

SECTION 2



We'll help you understand the tools you need for free camping and how to be self-sustained when you're off-grid.

02

SECTION 3



We're sharing our absolute favorite free campsites in the USA - 21 spots to be exact!

03



Free camping is the best way to experience nature and be kind to your wallet.

From Florida to Oregon, Olivia and I have discovered hundreds of amazing free campsites. They come in all shapes and sizes. In this ebook our goal is to guide you to our favorites (and IMHO the best ones, too)!

SECTION 1: THE BASICS OF FREE CAMPING

There are many names for free camping and they all have nuanced definitions. It's not 100% necessary to know each term on your first trip out. However, as you become an experienced free-camper, you'll find great value in understanding the nuances.



Free camping also has legal ramifications. And while we're not legal experts, we can help you avoid trouble with local law enforcement by teaching you basic rules and best practices.



WHAT'S IN A NAME?

Are names important? Yes and no.

We like to call it "free camping" because it's extremely self explanatory. It means you're not paying to camp. None of the other names we share explicitly mention the cost (or lack thereof).

The "free camping" name also doesn't limit the campsite to a certain location-type. For instance, we've taking part in free camping in the center of town and in the middle of nowhere.

When we talk shop with fellow RVers, we'll use the nuanced terms. As we teach potential RVers about this camping-style, we like to call it "free camping."



THE MAIN NAMES

→ Here are the multiple terms for free camping. —

BOONDOCKING

Boondocking may be the most popular "free camping" term in the RV community, but it has a very vague definition.

Some campers insist boondocking must happen in the boonies...unfortunately everyone has a unique definition of the boonies.

Boondocking doesn't guarantee the price is free. Some BLM lands in the boonies still charge a small fee.

DRY CAMPING

This means camping with no hook-ups. You'll have to provide your own water, electricity, and waste management. Sometimes dry camping costs money.

When RVers use the term dry camping, they're typically referencing camping on BLM land.

OVERNIGHT CAMPING AND LOTDOCKING

Overnight camping is always free, but it's hardly scenic. This type of camping, also referred to as overnight parking, happens in parking lots.

Popular overnight camping locations include Walmart, Bass Pro, and interstate rest stops.

Don't assume all stores allow overnight camping - it varies with every new location.

THE LESS COMMON NAMES

Fun to know, but rarely used

MOOCHDOCKING

We love the term, but don't really like moochdocking.

Moochdocking is camping in a driveway or yard...on private property.

This usually happens at a friends or families house. It's also the type of camping that's associated with the RV club, Boondockers Welcome.

Moochdocking may be a form of dry camping. Sometimes hosts will provide limited utilities.

FREEDOM CAMPING

Freedom camping is associated with a feeling more than a definition.

For us, freedom camping and free camping have a lot of overlap.

But, at the end of the day, this definition is based solely upon the interpretation on each individual camper.

FREE CAMPING CLUBS

We know this is a total oxymoron. But, most RVers consider these clubs as a tool to find free camping.

Harvest Hosts: This is the most popular "free camping club." For a yearly fee, the club gives you access to hundreds of free campsites at farms, vineyards, and breweries across the USA.

Boondockers Welcome: This club provides members with a data base of free moochdocking locations across the USA.

**BUT,
IS IT
LEGAL?**



Many first-time free campers want to know if it's legal.

The answer is yes and no!

LEGALITY, EXPLAINED

TO THE BEST OF OUR ABILITY.

We're not legal experts, but we have been free camping for five years (without getting arrested)! However, there are certainly rules to follow and boundaries to obey.

Having permission is the most important rule.

Federal lands clearly mark where free camping is allowed. You can access public land boundaries online and at local ranger stations.

Private-property free campsites are on a case by case basis. Having first hand permission is always our recommendation.

WE HAVE BEEN ASKED TO MOVE...

We're very conservative when it comes to selecting a free campsite. Even so, we've made a couple of boundary mistakes.

Over the past five years, we've been asked to move twice. Both of the occasions happened on federal lands and we were just over the legal boundary.

In both of these cases, we were simply asked to move (one ranger gave us 24 hours, another gave us 20 minutes). It exemplifies, however, that rangers are kind, but have little tolerance for camping outside the proper boundary.





HOW TO FIND FREE CAMPING SITES IN THE USA?

1. Campendium
2. Free Campsites Net
3. RV Parky



CAMPENDIUM

We've been using Campendium to find free campsites for over five years. Campendium can be accessed on the internet (a website) and on mobile devices (an app).

There are three simple reasons why this tool has given us a great success rate:

1. They have a huge database of verified free campsites.
2. The user reviews are in-depth, overwhelmingly accurate, and don't include typical internet drama.
3. The details are on point. Reviews include cell signal, RV type, and campsite access.

Before we get to the Campendium tutorial, I need you to answer these questions.

How you want to camp for free? There are so many ways to do it. You can do it in a huge Class A RV with tons of amenities, or you can do it in a car and a tent.

There is no right or wrong way.

Also, what type of cell connectivity you want is very important. If you don't need any, that's cool. But, if connectivity is important to you, we'll help you learn how to find it.

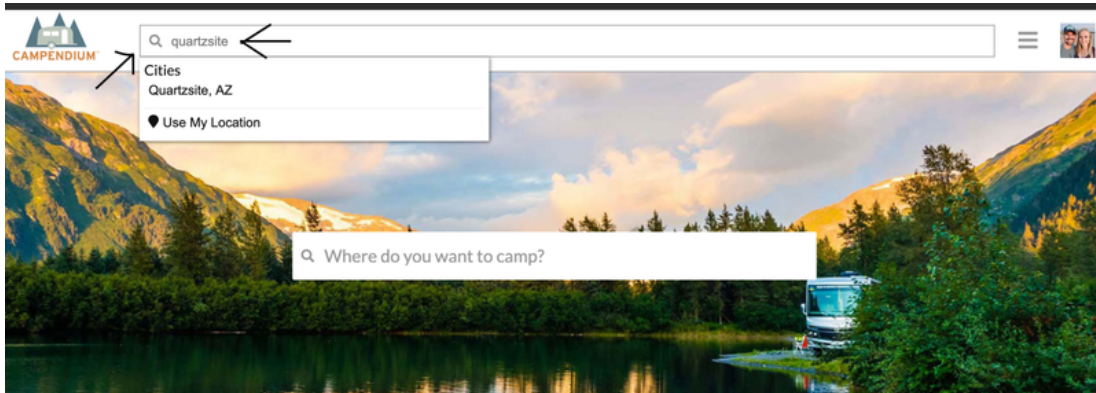
Let's walk through the process we use when searching for free campsites on Campendium.

TRY AND LEARN

CAMPENDIUM TUTORIAL



We're going to be using the Campendium homepage search bar for our first search. Let's go ahead and dive in with one of the easiest options out there, "Quartzsite, Arizona."



Once we search the term "Quartzsite, Arizona," Campendium shows us the free camping and the paid camping options.

We're going to want to edit that down to only the free camping.

We'll go here (pictured below) to "price," click on it.

You see it's at zero to \$200. We'll go ahead and scroll that all the way down to zero, but also click on "always show free." That way, it'll remember you in the future to give you those free spots if that's what you're looking for.

The screenshot shows the Campendium website interface. At the top left is the Campendium logo. A search bar contains the text "Quartzsite, AZ". Below the search bar are filter buttons: "Sort By", "Category", "Price", and "More Filters". The "Price" filter is expanded, showing a slider with a blue dot at the zero position. Below the slider, the text "Nightly rate based on last price paid" is visible. To the right of the slider, the checkbox "Always show FREE" is checked. A hand-drawn arrow points from the "Price" button to the expanded filter box. Another arrow points from the "FREE" text in the filter box to the "Always show FREE" checkbox. A third arrow points from the "Always show FREE" checkbox to the map area. The map shows a satellite view of Quartzsite, AZ, with several green tree icons representing camping spots. A red star icon is also visible on the map. The text "Quartzsite RV Camping" is visible on the left side of the map. Below the map, there is a listing for "Scaddan Wash Area" in Quartzsite, Arizona, with a 4-star rating and a review from TurtleGuys.

Now that we're only view free campsites, let's use the "sort by" tab. This is the best dropdown option when looking for free camping. We'll filter the list to show the highest rated campgrounds (based on user reviews) first.

Here in Quartzsite, we have a lot of options, but once we click on highest rated, it's going to give us, in a list on this left hand side, the best rated in descending order.

The screenshot shows the Campendium website interface. At the top left is the Campendium logo. A search bar contains "Quartzsite, AZ". Below the search bar are filter buttons: "Rating" (circled in black with an arrow pointing to the "Highest Rated" button in the dropdown menu), "Category", "Price", and "More Filters". The "Rating" dropdown menu is open, showing "Distance", "Highest Rated" (selected), and "Most Reviews". To the right of the filters, it says "Showing 14 locations".

The main content area is split into two columns. The left column displays a list of campgrounds. The first entry is "Palm Canyon" in Quartzsite, Arizona, with a 5-star rating and 28 reviews. It is priced at \$0 and was reported on 01/15/2019. The description reads: "Countless suitable sites offering expansive desert views" - Zamia Ventures. The second entry is "Plomosa Road Camping Area" in Quartzsite, Arizona, with a 5-star rating and 19 reviews, also priced at \$0.

The right column shows a map of the area around Quartzsite, Arizona, with several green location pins. A "satellite" button is visible at the top of the map. The map shows the location of the campgrounds relative to Blythe and Bouse.

Palm Canyon comes in at number one with five stars and 28 reviews.

That's a great sign on Campendium; Virtually is a guaranteed successful spot.

Let's click on it.

What we see at the top is Palm Canyon. It's in the Kofa National Wildlife Refuge. It'll give you a phone number to the local ranger station. You'll also see additional key data listed at the top.

Palm Canyon ❤️
Kofa National Wildlife Refuge
★★★★★ [write a review](#)
Palm Canyon Rd.
Quartzsite, AZ 85346
928-783-7861
[Official Website](#)
GPS: [33.3603, -114.107](#)

KEY INFO →

Last Price Paid:	\$0
Pad Type:	dirt
Elevation:	2108 ft
Max Stay:	14

Accessibility is not guaranteed, always scout ahead before driving down dirt roads.
[Learn more: Boondocking 101](#)



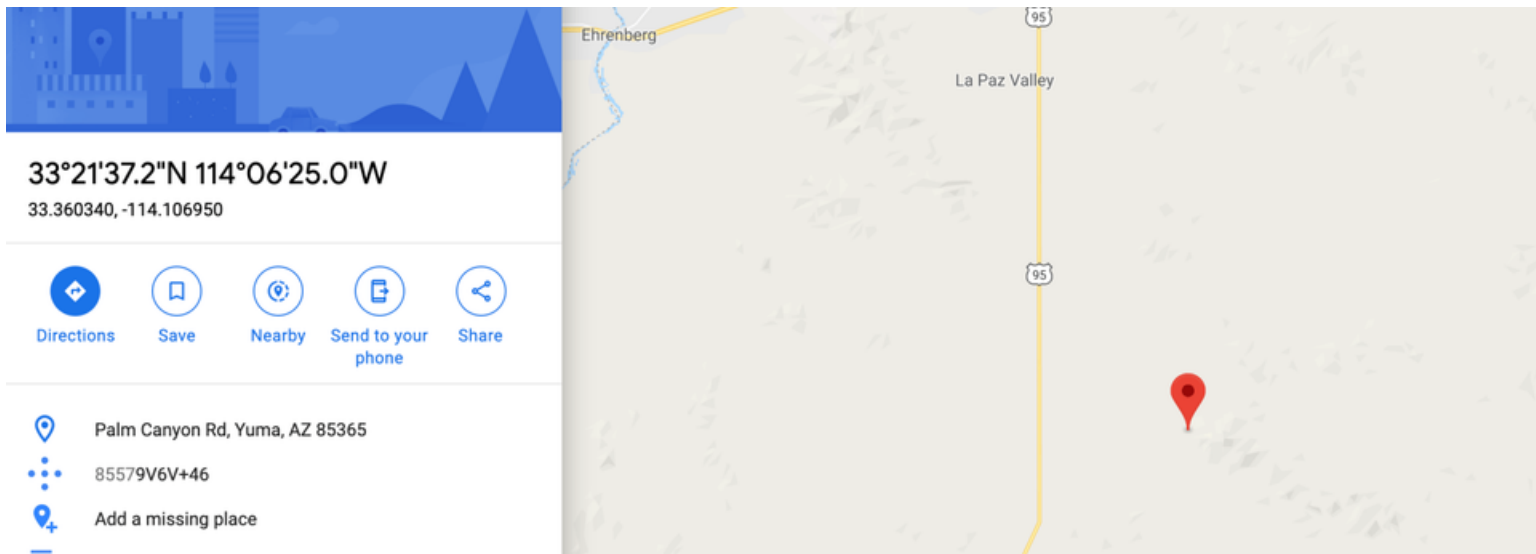
[View on Google Maps](#)



What I really like though is this GPS coordinate information.

You can click on the GPS link and it's going to show you right on the map where that's located.

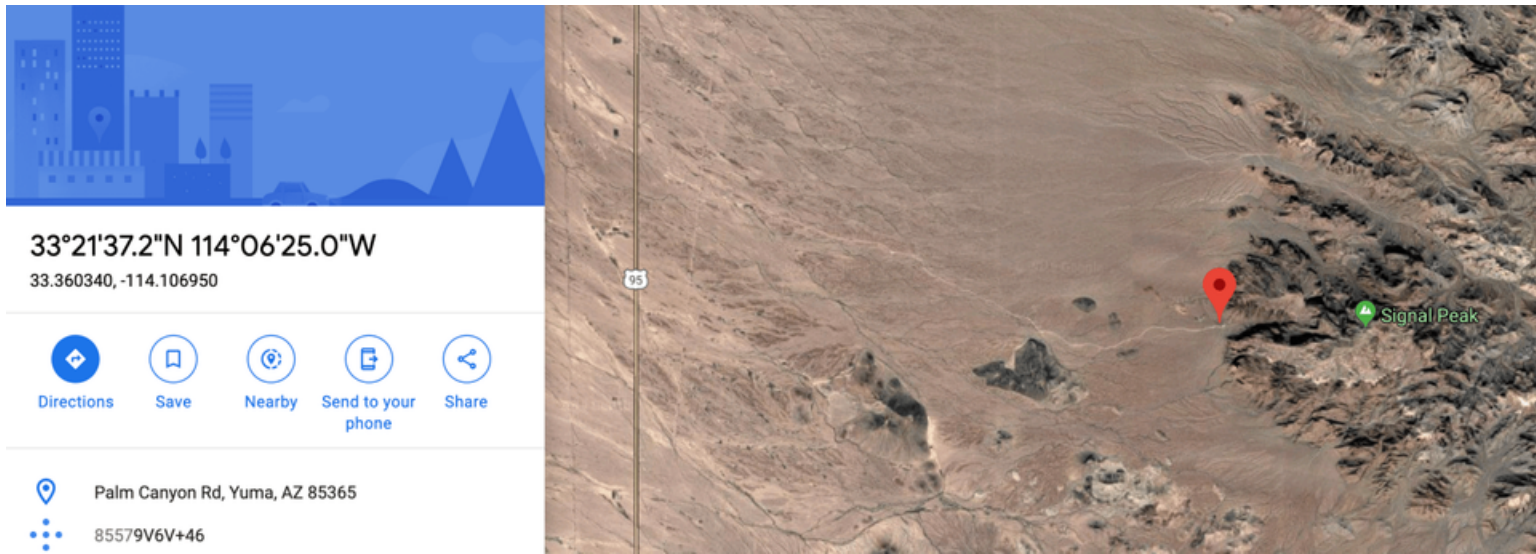
Scroll out a little bit, and you'll can see a detailed location on Google Maps. I can even click on the satellite imagery to get a better sense of what the area is going to look like as far as if it's going to have growth, if it's going to be desert, if it's going to be mountainous.



Here you can see the topography surrounding the Palm Canyon free campsite.

This free campsite is tucked back right against where a small little mountain range begins, and you can see the road from the satellite view, which is always a good sign.

Using the satellite imagery gives you a great sense of the surrounding area.










Campendium has a rating system is based on five different aspects: the access, the location, the cleanliness, site quality and noise. The star rating can be seen in the left side column.

On the right side, you'll see cell coverage reviews. These are user-generated responses based on the experience of real campers, not just cell coverage maps.

In addition to the reviews, there is also a blog post section where you can see more in depth reviews hosted on campers blog pages. You can also see videos posted in the same section.

28 people have reviewed this location. [★ Write a Review](#)

Ratings Summary	Cell Phone Coverage
★ ★ ★ ★ ★ Access	 Verizon 4G/LTE
★ ★ ★ ★ ★ Location	 Verizon 3G
★ ★ ★ ★ ★ Cleanliness	 Verizon Voice Only
★ ★ ★ ★ ★ Site Quality	 AT&T 4G/LTE
★ ★ ★ ★ ★ Noise	 AT&T 3G
	 AT&T Voice Only
	 T-Mobile 4G/LTE

[Reviews \(28\)](#) | [Blog Posts \(13\)](#) | [Amenities](#)

[Boondocking Site Review - KOFA National Wildlife Refuge, AZ](#)
The gorgeous KOFA mountains at sunset A huge and very remote refuge along Hwy 95 between Quartzsite and Yuma in western AZ. Location: KOFA National Wildlife Refuge. Link to official website HE...
Wheeling It | Added: February 22, 2015

[Rugged And Remote - KOFA National Wildlife Refuge, AZ](#)
Getting away from it all.... A rather dark and moody sunset Sometimes you just need to get away from it all, and when you talk about the Arizona Desert there are literally millions of acres in w...
Wheeling It | Added: February 22, 2015

[Boondocking on the KOFA National wildlife refuge](#)
Boondocking on the KOFA National wildlife refuge We have spent the last couple of weeks in a great spot, just outside the refuge actually. We found this place when we went on our Christmas day hik...
Tales from the Backroad | Added: January 28, 2015

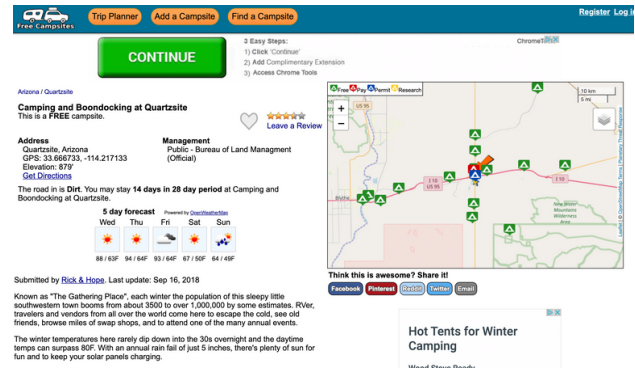
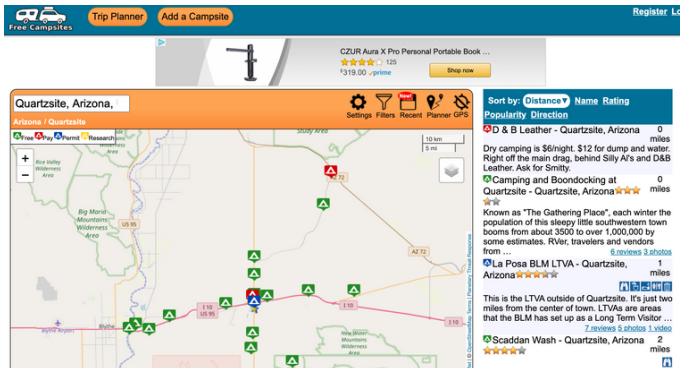
FREECAMPSITES.NET

Free Campsites Net is another wonderful resource for discovering great free camping spots. Using their webpage is similar to Campendium. However, there are nuanced differences between these two tools.

If you are camping in a van, small travel trailer, or tent, Free Campsites Net will provide helpful information. The reviewers on this site tend to camp in smaller units, making the site as a whole geared towards this type of minimal-camping.

RVers can find spots on Free Campsites Net, but you'll have to carefully read the reviews to understand if your RV can access the spot.

Here's a screenshot of the website.



RV PARKY

RV Parky is a web based tool to discover RV camping sites. It includes paid camping and free camping.

We never use RV Parky to find free camping spots in nature. Rather, the tool is most useful for us when we're looking for overnight parking spots.

RV Parky includes great info on Walmart, Bass Pro, Truck Stops, and many other overnight parking options. The reviews are often recent and you'll get a good idea if a big box store allows you to camp overnight.

It's important to note, even if previous campers have had been allowed to camp at a private business, we recommend verifying with the business as well.

The screenshot displays the RV Parky website interface. At the top, there is a navigation bar with the RV Parky logo, a 'Log In' button, and a 'Sign Up' button. Below the navigation bar is a search bar with the text 'Tampa, FL, USA' and buttons for 'Go' and 'Clear'. To the right of the search bar are filters for 'Filter', 'No filter', 'Any Distance', 'Stars', and 'Sort'. The main content area is divided into two columns. The left column shows a list of search results. The first result is 'Low Clearance 14'-0\"/>

Result	Distance
Low Clearance 14'-0" (Warning icon)	0.6 miles
Tampa Walmart Supercenter (Walmart icon)	2.9 miles
Tampa Walmart (Walmart icon)	3.4 miles

The right column shows a map of Tampa, FL, with various icons representing different types of camping sites. The map includes labels for various locations such as Hudson, St Leo, Dade City, Zephyrhills, Crystal Springs, Wesley Chapel, Land O' Lakes, Lutz, Citrus, University, Temple Terrace, Plant City, Lakeland, and Mulberry. The map also shows major highways like I-4, I-75, and I-98.

SECTION 2



Let's get into the meat & potatoes of free camping. In this section we'll review the tools & strategies for successful boondocking.

UNDERSTANDING YOUR NEEDS...

Even though we all love free camping, we have unique needs that make the experience great.

Before we dive into the tools & strategies, we'll give you a list of questions to answer first to better understand your boondocking preferences.

MEETING YOUR NEEDS...

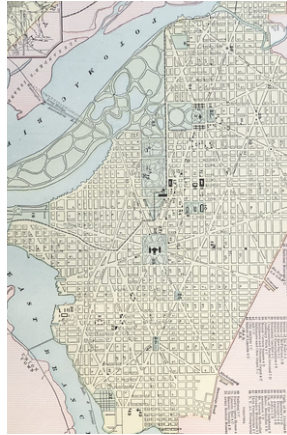
Once you know how you want to camp, we're going to shine light on the tools to help you make your camping dreams a reality.

TIPS & TRICKS WE USE...

Every RVer keeps a few tricks in their back pocket. We're giving you all of our best tricks and tips for finding the best free campsites.

In our 5+ years of boondocking...we've learned a lot of tricks (many we learned the hard way)!

BE SURE TO UNDERSTAND YOUR NEEDS



How far off-grid do you want to camp?

Not all free campsites are in the boonies. In fact, quite often these sites are only 10 miles or less from the nearest town.

Do you want to be near town or not?



Is staying connected important?

Cell connectivity is easier than ever these days, but not all campers want cell service.

How important is it to you to have cell connectivity. Will you feel ok if you can't make an emergency phone call?



How long do you want to be gone?

This may be the most important question of all. The answer to it will determine what type of RV you need...or what additional tools you'll need to buy.

Tank size is the key factor!



EXPECTATIONS
AND
OUTCOMES

TANKS SIZE & STAYING OFF GRID

The size of your RV tanks will be the largest determining factor as to how long you can camp off grid before breaking camp.

Breaking camp means packing up, leaving your campsite and dumping and/or refilling tanks.

RV tanks (fresh, grey & black) range from 5 gallons to 100+ gallons. Make sure you know the size of all of your tanks ideally before purchasing...and definitely before boondocking



UNDERSTANDING THE RV TANKS DEEPER

* Fresh Tank



The fresh tank is where your clean, drinking water is stored. With this water you will cook, clean, bathe, and drink.

* Grey Tank



The grey tank captures all the water that runs down your drains. Shower water and sink water are the primary sources.

* Black Tank



The black tank is where waste water (sewage) lives. Your RV toilet is connected to the black water tank.

It's not only about tank size, but also conservation.

We've never had tanks larger than 20 gallons. In terms of RVing, that's pretty small! Let that encourage you if you have smaller RV tanks as well.

With our small tanks, we've been able to camp off grid for up to 7 consecutive days. If you have tanks that range from 50 -100 gallons, you should be able to stay off grid for up to two weeks.

No matter what tank size you have, there are proven water-conservation strategies that will extend your time off grid.

1. Use a spray bottle to wash dishes - this will limit your faucet water usage and you can even add vinegar to the bottle for better (and organic) cleaning.
2. Take "Navy Showers" and use an Oxegenics Shower Head - this means don't keep the water running when you shower. An Oxegenics shower head infuses air into the water to use less H2O and maintain a good shower feel.
3. Carry a portable waste tank (aka RV Blue Boy). These can keep you off grid longer by giving you a portable container to empty your tanks while boondocking.
4. Wet Wipes are your friend. If you keep a container of wet wipes, you can use these in place of full wash sessions.



DO YOU NEED TO

STAY CONNECTED?



If cell connectivity is essential,
this section will share our
strategies for staying connected.



THE STRATEGY

RESEARCH

The most important first step is research. Before you drive to your next potential boondocking spot, research the cell connectivity.

How do you research?

1. Free campsite review webpages
2. Coverage maps
3. Video reviews

TOOLS

Once you know connectivity is essential for your boondocking experience, there are a few tools that will really help you stay connected.

What are the tools?

1. Cell Booster
2. Wifi Booster
3. Multiple Plans

- 1 CAMPENDIUM
- 2 FREE CAMPSITES DOT NET
- 3 CAMPGROUND REVIEWS

RESEARCHING CONNECTIVITY ON REVIEW SITES

All three websites that we use to find camping spots include cell connectivity info, too. We highly recommend using these sites to understand if you'll have cell signal.

Even though past performance doesn't guarantee you'll have signal when you arrive, it's been a great way for us to gauge whether our service and tools will allow signal at the spot.

On the right you'll see screenshots of cell service reviews on each of the three sites.

CAMPENDIUM

Reviews of The Main Drag 525 Dispersed Camping 30 people have reviewed this location.

Ratings Summary	Cell Phone Coverage	
★★★★★ Overall Rating	Verizon 4G/LTE	AT&T 4G/LTE
★★★★★ Access	Confirmed by 14 Users	Confirmed by 7 Users
★★★★★ Location	Last reported 5/17/2020	Last reported 9/28/2020
★★★★★ Cleanliness	Sprint 4G/LTE	T-Mobile 4G/LTE
★★★★★ Site Quality	Confirmed by 2 Users	Confirmed by 4 Users
★★★★★ Noise	Last reported 7/2/2020	Last reported 3/18/2020

Free Campsites

Based on 12 reports

Cellular Availability

Verizon 4G/LTE	Sprint 2G/3G	AT&T 4G/LTE
T-Mobile 4G/LTE	Other 4G/LTE	

Legend | Show More

CAMPGROUND REVIEWS

RV PARKS, RV RESORTS & MORE

RV LIFE RESORTS

Connectivity: ⓘ

- ✓ WiFi
- ✓ ATT
- ✓ Verizon
- ✓ Sprint
- ✓ T-Mobile

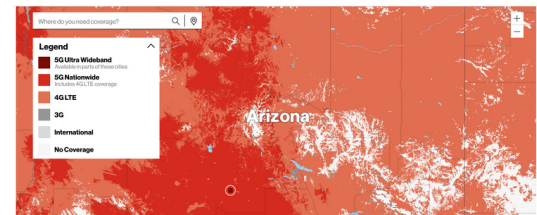
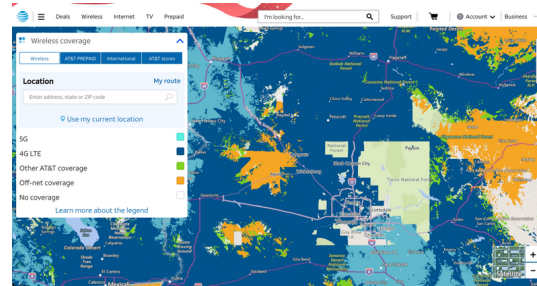
USING CELL PROVIDER COVERAGE MAPS



All major cell service providers have coverage maps available online. These maps have detailed coverage info. They show 3g, 4g, and 5g service - as well as phone only service.

We've had limited success using these maps. But, they are a good place to research what to expect at a free campsite.

Here are screen shots from all major carriers.

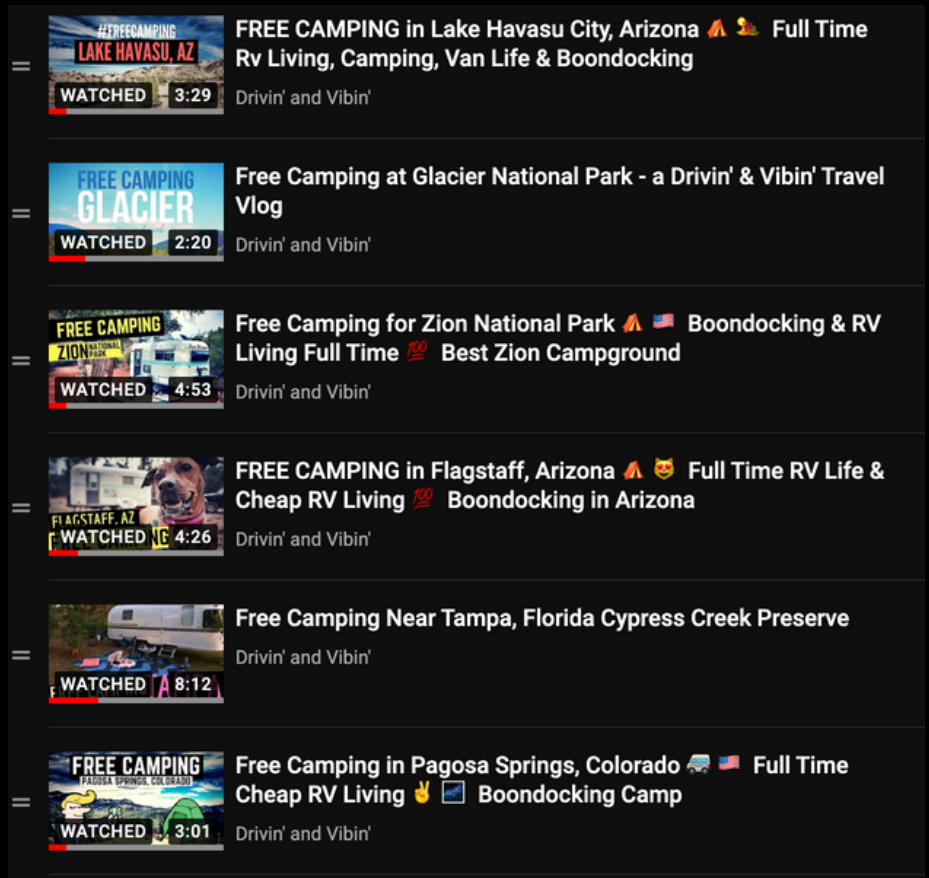


YOUTUBE REVIEW VIDEOS ARE GREAT RESOURCES

The least popular way (yet the most comprehensive) to understand if you'll get cell reception at a free campsite is watching YouTube videos.

Almost every best free campsite has a YouTube review video.

Not only will you get a great sense of the campsite, you'll also understand if cell connectivity is available.



- FREE CAMPING in Lake Havasu City, Arizona 🏕️ 🚐 Full Time Rv Living, Camping, Van Life & Boondocking**
Duration: 3:29
Channel: Drivin' and Vibin'
- Free Camping at Glacier National Park - a Drivin' & Vibin' Travel Vlog**
Duration: 2:20
Channel: Drivin' and Vibin'
- Free Camping for Zion National Park 🏕️ 🇺🇸 Boondocking & RV Living Full Time 🚐 Best Zion Campground**
Duration: 4:53
Channel: Drivin' and Vibin'
- FREE CAMPING in Flagstaff, Arizona 🏕️ 🐶 Full Time RV Life & Cheap RV Living 🚐 Boondocking in Arizona**
Duration: 4:26
Channel: Drivin' and Vibin'
- Free Camping Near Tampa, Florida Cypress Creek Preserve**
Duration: 8:12
Channel: Drivin' and Vibin'
- Free Camping in Pagosa Springs, Colorado 🚐 🇺🇸 Full Time Cheap RV Living 🙌 🏠 Boondocking Camp**
Duration: 3:01
Channel: Drivin' and Vibin'

WHAT IS AN RV CELL BOOSTER?

AN RV CELL PHONE BOOSTER IS A DEVICE THAT CAPTURES THE CELLULAR SIGNAL OUTSIDE YOUR RV, AMPLIFIES IT, AND THEN BROADCASTS THE ENHANCED SIGNAL THROUGHOUT YOUR RV.

RV CELL BOOSTER COMPONENTS

AN RV CELL BOOSTER HAS THREE NECESSARY PIECES, AN EXTERNAL ANTENNA, A BOOSTING STATION, AND AN INTERNAL ANTENNA.

EXTERNAL ANTENNA: THIS IS THE ANTENNA THAT TALKS TO THE CELL TOWER.

BOOSTING STATION: THIS IS WHERE THE SMALL SIGNAL TURNS INTO A LARGER SIGNAL.

INTERNAL ANTENNA: THIS IS HOW THE BOOSTED SIGNAL REACHES YOUR CELLULAR DEVICE.



Are Cell Boosters Worth The Money?

The big question is should you spend the money on a cell phone booster? We would argue that the answer is yes.

Although U.S. carriers are extending their reach on the daily, it's still going to be quite some time before their reach extends everywhere. If you travel in an RV, trailer, SUV, or what have you, it's a good idea to have a cell booster if only to stay connected if you have an emergency situation.

If you need a connection for work or if you want to connect multiple devices, it's definitely worth stepping up to a more robust solution. The WeBoost Drive X RV is the best, most robust option, but the SureCall Fusion2Go RV is still a solid solution as well, especially if you need to pinch a few pennies.



10 CRUCIAL FREE CAMPING RULES

- 1 DON'T PARK TOO CLOSE TO YOUR NEIGHBOR

- 2 DON'T STAY IF YOU FEEL UNSAFE

- 3 DON'T CREATE A NEW CAMPSITE

- 4 DON'T OVERSTAY THE LIMITS

- 5 MAKE SURE THE SITE IS ACCESSIBLE BEFORE DRIVING IN

- 6 DON'T ATTRACT (OR FEED) WILDLIFE

- 7 BE POLITE WITH GENERATOR USAGE

- 8 DUMP TANKS AT A DUMP STATION, NOT ON THE GROUND

- 9 LEAVE NO TRACE

- 10 ARRIVE PREPARED

WHERE DO YOU DUMP IT WHEN BOONDOCKING?

If you're camping at an RV park, you probably have a direct connection to their sewer system. However, if you're boondocking, you'll be totally off the grid - with no immediate access to dumping. Here are a few places you can dump your RV black tank when boondocking.

TRUCK STOP DUMP STATIONS

Many interstate truck stops have dump stations for your RV black tank. You can search on Campendium or AllStays to verify if a truck stop has one. At the truck stops, the dump stations are often located on the edge of the lot with easy RV access. You pay at the station. By swiping your credit card at the dump, the latch unlocks, and you can proceed with dumping.

INTERSTATE REST STOPS

Less common, but even better, are interstate rest stop dump stations. These dump stations are typically free and have super easy access. Mississippi is one of the states that offer this complimentary service. These facilities are usually very well kept, too. Service staff cleans them daily.

RV PARKS FOR DUMPING

Even if you don't stay at an RV park, they'll usually let you dump your black tank for a small fee. The benefit of using RV parks for dumping is two-fold. If you're free camping on BLM land, there's usually an RV park within 20 miles. The nearest truck stop with a dump station could be much further. Virtually every RV has a dump station and would be happy to collect a small fee to let you use it.

COUNTY PARKS & FAIRGROUNDS

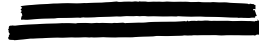
Like RV parks, many county parks and fairgrounds have dump stations and will let you use them for free or a small fee. These are harder to find, but can be the closest option out west. We suggest using Campendium if you're using an app to search for an RV dump station. Better still, we recommend using RV Trip Wizard to plan your entire route (including dump station research) before heading out.



YOU NEED TO KNOW...

9 BOONDOCKING MYTHS

There are many misconceptions when it comes to camping off-grid. Don't let these myths scare you off!



WHAT ARE THE MYTHS?

If you haven't tried boondocking before due to fear or uncertainty, this section is for you!

We know boondocking can be a challenge, but when done with preparation and the right frame of mind, there's no RV resort in the USA that can compete with a beautiful boondocking spot. Let's get to debunking these boondocking myths.

BOONDOCKING IS OUT IN THE BOONIES

This is a common misconception (and for good reason). The name boondocking sounds like this type of camping happens out in the boonies. And, the boonies can be a scary place...think "no cell service", "no nearby gas stations", & "axe murderers in the woods."

"This is a myth!

While it's true that some boondocking is out in the boonies, most of our favorite boondocking sites are actually close to town!

For example, we've boondocked right outside of Sedona, downtown Natchez Mississippi, on the beach in Texas, and near the entrance to Zion National Park. Using tools like Campendium, we can make sure the boondocking site we research is close to nearby towns & amenities!

BOONDOCKING MEANS NO INTERNET

This myth couldn't be further from the truth! We only camp at boondocking spots that have internet availability. Using the Cependium website as our resource, we can see what type of internet other campers have received at each boondocking location.

This isn't wifi internet. We're talking cellular internet. You'll have to have a cell phone or a cellular hotspot to receive internet at boondocking locations...but, really, who doesn't have a cell phone these days?!

We also use a cell booster to give us a stronger signal and faster speeds.

This isn't essential, but it can really help. For example, when we boondocked outside of Glacier National Park we received one bar of unusable cell service. Once that signal was boosted, it turned into 4 bars of service that was able to stream Netflix.



YOU WON'T HAVE POWER WHEN YOU BOONDOCK

This is one of the easiest boondocking myths to bust! We'll bust it three ways starting with the cheapest method!

1. Some boondocking sites offer free electricity! This isn't extremely common, but it's still true. Wyoming is one state that you'll find free electricity at city parks quite regularly. We really enjoyed this boondocking amenity in Glenrock City Park!
2. Carry an inexpensive inverter generator. These generators can easily provide you power (some can even run the AC unit), and they're very affordable. We've carried a Honda generator with us for 4 years. Even though we don't use it often, it's great for topping off the batteries and cooling down our RV with power for the AC.
3. Solar & Battery power! It can cost a little bit more upfront, but it's great for the camping purist. Solar power is self-sustaining and the battery bank makes no noise!

Having power when you boondock is pretty easy. It just takes a little preplanning and a small monetary investment.



YOU'LL GET MURDERED & ROBBED WHEN BOONDOCKING

We've all heard the horror stories...generators being stolen, intruders banging on the RV door and creepy noises in the night. While we can't guarantee your everlasting boondocking safety, in our experience this myth is far from the truth!

Here's the rules we boondock by:

1. If the boondocking site gives us bad vibes, we don't camp there. We always have multiple spots in a given area to choose from.
2. We don't leave valuables out in plain sight.
3. We lock the door.
4. We lock the trailer hitch.
5. Most importantly, we listen to our intuition.

In our 4 years of boondocking, we've never had a safety concern or been robbed.

To be honest, it did take a little time to feel completely comfortable leaving our camper unattended. However, by strictly following our own rules, we've become confident in our safety while boondocking.



THERE'S NOTHING TO DO WHEN I'M BOONDOCKING

There's plenty to do while boondocking! We often get the question, "don't you get bored?" And, the answer is absolutely not!

Sure, there aren't any organized activities like at an RV park...but, who wants to do those anyway?! We love to hike, explore, kayak, shop, eat, read, play music, and so much more.

If we want mindless entertainment, we can stream Netflix using our cellular internet.

If you find yourself bored in daily life...sure, you'll also be bored when camping in nature. However, I highly doubt that is a symptom of boondocking!



BOONDOCKING IS LONELY

You can definitely boondock in remote spots with no neighbors. We find this to be the exception and not the rule. We love boondocking because it draws together like-minded people.

There's a wonderful community of boondockers in America. These people have many of the same desires; to feel freedom, to connect with nature, to satiate their wanderlust.

These are the type of people we want to connect with. Obviously, we don't love boondocking in overcrowded spots. But, connecting with our distant neighbors is one of the joys of boondocking. Give it a try!

There are also many RV groups you can join that help you connect with like-minded campers. We've made many friends through the Escapees RV Club.

Boondocking with friends is the best!



COOKING IS HARD WHEN YOU BOONDOCK

We cook using a propane stove and oven whether we're boondocking or at an RV park. The functionality is identical in both cases. Many RV fridges run on propane, meaning the functionality will be consistent no matter where you camp.

If you're worried you won't be able to use your microwave - an inexpensive inverter generator can solve that problem. RV kitchens are built to function off grid.

You don't have to change your cooking habits when boondocking.

The biggest concern you may have is disposing trash. You'll just have to be a little more aware of the nearest dumpster...or create less waste.



IT'S HARD TO FIND A GOOD BOONDOCKING SITE

If you know the right tools to use, it's quite easy to find a great boondocking site. We fully understand, it can take a little while to learn how to use these tools. That's why we created a step-by-step tutorial for using Campendium (found in section 1).

More important than learning the tools: is learning your preferred boondocking style.

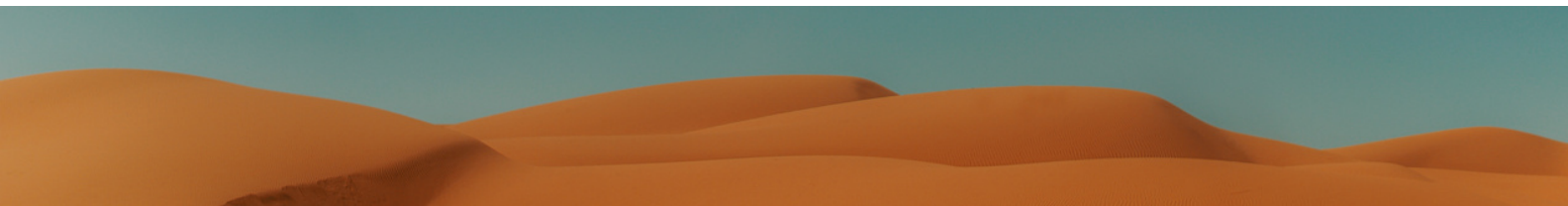
There are lots of ways to boondock, and your way will be unique to you. Once you understand how you like to do it, it'll be a lot easier to find the best site for you!

YOU HAVE TO BE ALL IN

Boondocking purists are the worst! No one cares how many days (or years) in a row they've boondocked. Let me be clear - you can boondock a little as you wish.

As with everything in life, balance is key. We want you to experience the joys of boondocking. If that means one trip a year, that's great! If that means 300 days a year, that's great too!

We've been shamed before for sharing our boondocking experiences and then living it up at an RV resort. Please, if you feel similar pressure, let it go.



SECTION 3: THE BEST FREE CAMPSITES IN AMERICA

Do you want to know about the best free camping spots in the entire United States? Look no further! From the east coast to the west coast, north and south, and everywhere in between...this epic list has the 21 best free camping spots in the Continental United States.



Keep in mind: Access and status of these sites is always in flux. Be sure to verify and scout before driving your RV, trailer, or car into the spot.

Free campsites often become paid campsites. While we'll update this often, these sites may not be free anymore - depending on when you're reading





21 BEST FREE CAMPSITES IN THE USA

- | | | |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1 WEDGE OVERLOOK, UT | 8 NORTH BEACH, TX | 15 SANTEE COASTAL RESERVE, SC |
| 2 THE MAIN DRAG, AZ | 9 OLIVER RESERVOIR, NE | 16 JACKSON ISLAND, TN |
| 3 NOMAD VIEW, SD | 10 CEBOLLA MESA, NM | 17 MOOSE RIVER PLAINS, NY |
| 4 SACRED WHITE SHELL MOUNTAIN, CO | 11 AMERICAN GIRL MINE, CA | 18 REDDEN STATE FOREST, DE |
| 5 NORTH CREEK, UT | 12 BLANKENSHIP BRIDGE, MT | 19 SKULL CREEK, OR |
| 6 JACKSON MOUNTAIN ROAD, CO | 13 CYPRESS CREEK, FL | 20 WHETSTONE CAMPING AREA, MO |
| 7 LAKE HATTIE, WY | 14 GREEN ROAD, MI | 21 LAKE CREEK ROAD, ID |

 NATIONAL PARK

#21 LAKE CREEK ROAD

NEAR KETCHUM, IDAHO

GPS: 43.735, -114.3662



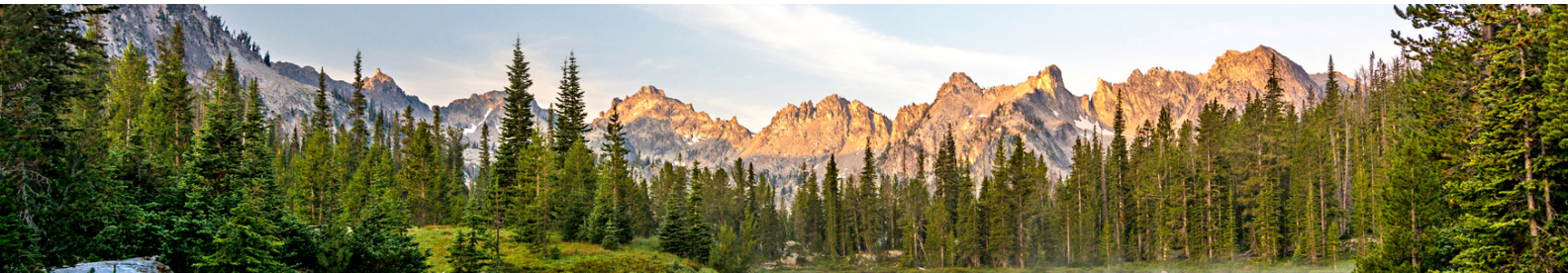
Why You'll Love It: Lake Creek Road is a beautiful dispersed camping spot just outside of Ketchum, Idaho. It sits in a beautiful mountain valley with a creek running through and has plenty of space to spread out.

Camping at this free campsite feels like you're the only one around because of how spaced out the campsites are.

Lake Creek Road is a must-stop if you're in the Ketchum, Idaho area. Plus, this spot has excellent cell service for Verizon, ATT, and T-mobile.

RV Access Overview: Easy access in and out on a well-maintained dirt road. Good for rigs of all sizes.

Reported Cellular Internet: Excellent cell service reported for most major carriers.



#20 WHETSTONE

NEAR WILLIAMSBURG, MISSOURI

GPS: 38.9665, -91.7302

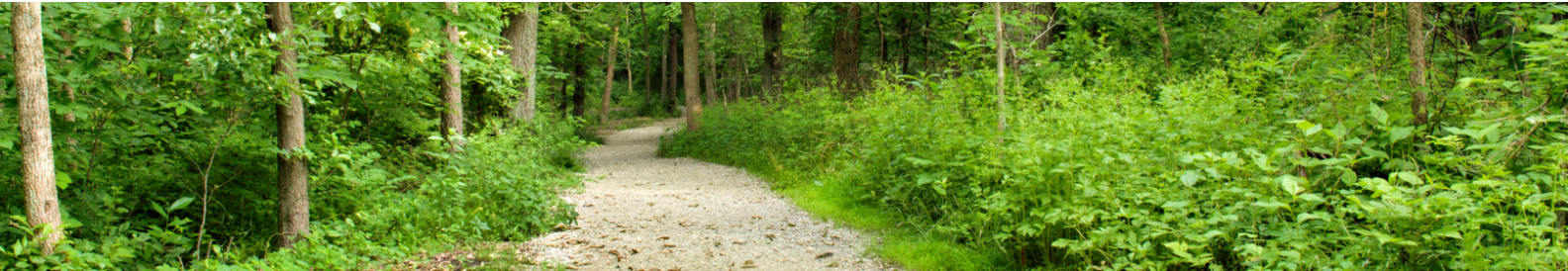


Why You'll Love It: Whetstone camping area is an excellent free camping spot not too far from I-70 in Eastern Missouri. This free campsite is in a conservation area and is surrounded by little lakes. It's a quiet, spacious, and peaceful place to stay one or a few nights.

This free campsite has a pit toilet, too. You'll likely see lots of wildlife when staying at the Whetstone camping area. Also at Whetstone Conservation Area are hiking trails, fishing, and a gun range.

RV Access Overview: Easy access in and out on a well-maintained gravel road. Rain can easily change the road to mud, though, so be aware. Good for rigs of all sizes.

Reported Cellular Internet: Decent cell service reported for most major carriers.



#19 SKULL CREEK

NEAR WOLF CREEK, OREGON

GPS: 42.7722, -123.5702



Why You'll Love It: Skull Creek campground is in a great location, has a vault toilet, and each site has its own fire ring. It's located just 25 minutes west of I-5 in southern Oregon.

This free campsite makes a great stop when traveling along I-5, it is also a great place to spend a couple of days while exploring the surrounding areas. This campsite is clean and well maintained. The only downside is no cell signal! But, if you don't require it, be sure to give this spot a go.

RV Access Overview: Easy access in and out on a well-maintained dirt road; however, there are only 5 sites here, with possible access to more camping along the road. Good for rigs of up to 30 feet, but may be possible for larger rigs if you scout it out ahead of time.

Reported Cellular Internet: No cell service



#18 REDDEN STATE FOREST

GEORGETOWN, DELAWARE

GPS: 38.7411, -75.4083



Why You'll Love It: You don't find much free camping along the east coast, and Redden State Forest free campsite is a real gem! This campsite has picnic tables, fire pits, and tons of free firewood cut and stacked in a shelter. There is also a water spigot and a port-a-potty... These amenities are pretty epic when you know you are getting all of this for free!

The sites here are spacious and secluded. Redden State Forest campground is a great place to spend a few days while exploring the beautiful Delaware area. You're only 40 minutes from Rehoboth Beach, 40 minutes from Dover DE, and about 2 hours from Washington DC.

RV Access Overview: Reservations are needed, and there are only 5 spots with limited turn-around space, so best for smaller size rigs such as vans and truck campers.

Reported Cellular Internet: Decent to excellent cell service reported for most major carriers.



#17 MOOSE RIVER PLAINS

INLET, NEW YORK

GPS: 43.6892, -74.7505

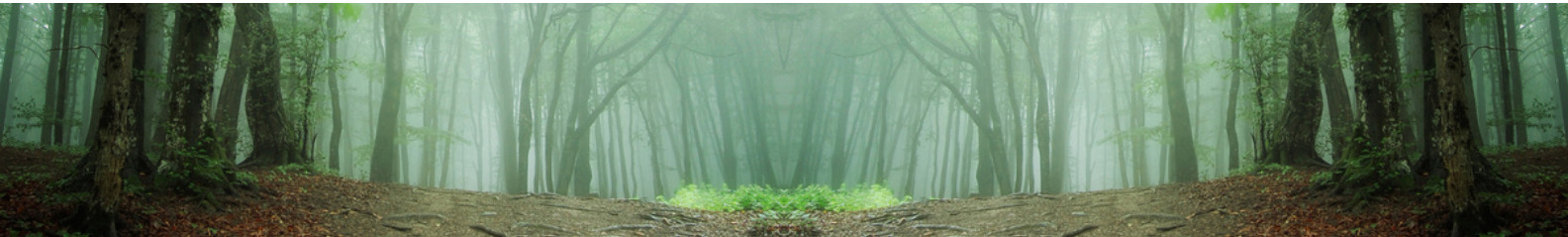


Why You'll Love It: Another epic free campsite along the east coast, this time in Upstate New York! The Moose River Plains camping corridor is a beautiful free camping area near Inlet, New York, and has a lot to see and do. The Moose River Plains complex is over 79k acres and is part of the Adirondack Forest Preserve.

There are more than 65 ponds and lakes in the area with tons of brooks and streams throughout. The complex has low-lying river valleys, hills, and mountains. It's a really unique place geographically, and a great place to spend some time.

RV Access Overview: Bumpy dirt road to access and good for most small campers and trailers. Not recommended for big rigs, but could be a possibility if you scout it out ahead of time.

Reported Cellular Internet: Very limited cell service, if any, for all major carriers.



#16 JACKSON ISLAND

SPRING CITY, TENNESSEE

GPS: 35.6613, -84.8454



Why You'll Love It: This free campsite is managed by the Tennessee Valley Authority and it's a great spot right on a lake. You can literally camp just feet from the water's edge. You can enjoy fishing, water access, a swimming beach, and just relaxing at your site.

There are vault toilets available and great views from all the campsites. Camping limit is 14 days here. This is a seriously great free camping spot in Tennessee!

RV Access Overview: Easy to access and maneuver around. Great for rigs of all sizes.

Reported Cellular Internet: Decent cell coverage for AT&T and Verizon, but very limited for others.



#15 SANTEE COASTAL RESERVE

MCCLELLANVILLE, SOUTH CAROLINA

GPS: 33.1538, -79.3668



Why You'll Love It: Free coastal camping in South Carolina? Yes, please! This free campsite is in the Santee Wildlife Management Area, a wetlands conservation area on the coast of South Carolina.

This free campsite has fire pits, picnic tables, hiking trails, and trash service. The maximum stay here is 4 nights, which is plenty of time to enjoy this serene setting. The campsites are large, the area is quiet, and the cell signal is decent.

RV Access Overview: Well-maintained, hard-packed sand road with easy access for rigs of all sizes.

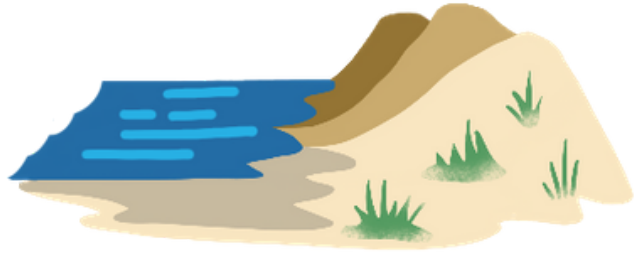
Reported Cellular Internet: Decent cell service for most major carriers.



#14 GREEN ROAD

FREE SOIL ,MICHIGAN

GPS: 44.1037, -86.4011



Why You'll Love It: If you want a beautiful free campsite close to Lake Michigan, this is it! The Nordhouse Dunes Wilderness area is over 3,000 acres of National Forest and there are great hiking opportunities and wildlife viewing in the area.

This campground has sites tucked in between trees that are spacious, with plenty of room in-between for a feeling of seclusion. This place is good for vans, tents, and RVs!

RV Access Overview: Sand and dirt road that is generally easy to maneuver, but be aware when it rains, as it can get muddy. Great for rigs of all sizes, but if you do have a Class A or larger trailer, spots are limited and maneuverability can be tricky.

Reported Cellular Internet: Cell service varies depending on carrier and the tools you have for your mobile internet needs, but seems to be limited to decent service.



#13 CYPRESS CREEK

LAND O' LAKES, FLORIDA

GPS: 28.2382, -82.4305



Why You'll Love It: Free camping in Florida... next to big cities like Tampa? Yep, you better believe it. Cypress Creek Preserve is not only free camping - it's excellent free camping in Florida. This preserve is managed by Florida Water Management - which means you'll have to make a reservation for boondocking, but it's not difficult. It's also gated, which is great for security!

Free camping at Cypress Creek Preserve truly feels like you're out in nature, but it's only a couple of minutes away from shopping, dining, and the amenities of a city. There are many hiking and biking trails here, and bonus: they're dog friendly! Our dog, River, enjoyed hiking the area every day that we stayed there.

RV Access Overview: There are two sites here: Primitive and Equestrian. The Equestrian side has good access for all size rigs, while the Primitive side is more limited with low hanging trees.

Reported Cellular Internet: Decent cell service for all major carriers.



#12 BLANKENSHIP BRIDGE

COLUMBIA FALLS, MT

GPS: 48.4641, -114.0726



Why You'll Love It: Free camping near Glacier National Park isn't easy to come by, but this spot is incredible!

This campsite is known as Blankenship Bridge SW on Freecampsites.net, and as Middle Fork Flathead River on Campendium. The road in can be a bit difficult, but we promise this campsite is absolutely worth it. This is dry camping with no amenities, but there is a pit toilet across the bridge in a county park. Cell service at this location is decent, which is excellent and hard to find in the Glacier area!

RV Access Overview: The access into this spot is limited with a bumpy road not well suited for low clearance vehicles. Best for 4x4's, truck campers, small rigs and vans.

Reported Cellular Internet: Good cell service for most major carriers.



#11 AMERICAN GIRL MINE

WINTERHAVEN, CALIFORNIA

GPS: 32.8368, -114.812



Why You'll Love It: The American Girl Mine BLM camping spots is one of the most popular free campsites out west, and it's not hard to see why! This is a very large free camping area with room for plenty of rigs, and for everyone to be spread out.

The American Girl Mine is not too far off of the I-8 highway. American Girl Mine is a great free campsite for snowbirds or winter RVing in the desert.

RV Access Overview: Easy access well-maintained gravel road. Great for rigs of all sizes.

Reported Cellular Internet: Excellent cell service reported for most major carriers.



#10 CEBOLLA MESA

QUESTA, NEW MEXICO

GPS: 36.6405, -105.6891



Why You'll Love It: Cebolla Mesa is a free camping site located right on the Rio Grande Gorge. Located just a few miles from the Rio Grande del Norte National Monument, this location is perfect for exploring the area.

There's a vault toilet on site, fire pits in most sites and some even have picnic tables. This is a quiet campground with great views - we definitely recommend it to anyone traveling near the Enchanted Circle.

RV Access Overview: - Maintained dirt road for fairly easy access in and out, but could become muddy during heavy rains. Great for most types of RVs under 32 feet long, but possible access for larger rigs if you scout out the area first.

Reported Cellular Internet: Decent cell service for most major carriers.



#9 OLIVER RESERVOIR

KIMBALL, NEBRASKA

GPS: 41.2311, -103.8241



Why You'll Love It: The Oliver Reservoir free campsite is a State Recreation area on Oliver Reservoir in Nebraska. This is a well maintained campground with campsites right on the lake!

Since this is a pretty popular spot, you'll have the best chance at getting a site during the week. Holiday weekends here can get pretty rowdy, but if you're okay with that then you'll fit right in! This free campsite has restrooms, trash, and even water and a dump station - which is pretty awesome! They do accept and encourage donations.

RV Access Overview: Easy access in and out and great space for rigs of all sizes.

Reported Cellular Internet: Decent to excellent cell service for most major carriers.



#8 NORTH BEACH

CORPUS CHRISTI, TEXAS

GPS: 27.4774, -97.2742



Why You'll Love It: Free camping on Padre Island National Seashore... what could get better than that?! Free camping right on the beach with the sound of the waves in the Gulf of Mexico lulling you to sleep... this campsite is one of the best.

You have access to nearby water and dump station at a fee station nearby, and you're in a great location to explore the Corpus Christi area. There is plenty of space to spread out to enjoy your stay here. Definitely check this campground out if you're in the Corpus Christi area.

RV Access Overview: Can be good for any size rigs as long as you pay attention to tides and where you are parking on the sand.

Reported Cellular Internet: Cell service varies depending on carrier and the tools you have for your mobile internet needs, but seems to be spotty and limited for most carriers.



#7 LAKE HATTIE

NEAR LARAMIE, WYOMING

GPS: 41.2375, -105.9014



Why You'll Love It: The Lake Hattie free campsite is a public access area on Lake Hattie in Wyoming. This free campsite has limited amenities but does include a boat ramp and vault toilet.

If you have a smaller rig or are in a tent, you can camp right on the water's edge! Free waterfront camping just can't be beat. In the summer, the water is warm enough to swim in. Or you can fish!

RV Access Overview: Good for any size rig if you don't mind a rutted road with a few potholes. Just take it slow.

Reported Cellular Internet: Cell service varies depending on the carrier and the tools you have for your mobile internet needs, but seems to be decent service for most carriers.



#6 JACKSON MOUNTAIN ROAD

PAGOSA SPRINGS, COLORADO

GPS: 37.3474, -106.9343



Why You'll Love It: At just 8 miles from downtown, this is an epic free campsite for spending time near Pagosa Springs. There are no amenities at this campground, you'll have to pack it in and pack it out. Cell data speeds here are decent for every carrier – especially if you have a booster. There is plenty of wildlife to view in this area and the campsites are spread out and tucked in the trees.

Jackson Mountain road is a beautiful free campsite – we definitely recommend a stop here when you check out Pagosa Springs!

RV Access Overview: Dusty, dirt road, but will work for most types of RVs under 32 feet long, but possible access for larger rigs if you scout out the area first. Reported Cellular Internet:

Cell service varies depending on carrier and the tools you have for your mobile internet needs, but seems to be spotty for most carriers, with AT&T a bit better than Verizon carriers.



#5 NORTH CREEK

VIRGIN, UTAH

GPS: 37.2203, -113.1616



Why You'll Love It: If you're looking for the best free campsite near Zion National Park, this is it. There are no amenities or services at this free campsite, so you'll need to pack it in and pack it out here. Each campsite is separated by trees and shrubs which keeps noise to a minimum and provides a sense of privacy.

Perhaps the best thing about this free campsite is its proximity to Zion National Park... just 12 miles away!

RV Access Overview: Great for most types of RVs under 32 feet long, but possible access for larger rigs if you scout out the area first.

Reported Cellular Internet: Cell service varies depending on carrier and the tools you have for your mobile internet needs, but seems to be decent for most carriers, with AT&T a bit better than Verizon.



#4 SACRED WHITE SHELL MOUNTAIN

MOSCA, COLORADO

GPS: 37.527, -105.5935



Why You'll Love It: The best part about this free campsite is its proximity to Great Sand Dunes National Park, which is just about 6 miles away. Sacred Shell White Mountain is a BLM site with no amenities but great access to all there is to experience in the Sand Dunes and the surrounding Sangre de Cristo mountain range. There is plenty of space for RVers to spread out, to have their own space, but also to be close to each other if you are visiting with a group.

RV Access Overview: Easy access in and out with a well-maintained dirt road, although some of the turn-offs can be tight. It can be accessed by many different sized rigs; however, if you have a bigger Class A, it would be a good idea to scout the road beforehand.

Reported Cellular Internet: Decent to excellent cell service reported for most carriers.



#3 NOMAD VIEW

WALL, SOUTH DAKOTA

GPS: 43.8898, -102.227



Why You'll Love It: This free campsite is in the Buffalo Gap National Grassland. This site is just one mile from the Badlands National Park west entrance and about 5 miles from the quirky town of Wall, South Dakota. The location is what makes this campground great, but the views are epic, too. This campsite is a great jumping off point for exploring the vastness of Badlands National Park.

There are amazing views overlooking parts of the Badlands...you won't regret staying at this campsite!

RV Access Overview: Access in is on a well-maintained dirt road with a few potholes and ruts that can be avoided. Good for any size rigs, just be aware of turn around spots if needed.

Reported Cellular Internet: Decent to excellent cell service reported for most carriers.



#2 THE MAIN DRAG

SEDONA, ARIZONA

GPS: 34.8334, -111.9083

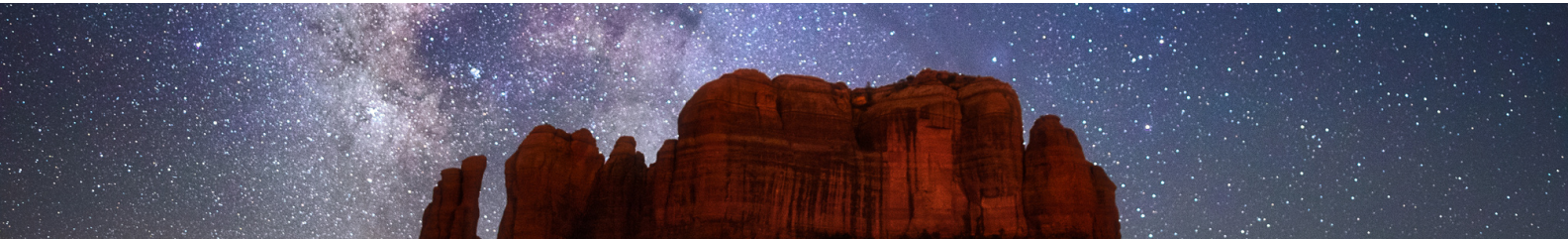


Why You'll Love It: Sedona, Arizona is a beautiful town that, for some, has mystical and healing properties. Whether you believe in that kind of stuff or not, Sedona is a must-see town in Arizona! With towering red rock buttes, hundreds of miles of hiking, and excellent night time stargazing opportunities, Sedona should be on everyone's list.

The Main Drag is free BLM camping just a few miles outside of Sedona on Forest Road 525.

RV Access Overview: Easy access for any size rig if you stay close to the main turn off. The road gets progressively worse, the further you go in. However, if you scout it out ahead of time, it is quite possible to get any size rig in and out of many pull-offs on this road.

Reported Cellular Internet: Decent to excellent cell service reported for most carriers, although T-Mobile seems to have less service.



#1 WEDGE OVERLOOK

EMERY, UTAH

GPS: 39.0932, -110.7589



Why You'll Love It: This free campsite definitely deserves the number one spot on this list! Wedge Overlook is on the Little Grand Canyon in Emery, Utah, and the views do not disappoint.

The road in is a 20 mile long dirt road, but don't let that deter you. The road is wonderfully maintained and the campsite is definitely the pot of gold at the end, even without amenities.

RV Access Overview: Access in is on an excellent, smooth 20 mile dirt road. While some bigger rigs might be able to use the closer in sites, this area is best meant for smaller campers, vans, tents and some fifth wheels.

Reported Cellular Internet: Decent cell service for most major carriers, with Verizon reportedly being one of the best.



GET OUT THERE AND EXPLORE THE USA!



Thanks for
learning about
free camping with
us!

Remember to research and verify
campsite access before arriving to a
location with your RV.

