

The Art of Reserving the Best RV Campsites: Lessons from a Campsite Reservation Ninja

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Reserving the best RV campsites in an era of campground overcrowding is challenging, but not impossible. In this article, you can learn how to channel your inner “Campsite Reservation Ninja” to get the spot of your dreams.

Reserving The Best RV Campsites Takes Work (and it’s worth the effort!)

Many RVers like having a plan and knowing when and where they’ll be camping weeks or months ahead. For campers who have very limited options, such as only a specific week or two of vacation time, it is a necessity.

Finding open campsites is challenging, especially during peak seasons and holiday weekends. It's even more challenging if you suddenly have time for a last minute summer RV trip.

The trick is to reach out of your comfort zone a little bit and go beyond asking your RVing friends or popular Facebook groups. You need to do a little deeper research on your own. You'll find that there are still plenty of sites available if you are willing to take the time to plan your RV trip and put in the research time.

Campground Availability – How To Find Campsites For Your 2021 Road Trip, by Patrick Buchanan

My wife Jeanne and I have been RV traveling full-time for three years. We've visited all Lower 48 U.S. states and six Canadian provinces. We both like having a plan to reserve the best RV campsites. I tell Jeanne, "Sure, sweetie, I'll find us a place to sleep 365 nights a year!" Umm, no pressure there.

Channel your inner Campsite Reservation Ninja

Being the trip planner, I've learned a few tricks to keep that promise.

To reserve the best RV campsites, all you need is knowledge, strategy, and a willingness to work at it. Sometimes, that means logging in to a reservation site at midnight before the opening bell, or rousing yourself out of bed at 4am to compensate for being three time zones away. It's worth the effort, though, so let's explore tips and tricks for finding open RV campsites.



Reserving the best RV campsites pays off. (Image: Erik Anderson)

How to Research Your Ideal Campgrounds & RV Parks

Two great RV trip planning resources are found in the RV Life family of resources:

[RV LIFE Campgrounds](#) offers a huge user-friendly campground and RV park database. You can research campground facilities, amenities, and find helpful real-life reviews from fellow RVers.

[RV LIFE Trip Wizard](#) is a one-stop resource that combines campground research with the best RV trip planning in one super convenient place. Check out the awesome trip planning features, which also provides one-click linking to the RV LIFE Campgrounds. Research campgrounds, go to reservation sites, book available campsites, and create customized trip plans all on one platform!

Other handy sites for reserving the best RV campsites are [Recreation.gov](#) and [ReserveAmerica.gov](#). They encompass nearly all U.S. National and State park destinations.

Many U.S. counties and local municipalities also have campground reservation sites, most often as part of their Parks & Recreation Departments.

If you are a Canadian RV, visit [ParksCanada.ca](#), as well as Canada's separate provincial parks campground reservation sites.

Watch Campground Reservation Windows

Most campgrounds and RV parks have reservation, or booking, windows. Those are the periods in which campsite reservations are accepted.

National, state park campgrounds, and other public campgrounds often have strict time frames for making reservations. To make matters more confusing, reservation windows can differ vastly from state-to-state and park-to-park.

We've encountered Florida county RV campgrounds with super-short 45-day booking windows.

At the other extreme, once we also needed to make reservations at prime Gulf of Mexico RV resorts thirteen months in advance!

Most national and state parks open their reservation window up to 12 months ahead. Below is an example of the booking window for Killens Pond State Park in Delaware.

This information isn't always easy to find on a reservations website. When in doubt, call the park or main reservation call center to find out.

BOOKING WINDOW

CABIN

Thu Jun 29 2023 - Fri Jun 28 2024

Reservations must be made 1 Day(s) ahead of arrival and can be made up to 12 Month(s) in advance.

PAVILION

Thu Jun 29 2023 - Fri Jun 28 2024

Reservations must be made 1 Day(s) ahead of arrival and can be made up to 12 Month(s) in advance.

PICNIC AREA

Thu Jun 29 2023 - Fri Jun 28 2024

Reservations must be made 1 Day(s) ahead of arrival and can be made up to 12 Month(s) in advance.

STANDARD

Wed Jun 28 2023 - Fri Jun 28 2024

Reservations can be made for today and can be made up to 12 Month(s) in advance.

TENT ONLY

Wed Jun 28 2023 - Fri Jun 28 2024

Reservations can be made for today and can be made up to 12 Month(s) in advance.

Pay attention to reservation windows. (Image: Erik Anderson)

When is the reservation window opening bell? You need to know. Some campsites become reservable at 8 a.m. Others become available at 7 p.m. or 12 midnight. It could be on a Saturday or Sunday, so pay attention.

Also, note the reservations websites' time zones. There's nothing worse than logging into a reservation site at 8 a.m. Central time, only to realize that the booking window opened up an hour earlier at 8 am Eastern time!

Knowing when the reservation window opens is a critical part of being a successful Campsite Reservation Ninja. You must be online and ready to click that "Book Now" button before the opening bell.

Campsite Priority Lists

Once settled on your preferred campground or RV parks, pre-select the best camp sites for your needs. For this, we use two resources:

1. **Campground maps of the place we want to stay, and**
2. **Google Satellite View**

In many national and state park reservation sites you can even click on the campsite map icons to see ground-level photos of campsites.



Photo showing campground road conditions. (Image: Dave Helgeson)

Compare the campground map features with Google Satellite View. Look for water views, and features like which sites have full-hookup or electric hook ups, closest restrooms, water stations, hiking trails, disability access if needed, etc. Review the location's minimum stay requirements, if any, and cancellation fees (which are typical). Then you can narrow the choices to your top picks.

We like having four to six sites picked out and on our pre-reservation list, ordered by preference. That way if our first choice is booked, we can immediately try the next one on our list.

Set Up Your Reservation Website Account Early

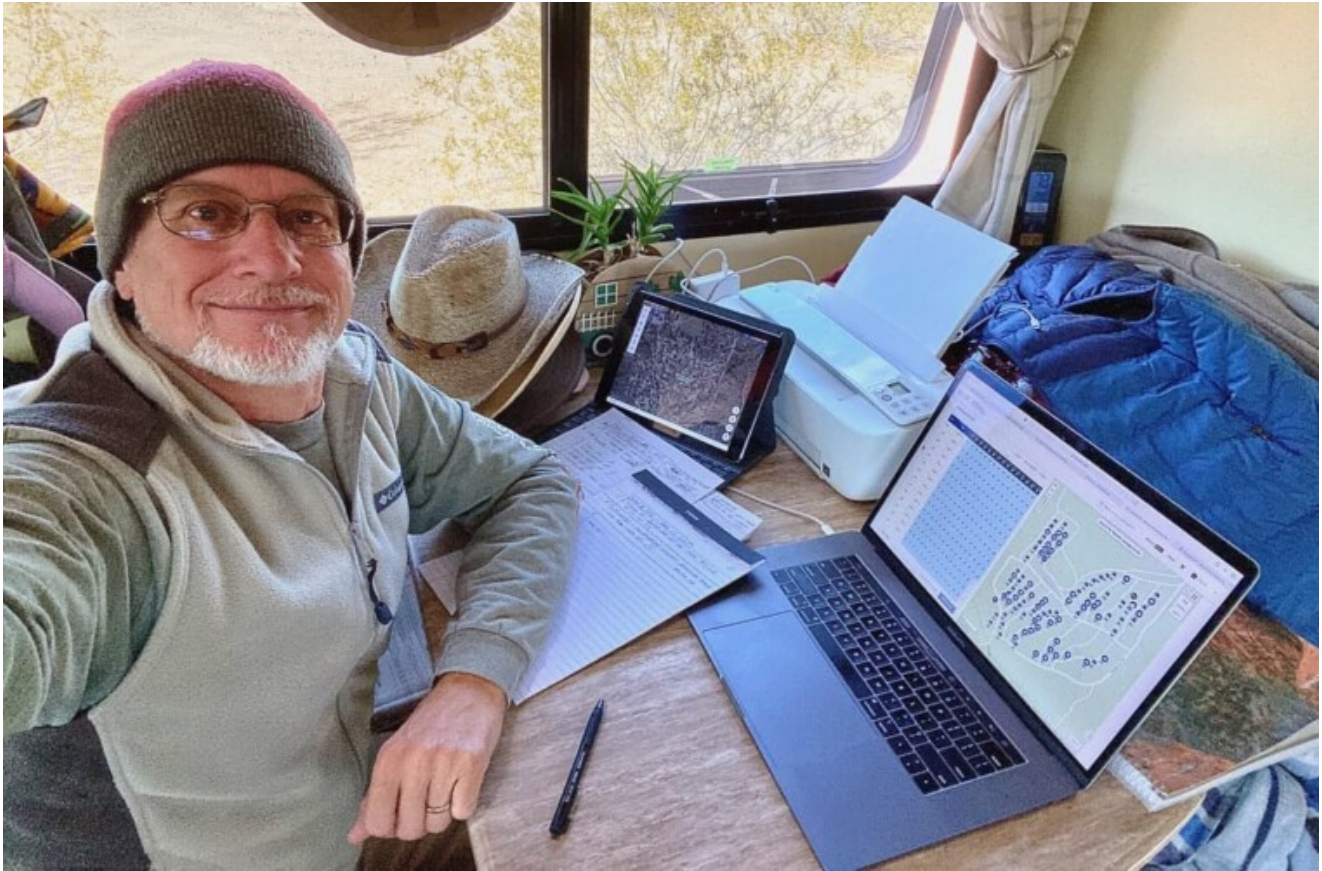
Unlike private RV parks, most national, state, county and similar reservations sites require you to create an account. Often, if you don't create an account, when you get to the point of booking a site, the website will require you to go back and create the account. That is nerve-racking if you are in the midst of booking rapidly disappearing campsites.

Plan Your Login Mission

Remember those booking windows and opening bell times? Set them in your calendar! And if necessary, set your alarm to wake up at least half an hour before the reservation window start-time.

Next, make sure computer connections are solid. Then check that you have the reservation site(s) login screen keyed up.

Get your Visa or Mastercard credit cards ready.



Get ready to book your reservation before the window opens. (Image: Erik Anderson)

Reservation Countdown Timers? Don't panic!

A heads up on reservation “countdown timers: Not all campground reservations websites have them, but some allow only a maximum number of minutes to complete your reservation. If you exceed the time limit, your campsite is automatically emptied from the shopping cart and released back into the system!

The countdown timer usually pops up after clicking “Book Now.” You’ll see a countdown limit for as short as seven minutes and, rarely, up to 20 minutes. When you see the timer, don’t panic. Calmly input the information required. Then, double-check your entries before checking out. This is why we suggest having all your information ready before starting the process to book an RV site.

Save Campsite Reservation Confirmations

You can breathe a sigh of relief when you see a message like “*Your reservation is booked!*” But don’t leave the website just yet.

Download and save, or print, all campsite reservation confirmation pages and emails before closing out.

Keep a “Camping Reservations” email folder on your phone to keep campsite reservations confirmations in one convenient place.

If you are using RV Life Trip Wizard for RV camping trip planning, now is a great time to enter reservation details in the “*Reservation*” and “*Comments*” fields of RV Trip Wizard’s trip plan.

RV Campground Cancellations: How to Grab Last-Minute Openings

Despite your efforts, you may still get shut out of favorite campsites. It happens. But, you have a few more tricks up your sleeve.

Step 1: Call the campground or reservation site directly.

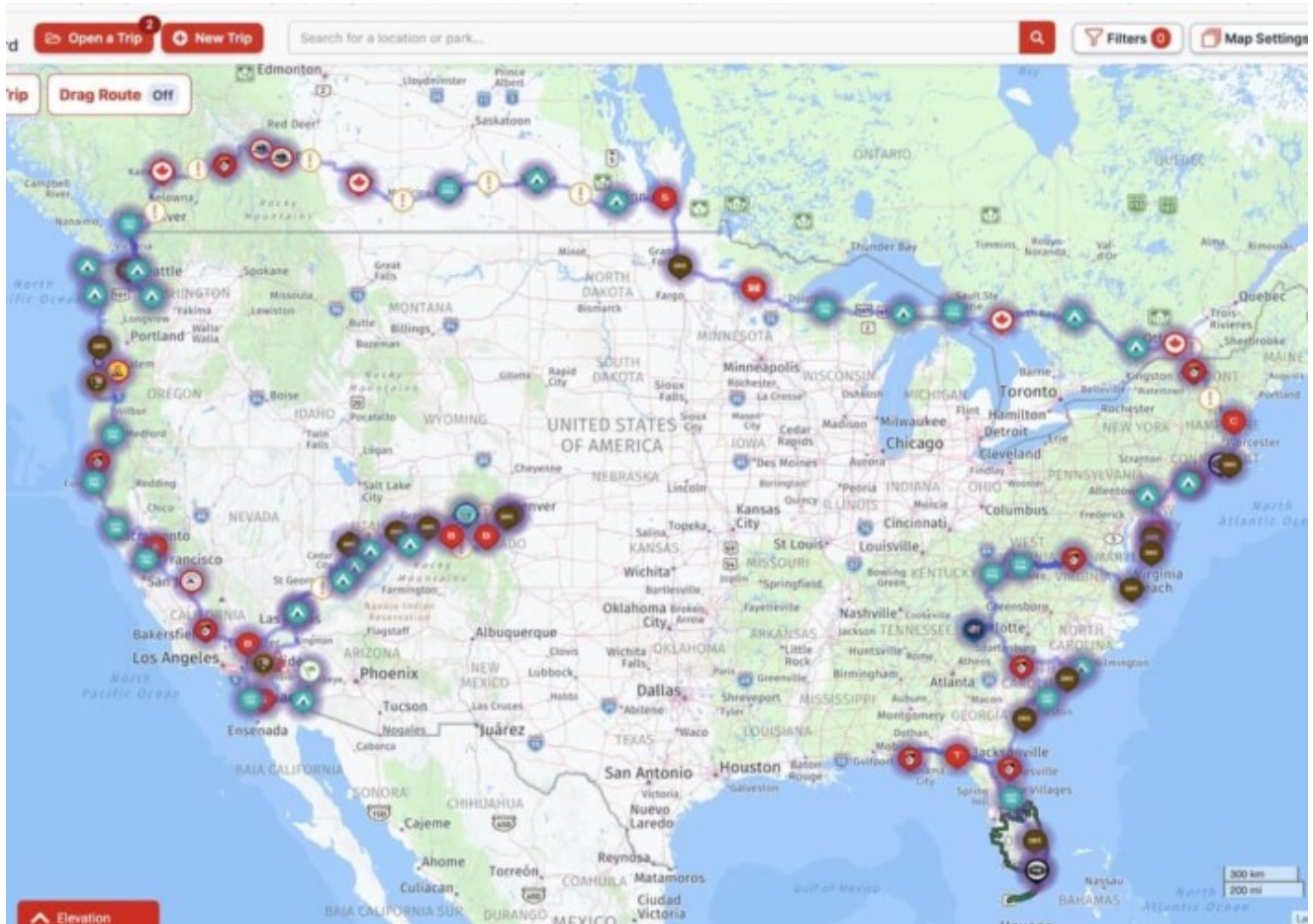
Sometimes the online reservation site doesn’t reflect real-time campsite availability. Park office staff or reservation agents may know of cancellations or changes that might work for you. They can often do the booking right over the phone, too.

Step 2: Go to a website that allows you to create search alerts for cancellations at many campgrounds for your specific dates.

There are a few of these websites out there, many charging varying reservation fees. But one promising free resource is Spot2Nite. Here’s an article and video explaining the service: [RV Camping Made Easy – Spot2Nite](#).

Create an account, and these last minute campsite reservations booking sites can repeatedly scan campground reservation sites for your arrival date preferences. When a campsite meeting your criteria opens up, you’ll get notified.

Usually, these sites provide a link directly to the reservation site for booking. But you need to act quickly as these are some of the best RV campsites and availability can be gone in a flash!



RV Trip Wizard researches trips and campgrounds. (Image: Erik Anderson)

Ready to Start Reserving The Best RV Campsites?

Armed with your new stealthy Campsite Reservation Ninja skills, you're now ready to snatch up amazing campsites! Here's how to do it:

- Do your research
- Prepare for reservation day
- Be online early armed with your ideal day of arrival and backup date.
- And get ready to click that "Book Now" button

This sounds like a lot of steps to book the best RV campsites. But it's worth the work. You'll feel great seeing those "*RV Campsite Booked!*" messages and knowing your next RV adventures are planned and ready to enjoy.

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About the Author:



Erik Anderson

Erik and his wife Jeanne have been living, remote-working, and traveling full-time around the U.S. and Canada in their mid-size Class A motorhome since July 2020. They love hiking, biking, kayaking, and adventuring with their beloved Cavalier King Charles spaniel, “Hershey Pup”. A well-traveled pup, Hershey has happily wagged his tail through all of the “Lower 48” U.S. states, 6 Canadian provinces, and 40 national parks. And they’re not done yet! Along with RV lifestyle media writing, Erik co-authors their Hershey Pup RV Adventures children’s book series. He loves how their pup’s RVing adventures makes kids smile!