



Highland
RIDGE RV



A BEGINNER'S GUIDE TO RVING

ANSWERING 8 QUESTIONS THAT
MATTER MOST TO NEW RVERS.





TRAVELING YOUR WAY

Travel can be anxiety inducing. Most people have their own comfort zone figured out and know how they like to do things on a trip, whether it's an old-fashioned road trip or a trek through the airport. It's understandable that trying something new and different is a little daunting. If you're considering giving RVing a try, we're here to help put you at ease. Because, as you'll read, RVing is not only fun, but also super flexible and adaptable to any traveler.

We're going to give you answers to some of the most basic questions rookie RVers have, so that you're comfortable with and prepared for exploring this fun and flexible mode of travel.

Some of the questions we'll explore:

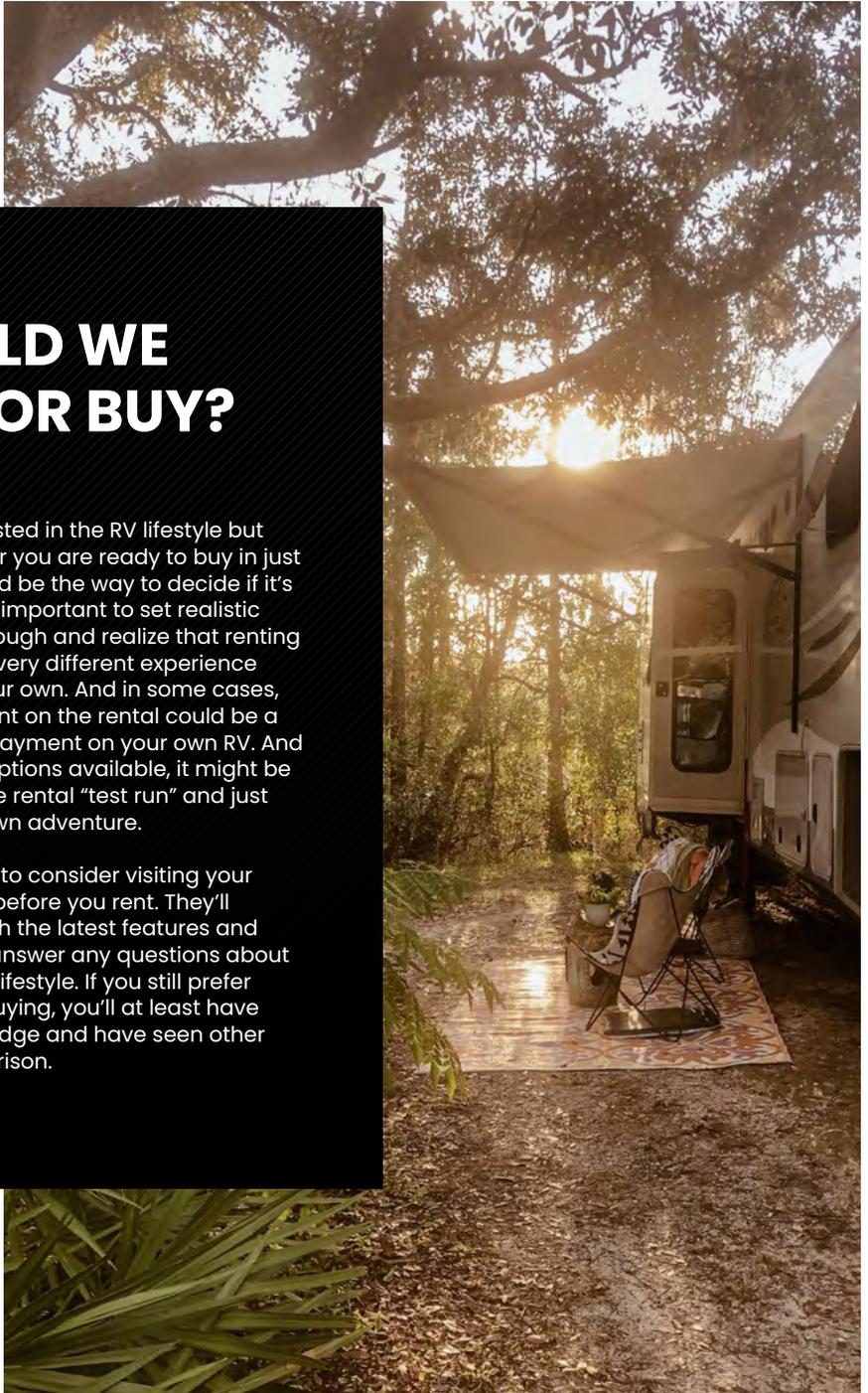
**SHOULD WE RENT OR BUY?
WHERE DO WE SEE RVs IN PERSON?
HOW DO WE IDENTIFY THE RIGHT RV?
WHERE DO WE KEEP AN RV?
WHERE DO WE GO IN AN RV?
HOW DO I FIND AND BOOK A CAMPSITE?
HOW DO I PACK AN RV?
HOW DO I COOK ON AN RV TRIP?**

We here at Highland Ridge hope this will help you get out there and do it with confidence and eager anticipation!

SHOULD WE RENT OR BUY?

If you are interested in the RV lifestyle but not sure whether you are ready to buy in just yet, renting could be the way to decide if it's right for you. It's important to set realistic expectations though and realize that renting an RV can be a very different experience than owning your own. And in some cases, the amount spent on the rental could be a sizeable down payment on your own RV. And with financing options available, it might be better to skip the rental "test run" and just dive into your own adventure.

You might want to consider visiting your local RV dealer before you rent. They'll walk you through the latest features and floorplans and answer any questions about RVing or the RV lifestyle. If you still prefer to rent before buying, you'll at least have baseline knowledge and have seen other units for comparison.



RV OWNERSHIP HAS SOME SERIOUS ADVANTAGES OVER RENTING.

COMPARE OVERALL PRICE. An RV rental for a week can be anywhere between \$1,000–\$3,500, depending on where/from whom you rent and the type of unit you rent. What's more, it's hard to know the exact amount of money you'll spend.

ENJOY (AND FEEL SAFE) IN YOUR OWN SPACE. While rental companies are stepping up in terms of sanitation, you're still using a unit that other people have lived in—as recently as the day before. It takes time and exploration to learn about your RV and all of its ins and outs. When you own your RV, you can master setting up camp at a nearby campsite for a day/night or even boondocking in your backyard.

READ THE FINE PRINT. When it comes to renting an RV, the number and variety of additional fees can be shocking. While a savvy renter will have visibility to some of these fees during the research/rental quoting process, many are not disclosed until the final bill at the end of your trip.

RENTALS ARE NOT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE FINISHES, DESIGN, AND AMENITIES YOU'LL GET IF YOU BUY. Rental units are designed and manufactured to be “bare-bones.” While you'll get a sense for the experience and setting, a rental doesn't expose you to all the capabilities of today's RVs.

RENTAL RVS GENERALLY COME BARE.

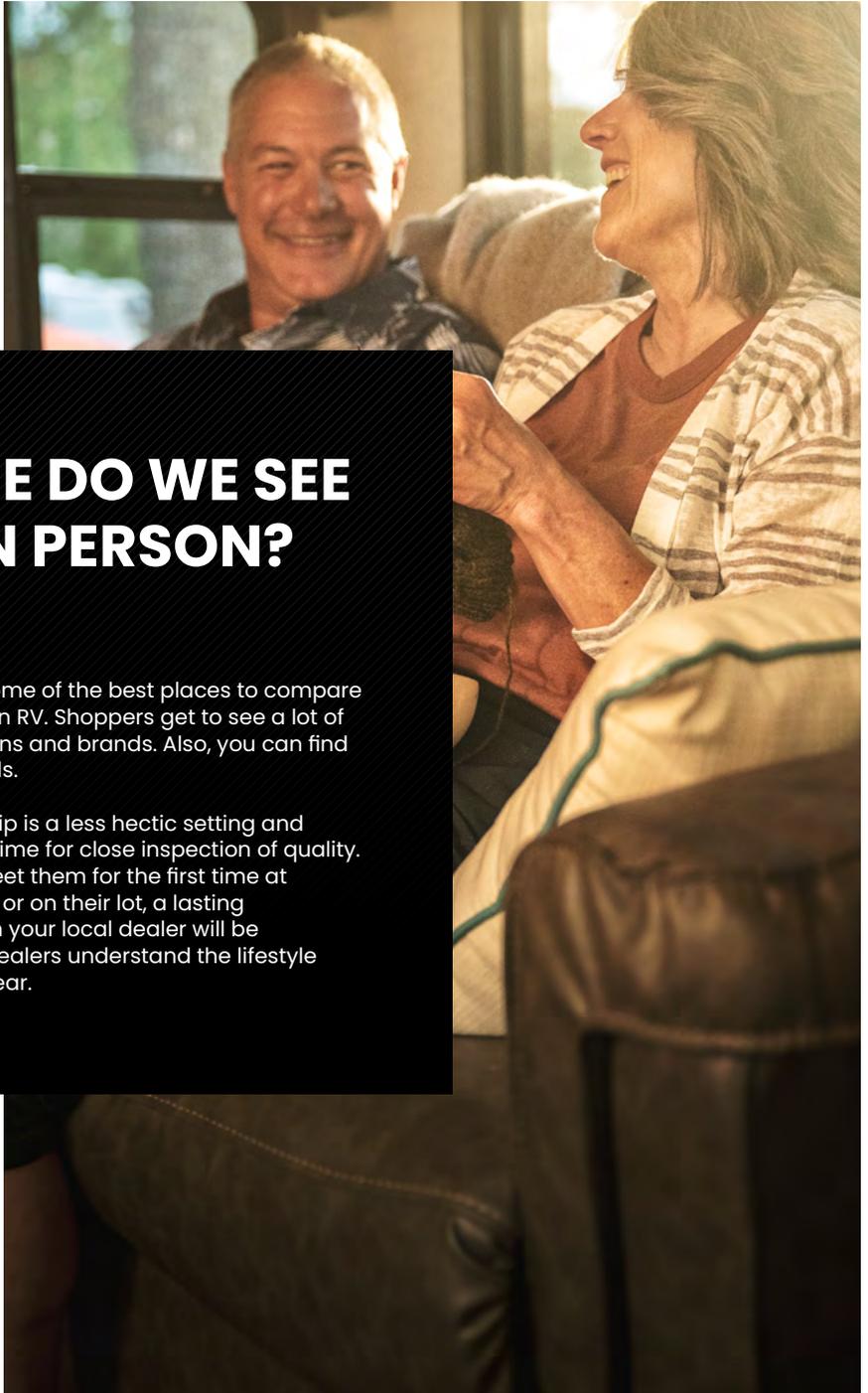
That means no linens, kitchen necessities and cleaning supplies. Those who own, on the other hand, can hit the road with less hassle because those essentials are already stored and ready to go in their RV.

DON'T FORGET YOUR FURRY FRIENDS.

One of the best things about RV travel is that it's easy to take your four-legged family members with you. But if you're renting, that might not be an option. If it is allowed, it will likely incur additional fees.

PICK UP AND DROP OFF TIMES. RV renters should be prepared to spend at least an hour on each end of their trip at the RV rental counter. Once you have the keys and are ready to go, you'll still need to load up your RV—and unload and clean at the end.





WHERE DO WE SEE RVS IN PERSON?

RV Shows are some of the best places to compare and purchase an RV. Shoppers get to see a lot of floorplans, options and brands. Also, you can find some good deals.

The RV dealership is a less hectic setting and can offer more time for close inspection of quality. Whether you meet them for the first time at a regional show or on their lot, a lasting relationship with your local dealer will be invaluable. RV dealers understand the lifestyle and know the gear.

NO NEED TO GET OVERWHELMED AT THE RV SHOW... MAKE THE MOST OF YOUR TIME

FAMILIARIZE YOURSELF WITH BRANDS.

You'll save time at the show if you have a basic understanding of what differentiates brands from each other. Also, not all manufacturers list their MSRPs on their website, but if they do, you can use MSRPs to compare units and any deals you see at the show. All this narrowing down will help you create a plan of attack, so you can walk past the units you already know won't work and see as many "potentials" as possible.

MAP YOUR SHOW. Make efficient use of your time. Print out a map from the event website, plan a route through the displays and bring it with you. Find out which nearby dealer will have displays and be sure to include them in your route.

GET TO KNOW YOUR DEALER. This is a great opportunity to establish or build on an existing relationship with your Highland Ridge dealer. Exchange information and keep in touch. You'll find they're a valuable and willing resource for you no matter your familiarity with the lifestyle.

CONSIDER YOUR TRAVEL COMPANIONS. If you typically travel with friends or family, consider bringing them along so you can bolster your knowledge together, based on how you like to travel and the experiences you enjoy sharing most. Many shows are pet friendly as well.

PLOT YOUR COURSE AND DRESS FOR COMFORT.

It's a lot easier to take in all an event has to offer when you're not distracted by achy feet or the warm sun. Many shows take place outdoors, so check the forecast, dress and pack accordingly. Some shows are rather large, so wear comfortable shoes and get ready to walk! Preplanning a path will help you see everything you wanted to see without making you downright exhausted once you're ready to choose.

FIND THE BEST TIME TO ATTEND. If crowds aren't your thing, go early in the day or, if possible, on a weekday. Also, keep an eye out for deals on admission. Events may have discounted twilight rates or on certain days for veterans, seniors or children.

RVERS AND CAMPERS ARE VERY COMMUNAL, ENGAGE WITH THEM. They share a rare and unique comradery. Don't hesitate to engage with other attendees. You're sure to hear some great stories, learn about interesting destinations and pick up some tricks for making your time on the road a little easier.

EDUCATIONAL SEMINARS typically provide insights into the lifestyle, unique trip ideas and innovations that make life on the road a little easier, especially for newer RVers. Often delivered by industry veterans or full- and long-time RVers, you'll get a strong sense of what the community is like instead of feeling like you're getting the hard sell from a campground or technology pitch man.

DOCUMENT, DOCUMENT, DOCUMENT. Take notes, pictures or videos and collect product brochures. You'll see so much in a day at an RV show that it's smart to take measures to help remember things.

COMPILE A LIST OF NEEDS. This will help you remember your non-negotiables and save you time as you walk the rows of units. You may like a unit, but it doesn't fit your needs, move on.

UNDERSTAND THE PURCHASING PROCESS. When you decide on a unit at the show or decide to order a unit with your specified options, the negotiation begins. This could include the asking price, financing terms, trade-in value—whatever financial aspects that are involved. Have a firm idea before you get to the show what your budget is, whether you're looking for the right monthly payment or are planning to pay it in full.

And one more thing: if this is your first time buying an RV, know that you won't be going home with it that day. The dealer will want to do some final detailing, run some final quality checks and schedule a proper walkthrough with you.



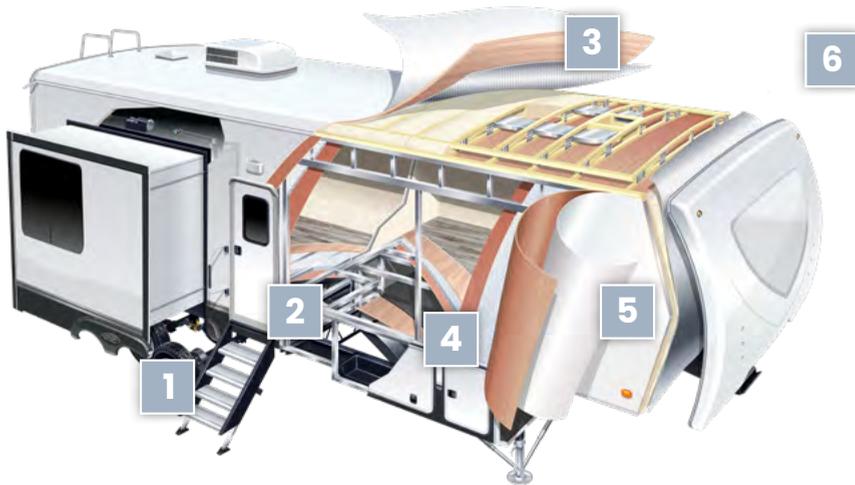
INSPECT THINGS AND TAKE THE TIME TO LEARN AT THE DEALERSHIP.

This will serve as your home away from home. You deserve the assurance that your RV is going to withstand the elements while you enjoy the journey, and much of it is rooted in the things you can't necessarily see. Selecting the right options will certainly add to the experience your RV provides, but the overall durability, consistency of comfort, and resale or trade-in value of your RV lies in its fundamental construction elements.

The best, and in some cases the only chance to learn some key details about the RV's construction is at the dealership. So, take this opportunity to ask questions. Flip switches and feel materials and construction features with your own hands and ask the questions you've always wanted to ask.



HERE ARE A FEW EXAMPLES OF THE KINDS OF CONSTRUCTION AND DETAILS TO LOOK AND ASK FOR DURING YOUR TIME AT THE DEALERSHIP.



1 SLIDEOUTS

- Best in class slide height and depth
- Flush floor slides with vinyl flooring
- Electric motor slide system
- Fully laminated construction plus 3M® flashing tape along corners to prevent leaks

2 DOORS & LOCKS

- Full-width entrance doors with built-in screen doors
- Entrance and baggage doors on secure and convenient Keyed-Alike™ system

3 ROOF

- Double batten insulation layered with radiant foil
- Screw-mounted plywood decking
- PVC roofing membrane with 15 year limited warranty/non-prorated
- No treatment required! Will not chalk or spot
- Heat reflecting properties keep coach cooler in the summer

4 FLOORS

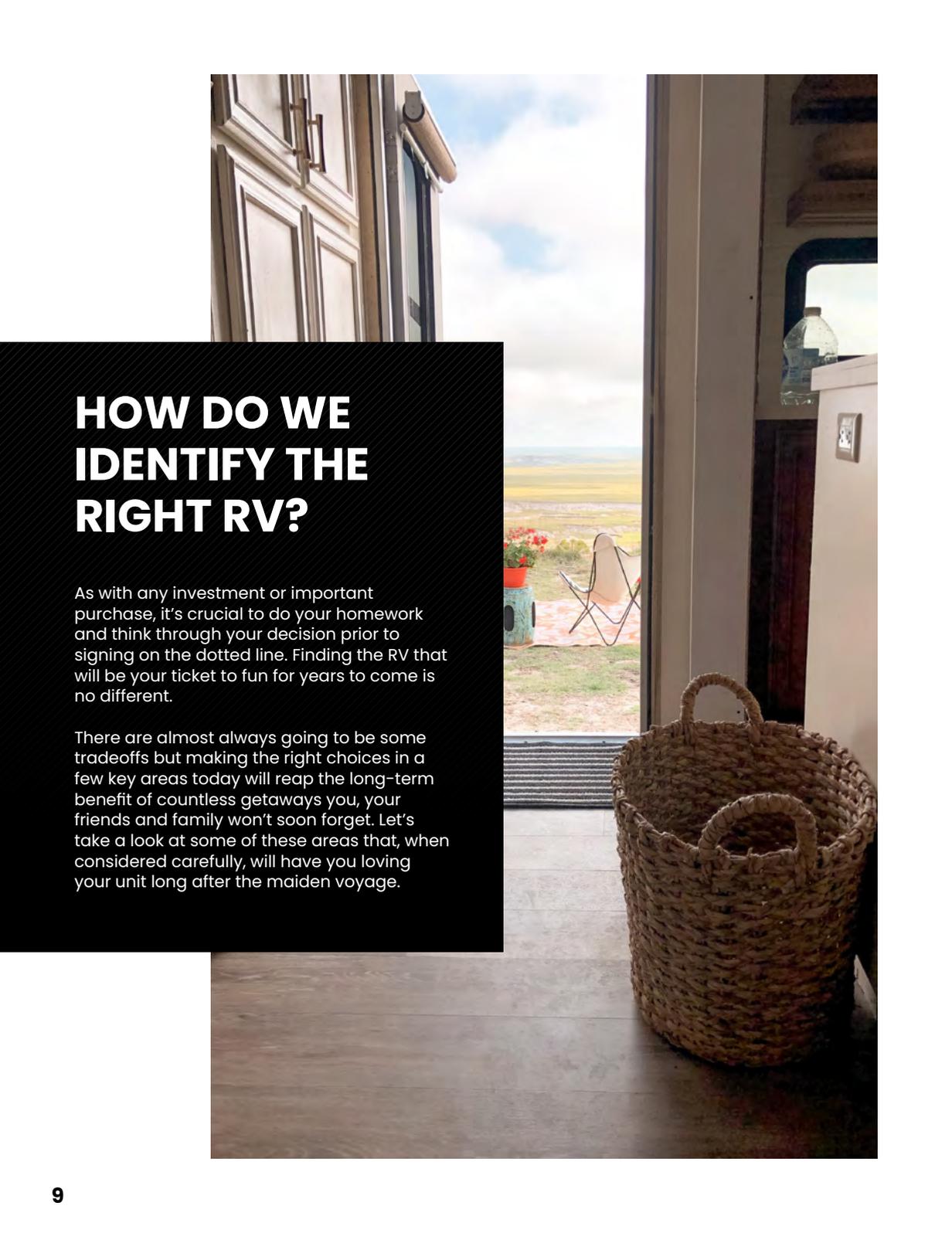
- Wood framed construction with floor joist 16" on center 5/8 tongue and groove residential floor decking
- Residential vinyl flooring throughout
- Insulated with residential fiberglass insulation with an added layer of radiant foil
- Bottom wrapped with an anti-puncture woven moisture barrier

5 SIDEWALLS

- Lightweight, double-welded aluminum framed walls
- Rigid foam insulation
- Gelcoat fiberglass—all sidewalls, rear walls, slide out endwalls and roof are fully laminated

6 MAIN BODY

- Class-leading I-beam chassis and draw bars
- Equa-Flex® suspension system
- Aluminum wheels with nitrogen-filled tires

A photograph of an RV interior. On the left, there are white kitchen cabinets with gold handles. On the right, a doorway leads to an outdoor area with a folding chair, a potted plant, and a view of a vast, flat landscape under a cloudy sky. In the foreground, a large, empty, light-colored woven basket sits on the floor. A water bottle is visible on a shelf in the background.

HOW DO WE IDENTIFY THE RIGHT RV?

As with any investment or important purchase, it's crucial to do your homework and think through your decision prior to signing on the dotted line. Finding the RV that will be your ticket to fun for years to come is no different.

There are almost always going to be some tradeoffs but making the right choices in a few key areas today will reap the long-term benefit of countless getaways you, your friends and family won't soon forget. Let's take a look at some of these areas that, when considered carefully, will have you loving your unit long after the maiden voyage.

DO NOT OVERLOOK THE CORE ELEMENTS OF A UNIT. While modern RVs are chock full of exciting technology, updated appliances and chic décor, a great deal of importance and attention should be paid to the “nuts and bolts” too—think the chassis or frame, roof, walls and insulation, flooring, suspension, hitch components—all the stuff that may not catch your eye. While not flashy, those are the factors that translate to less maintenance, fewer repairs, more durability and higher resale value. Evaluate the quality of the core construction, then go from there.

ESTABLISH AND STICK TO PRIORITIES. Decisions on things like interior décor and options may come down to weighing “wants” vs. “needs.” Leather seating, vinyl flooring, outdoor TVs or sinks, residential-level décor may all make you say, “I want that,” but stay focused initially on the things that make you say, “We’ll definitely need that.”

Take into consideration how you actually plan to use your unit and how you like to camp. Love spending most of your time outdoors? Maybe you can forego extra bells and whistles on the inside of your RV, but look for outside kitchens or entertainment centers. Then again, if you have an antsy bunch who like plenty of options to keep everyone busy on a rainy day, extras on the inside might be the right choice. However you like to enjoy your RV, weigh your options based on your specific needs.

SELECTING THE RIGHT FLOORPLAN IS CRITICAL TO THE OVERALL ENJOYMENT OF AN RV. Some insider info for you: There’s a saying in the business that floorplans sell RVs. While not entirely true, it speaks to the importance of choosing the right one.

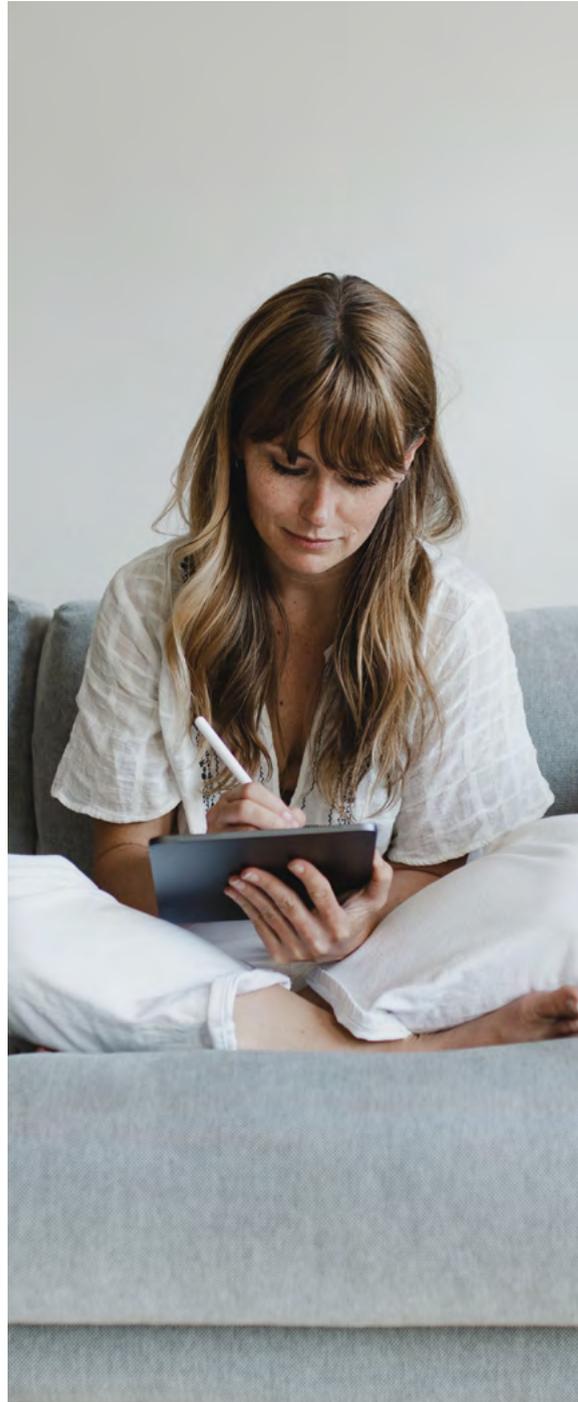
Take into account the type of camping you enjoy most; whether you’ll be making weekend adventures or longer hauls, and the activities that fill your trips will help determine your storage needs. Then, think about who will be traveling in the RV most often—you and your spouse, other couples, the kids and their friends? Is it important that the kids have their own area? Answers to questions like these will help you decide on sleeping capacity. Don’t forget the kitchen. If you prefer to cook inside, outside or fireside will determine your culinary needs. Once you’ve settled on these things, see as many floorplans as possible to get a clearer picture of how these factors fit with the layout today and down the road.



SEE FOR YOURSELF. The Internet provides buyers all kinds of information; manufacturer videos reveal construction tactics; forums can provide firsthand testimonials; elaborate technologies can be distilled down into simple graphics; the list goes on and on. That said, subtle differences on paper—or on screen—can dramatically affect livability in real life. There’s simply no better way to decide which RV is for you than to have a “walk-around.” Even if it’s not the exact floorplan you’re after, seeing the same model can make it easier to envision how the RV will serve your needs.

It’s also the best way to judge the overall quality of a unit, those core elements we talked about earlier. No matter the floorplan, you’ll get a sense for how well different brands are built.

CONSIDERING ALL YOUR RESOURCES, TOGETHER. Regardless of your budget or camping style, there’s something perfect for you if you look hard enough. Speaking with another RVer or spending an extra hour online doing research is all worth it when you find your ideal RV. The tools and resources are available out there: manufacturer websites, brochures and 360-degree virtual tours are easily accessible.





WHERE DO WE KEEP AN RV?

If you're a city dweller that has, or is thinking about buying an RV, there's an ownership factor that's bigger for you than suburbanite and space-rich rural RV owners: where to park your unit when you aren't using it. Wherever you live you'll need to consider where you'll keep your unit when not in use.

RV trends are making storage easier. Especially in the towable sector, there are more small options than ever before. Having a garage isn't all that uncommon, even in an urban area, and more and more units are being designed to fit comfortably in them.

THERE ARE ALL KINDS OF OPTIONS OUT THERE.

GET BY WITH A LITTLE HELP FROM YOUR FRIENDS. It may be the best option to keep your RV in a friend's driveway or backyard. You'll know who's watching it and can have someone quickly check on things if necessary. Here's a pro tip for you and your friend: look into homeowner association rules first. You'll find that some are surprisingly tough on what you can park on your property and where exactly.

YOUR NEXT STOP SHOULD BE AN RV DEALER. They know your area, talk with other RV owners all the time and know what might be needed for the specific unit you own or are thinking of owning. Some dealers even offer storage, which can be a great solution. They usually charge monthly fees based on length. Need some maintenance or service performed? Having it done at the same place where you store your unit is extra convenient.

CHECK ONLINE MARKETPLACE. The more people around, the more effective a tool like online marketplaces are. That's good news for RVing city folk. In addition to searching for just about any good or service, you can also post what you're in need of, like a space for your RV. You may find a mix of private citizens and businesses, so you'll definitely want to do your due diligence before agreeing to anything.

FIRE UP GOOGLE. A quick Google search with the term "RV storage" or "vehicle storage" and your location will likely give you some indoor and outdoor options. For those willing to pay, some facilities will pick up and deliver your RV. Cost and availability will depend on the size of your RV.

In addition to searching for just about any good or service, you can also find social communities and share what you're looking for, like a space for your RV. You may come across a mix of private citizens and businesses, so you'll definitely want to do your due diligence.



WHERE DO WE GO IN AN RV?

Enjoying a family RV trip begins long before you pull into the campground. Although some people love to travel on a whim, free of checklists and agendas, planning can be the key to happiness for popular destinations.

The real trick is finding a good balance. You definitely don't want to overschedule every day of the vacation, but without any itinerary at all you may miss out on some really great experiences. Plan 'must-dos' but leave space in the schedule in case of poor weather and the family's mood—allowing for down time can be vital to enjoying that big adventure you've planned.

It can be hard to squeeze in every single activity and attraction that a destination has to offer. Eliminate disagreements and stress by deciding on an A-list far in advance of the trip. Make sure your A-list includes picks from everyone in the family—including the kids! No one wants to end a trip feeling disappointed that they didn't get to do a bucket list activity. All you really need for a great RV trip is a rough agenda, some free time and quality time with your favorite people.



THERE'S MORE THAN ONE WAY TO BUILD AN ITINERARY.

EAT YOUR HEART OUT. Let your stomach guide the way by mapping your route around a specific food or heading to areas where regional cuisine is all the rage. Whether you travel to the Northeast to try an abundance of fresh lobster spots, to northern Michigan for delicious cherries or to the Pacific Northwest for salmon, a cuisine-inspired trip is a great way to unleash your inner foodie.

GO WHERE THE MUSIC TAKES YOU. Whether you map your itinerary around music festivals across the country or want to follow your favorite band on tour, plan your trip around a good time—and a good beat. Many festivals take place during the summer months and often have dedicated RV camping areas for you to enjoy the festivities.

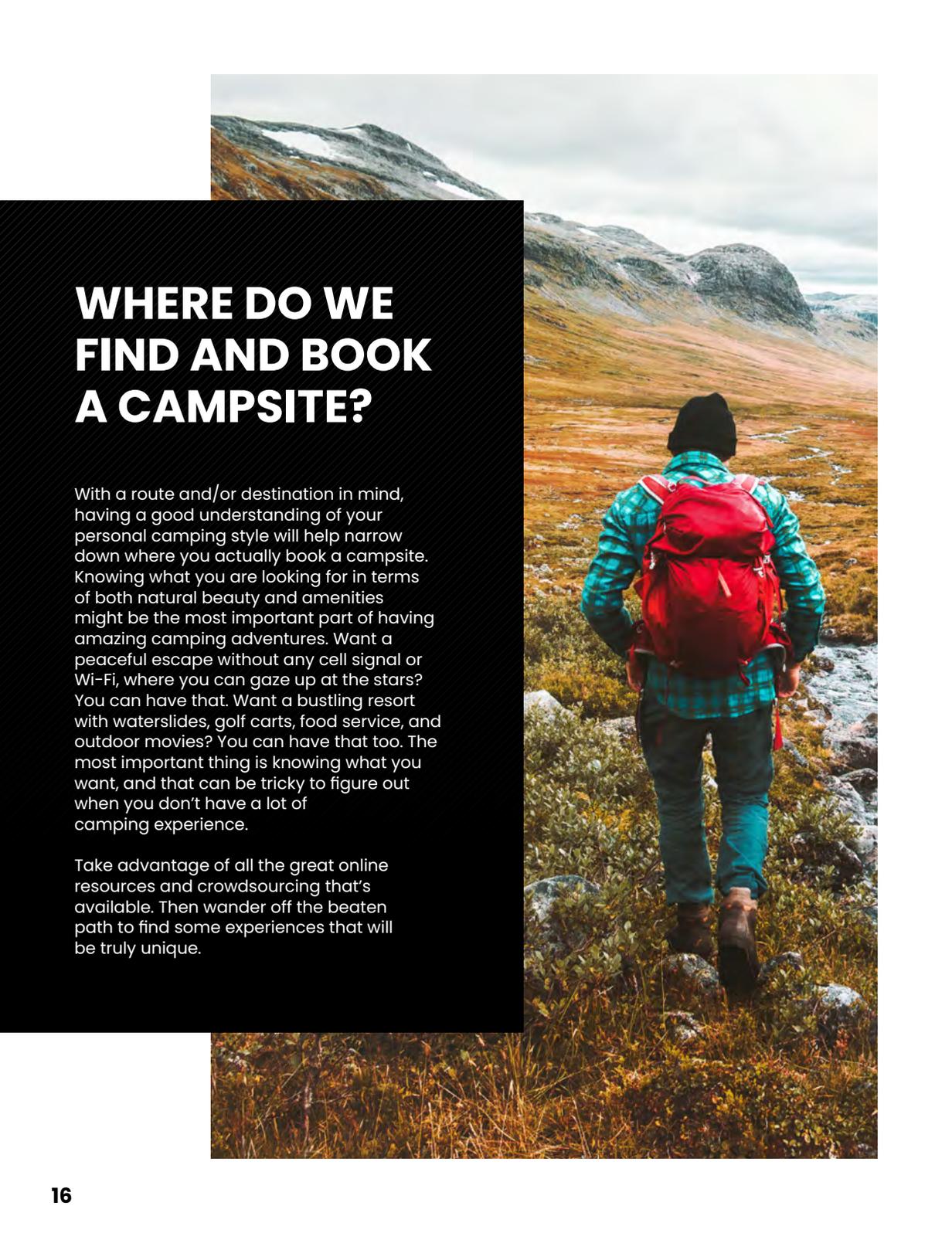
WORK AND PLAY. Take to the road but hang on to your day job—the workamper way. Plan your stops around your next jobsite or pick areas that will inspire productivity while you work remotely so you can enjoy your surroundings when the workday is done.

TAKE NATURE'S COURSE. Capture the beauty of nature across the United States. Explore new terrain and spot wildlife by stopping at some of the country's most stunning national and state parks, like Yellowstone National Park in the West or Acadia National Park in the Northeast.

HISTORY IN THE MAKING. Plan an itinerary that will guide you through history. From Civil War battlegrounds in the South to ancient ruins in the Southwest, the United States is home to many locations with historical significance—so you can learn more about our past on the road.

LET GREAT BOOKS INSPIRE YOU. We are so entrenched in an internet and app culture, that sometimes we forget about travel books. Find out if there are any great books written about your destination, or stories that take place there. For instance, reading books like *The Lobster Coast* and *The Lobster Chronicles* before visiting coastal Maine will give you a deeper understanding of the region.

YES, YOU CAN VISIT THE CITY IN AN RV. You may be surprised what overnight options are available in the heart of big cities. For instance, Chicago's downtown convention center, McCormick Place, offers options in its lots, and a park just outside New York City is quick a 15-minute train ride from Manhattan. You can also take advantage of public transportation. While there are chances to spend nights within the city limits, there will often be several more options for you a little farther out.

A hiker with a red backpack is seen from behind, walking through a rugged mountain landscape. The hiker is wearing a teal and blue plaid jacket and dark pants. The terrain is rocky and covered with low-lying vegetation in shades of brown and green. In the background, there are large, rocky mountains under a cloudy sky. A small inset image in the top left corner shows a close-up of a mountain peak with patches of snow.

WHERE DO WE FIND AND BOOK A CAMPSITE?

With a route and/or destination in mind, having a good understanding of your personal camping style will help narrow down where you actually book a campsite. Knowing what you are looking for in terms of both natural beauty and amenities might be the most important part of having amazing camping adventures. Want a peaceful escape without any cell signal or Wi-Fi, where you can gaze up at the stars? You can have that. Want a bustling resort with waterslides, golf carts, food service, and outdoor movies? You can have that too. The most important thing is knowing what you want, and that can be tricky to figure out when you don't have a lot of camping experience.

Take advantage of all the great online resources and crowdsourcing that's available. Then wander off the beaten path to find some experiences that will be truly unique.

PUBLIC CAMPGROUNDS: FEWER HOOKUPS, MORE AFFORDABLE SITES IN STUNNING PLACES.

The most popular **STATE PARK** campgrounds can be difficult to book. Try to get a site on the day the reservation window opens up. This will require some advance planning, but the reward will be huge. Think large sites, in beautiful locations, at affordable prices. Time to start planning now.

COUNTY PARKS often fly under the radar and are mostly used by locals. They may not always be located in name brand locations, but they offer peace and quiet for a fraction of the cost of private campgrounds. They are great for getting back to nature and kicking back and relaxing for the weekend.

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE campgrounds are often located in prime locations in the heart of our country's astonishingly beautiful national parks. Sites are difficult to get at popular national parks like Yellowstone and Yosemite, so advanced planning is a must. Many NPS campgrounds do not offer water and electric hookups, so plan on being prepared to dry camp in most situations.

Most RV owners don't know much about **CORPS OF ENGINEERS** (or COE) campgrounds, because they can be a bit difficult to find online. But they are worth seeking out. Most are located directly on the water and offer large sites and basic hookups at great prices. If you love to kayak or standup paddleboard then COE campgrounds will quickly shoot to the top of your bucket list.



PRIVATE CAMPGROUNDS: FULL HOOKUPS, AMENITIES (E.G. POOLS, PLAYGROUNDS, DOG PARKS AND LAUNDRY ROOMS) ARE MORE EXPENSIVE

FAMILY-OWNED campgrounds can range from rustic to resort. But most offer activities and amenities that are not present at a typical state or county park. Many of them will have pools and playgrounds that make them great for RV owners with children. They also typically have staff on hand to help new campers and on-site camp stores in case you forget ketchup or other pantry basics.

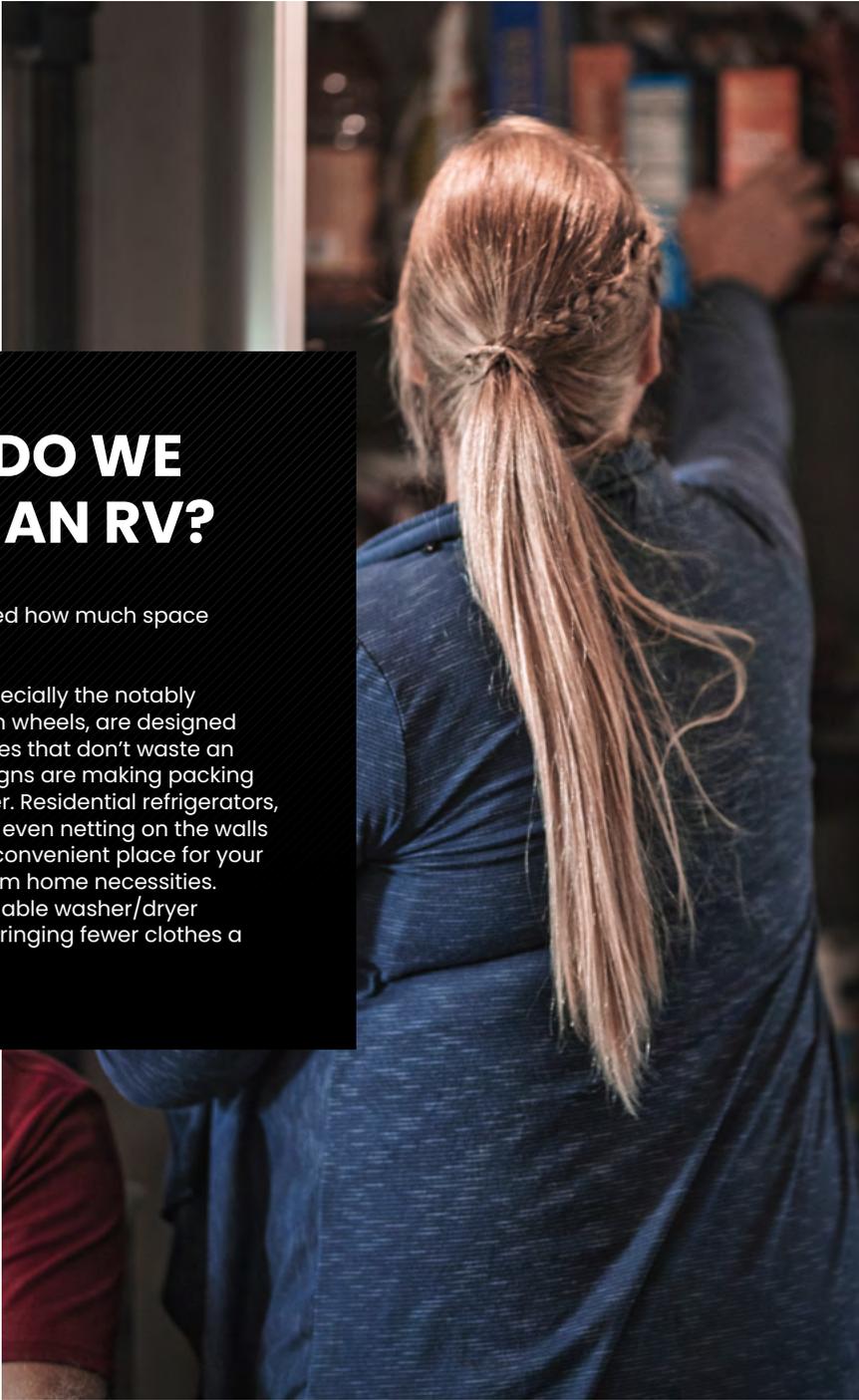
KOA is a franchise system and the vast majority of their 500+ campgrounds are operated by families and small business owners. KOA has a branding system that labels most of their campgrounds with either a Journey, Holiday, or Resort designation. Journey campgrounds make for excellent overnight stops. Holiday campgrounds serve as great basecamps for exploring a region. Resorts offer an all-in-one experience for a complete vacation right on-site.

JELLYSTONE PARK CAMPGROUNDS are designed for families and typically offer robust activities and amenities. Most Jellystones have excellent pools and some even have waterparks! Jellystone campgrounds are also good for families with teenagers because they typically have a wide variety of sports courts and playing fields.

RESORT CAMPING is on trend in many parts of the country. These campgrounds offer just about everything that a high-end resort hotel offers, but you get to pull your RV up instead of staying in a hotel room. Think pool bars, on-site restaurants, hot tubs, yoga classes and even concierge service at the front desk.

HARVEST HOSTS, HIPCAMP, RESERVE AMERICA follow a similar model to Airbnb and Vrbo. Small businesses and property owners rent out space on their property to RVers via the Web. Often, these are one-of-a kind spots like farms, wineries, breweries in locales where campgrounds are crowded or hard to find.

No matter where you go or how you plan your route, reserve your sites early (several months in advance). It's more competitive than ever for the best sites. Calling a campground is a smart move too. Not only can you get a better sense of what a site is like and where it is at the campground, but if you call closer to your arrival, you may be able to upgrade sites because of a cancellation.



HOW DO WE PACK AN RV?

You'll be surprised how much space there is.

Today's RVs, especially the notably storage-rich fifth wheels, are designed with smart spaces that don't waste an inch. Smart designs are making packing easier and easier. Residential refrigerators, kitchen pantries even netting on the walls make finding a convenient place for your home-away-from-home necessities. Meanwhile, available washer/dryer combos make bringing fewer clothes a lot easier.

PACKING CAN AFFECT THE TOWING EXPERIENCE. Be sure to consider the GVW (gross vehicle weight) of your rig and the towing capacity of your vehicle. When in doubt, find a truck scale to see if you are within your limits when the RV is fully loaded.

SIZE UP YOUR FAVORITE UNIT'S SPACE. If there are certain things you know you can't travel without, take them with you to the dealership to see how they fit in the basement storage or overhead bins.

MAKE A MASTER PACKING LIST. Create a list of all the items you may need for an RV vacation. While many of these items can permanently stay in the RV, some items need to be periodically replenished or have to be loaded each time. Use your master packing list to double-check your RV before each trip. At the end of the camping season, you will need to clear any items out of the RV that you don't want to store in it over the winter. The master packing list is useful in the spring when you reload the RV for a new camping season.

MAKE A SEPARATE PACKING LIST FOR THE KIDS. You don't need to hear "Hey mom, you forgot my belt. Hey dad, I can't find my charger." Create a separate packing list for each. It's a good lesson in accountability and responsibility also. You can make the complexity of the packing list match your children's ages. For younger children, you might create a page of photos or clip art images of the items they are responsible for.

USE BINS AND BAGS TO ORGANIZE. Cutting the clutter is essential. Use bins and bags to keep things organized inside each cabinet, a tub for office supplies, one for toiletries, one for medicines, etc. Use bins that stack nicely, sort your items into sensible categories, and label the bins, as needed. Having meaningful storage solutions helps everyone in the family learn where things are and where they belong. Whether you go the bin route or not, place nonslip liners in all cabinets.

FIND ROUTINES TO MAKE UNPACKING EASIER. Don't feel obligated to unpack everything as soon as you park. Pull out the essential items (such as groceries, toiletries and pillows) and leave the rest for later. Once everyone is feeling refreshed, set up a family assembly line to move items from the RV to the house. Establish who stays inside deciding what stays in and what goes out, while the rest of the family carries stuff in?

THINK VERTICALLY. Hang a shoe organizer in bedroom closets to maximize space for clothes. Use removable adhesive hooks on the wall of your kitchen to hang larger cooking utensils rather than shoving them in a drawer and taking up more space. Organize all of your travel documents (i.e. guides, RV park reservations, important paperwork) into hanging wall or door pockets to keep them all in one, easily accessible place.



HOW DO WE COOK ON AN RV TRIP?

For the traditional vacationer looking for a low-stress experience, hotel cooking or visits to touristy restaurants can be anything but. Campsite cooking, on the other hand, is quite simple—and a lot of fun for the whole family. Today's RVs offer large refrigerators and freezers, pantries and tons of counter space so you can bring your own favorite recipes or create new ones on the grill or campfire.

You aren't limited to jam-packed restaurants or market prices, plus you have the chance to experiment with fresh, local ingredients. The experience of cooking over an open fire or at your RV's outdoor kitchen is a truly special one and a great learning opportunity for the kids. Many RVers fall in love with cooking by the fire or at the grill—and the food just tastes better too.

A LITTLE PRE-TRIP PREP AND CAMPSITE CREATIVITY GO A LONG WAY.

MAKE A FLEXIBLE MEAL PLAN. Sketch out a rotating menu of three breakfasts and three lunches. Options such as oatmeal, cereal, tuna fish and peanut butter are all shelf stable and simple. Pack two or three freezer meals or homemade stew for the days when arriving at the campground or packing up to go home. Throw in some options for grilling and you should be set. Instead of stocking up on produce in advance, keep an eye out for farmers markets and roadside stands to enjoy the foods in season at your destination.

COMBINE SAVVY CHEF SKILLS WITH SOME PACKING PROWESS. Use Tic Tac® containers for your spice collection. At about a quarter the size of a traditional spice jar, the more spices you travel with, the more space you'll save.

ROUGH IT AND HAVE YOUR MORNING JOE. Fill a coffee filter with a large scoop of your favorite gourmet ground coffee, tie it tightly with dental floss and use it just like a teabag in a cup of hot water.

GHEE, OR CLARIFIED BUTTER, CAN BE A CAMPFIRE CHEF'S BEST FRIEND. A high smoke point makes it ideal for pan frying the catch of the day. Its concentrated flavor helps add to the basics like scrambled eggs or oatmeal. And its long shelf life makes it great for the road. Plus, it's healthier than regular butter.

PLACE HERBS LIKE SAGE OR ROSEMARY DIRECTLY ON THE COALS. To add a jolt of flavor to any dish, simply soak the herbs for a few minutes, allow the coals to burn down to an even gray and place the bundles on top. Once the initial smoke settles, add meat or veggies to the grill. The more you can contain the smoke, the more flavor food will absorb.

TO COOK HAMBURGERS MORE EVENLY, POKE A HOLE IN THE MIDDLE. A hole about the size of your finger will disappear during cooking and the center will be cooked as deliciously perfect as the edges.

SLICE YOUR HOT DOGS. A small slice about halfway through skinless hot dogs on opposing ends will help the heat reach the center faster, prevent shriveling and delivers a juicier result.

CAST IRON IS AN INVALUABLE CAMPGROUND COOKING TOOL, STORE WITH CARE. To help preserve this cookware for years to come, store it somewhere it is sure to stay cool and dry.

ALUMINUM FOIL CAN BE YOUR BEST FRIEND. Not only is it good for storing food, but it makes the cooking part easier too. Whether cooking sliced potatoes, veggies, pasta (yes, pasta) or simply reheating over the fire, foil is a solid solution. Wrapping food in foil for cooking essentially creates a mini oven. Add a cube or two of ice to help prevent food from burning or drying out.

TAKE ADVANTAGE OF NATURE'S MOST ACCESSIBLE UTENSIL—STICKS. The moisture in a twig direct from a tree or bush—still green inside—will help keep it from catching fire. Simply scrape off any nubs and bark and you're ready to go.

A COOLER IS ALWAYS HANDY. Try freezing water in old milk jugs—don't fill them quite all the way since it will expand. It's a tidy way to help keep things cool and, once it melts, you have some extra water to drink or use for cleaning.

RVing gives you the opportunity to customize your travel experience—to truly make it your own. Whether it's fun and excitement you're after, rest and relaxation, quality time with family and friends or anything in between, traditional travel simply can't compete with the flexibility and cost control RVing offers. That's not even to mention the health, wellness and educational opportunities the campground can provide for the whole family.

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