


# Quartzsite Arizona Boondocking and Big Tent RV Show

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by Erik Anderson

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Each year in January brings a huge attraction for RVers from all over the country to the eclectic little desert town of Quartzsite, Arizona: the famous “Big Tent RV Show”. This year, the 2024 Quartzsite RV Show and Big Tent event starts on January 20th and runs until January 28th. In this guide, we share a ton of useful information to help you prepare for a trip to Quartzsite, the show, and boondocking in the desert.



## The Quartzsite Big Tent RV Show

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The big tent show is held at the Tyson Wells show grounds and features over 200 vendors of all things RV-related (and some non RV-related). All under one of the biggest tents you've ever seen. Hence, the unofficial "Big Tent" reference to the show! Both admission and parking for the event are free. Large RV dealers bring in huge inventory of new RVs to tour – and buy! Everything from travel trailers and 5th wheels to big-rig class A motorhomes.

On the show website is a list of exhibitors. And with the immense crowds at this event, it can be a wise strategy to make a list of those vendors, products and services that interest you most along with their booth numbers. That way, you can more quickly zero in on what you want or need, and not be overwhelmed by the entirety of it all.

Detailed information on the Big Tent RV Show can be found directly at their website:  
<https://www.quartzsitervshow.com>





## About Quartzsite Arizona

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Quartzsite, with only about 3,700 year-round residents, lies at the intersection of Interstate 10 and AZ Highway 95 in the middle of a desert valley in Arizona. It is a couple of hours west of Phoenix, 90 minutes north of Yuma, 90 mins south of Lake Havasu, and a couple of hours east of Palm Springs, California.

But by the end of January, when the RV Show kicks off, this small mellow town absolutely explodes with hundreds of thousands of RVers... estimates are as high as over 750,000!



## So, where do all of those RVers park and camp?

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While there are many private commercial RV parks in Quartzsite, most of them offering full hook ups and some amenities, in this post, we'll focus on the dispersed camping, or "boondocking" opportunities in the area. The adventure, freedom, and low-to-no-cost of boondocking in Quartzsite is a big part of the draw for thousands of those RVers.

## Where to find boondocking / dispersed camping in Quartzsite?

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There are several great dispersed camping/boondocking options surrounding Quartzsite, Arizona!

The standard **short term Bureau of Land Management (BLM) areas**, are free and have a 14-day maximum stay. They are located mainly north and west of town. Those are: Plomosa Road, Hi Jolly, and Dome Rock. Two more short-term areas are located on the south side of town: Scadden Wash and Roadrunner.

Then, you have the BLM **Long Term Visitor Areas (LTVA's)** just south of the town, on both the east and west sides of Highway 95. In the LTVA's you can stay September through April for a very reasonable fee. The cost is either \$40/two weeks, (which can be extended), or



\$180 for the entire season. The permits are also accepted at other LTVA's in Arizona and California. The LTVA areas are La Posa North, La Posa West, La Posa South, and La Posa Tyson Wash.



## RV Terms to Know...

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In case you were wondering....

### What is boondocking?

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Boondocking – also called ‘dry camping’, ‘free camping’ or ‘wild camping’, is RV camping without being hooked up to electricity, water or sewer connections. You’re just camping with the amenities you have on board your RV.

[Related Article: 29 Tips for Successful Boondocking](#)

### What is dispersed camping?

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Dispersed camping is the term used for camping OUTSIDE of a designated campground, like public lands and national forests. It means no services are provided; such as trash removal, and little or no facilities; like tables and fire pits. Some popular dispersed camping

areas may have toilets.



## **Short term (BLM) vs long term (LTVA) camping areas**

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Free is always great, but the long term paid option has its advantages, too. Here's a quick overview of each option.

### **Camping in the 14-day BLM camping areas**

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At the BLM 14-day areas, there are campground hosts near the entrances to check you in. If no-one is available, or it is after-hours, you can just go settle into a site and come back the next morning to check in and get the permit to post up in your RV window. Sites are not marked, but it is fairly obvious where others have camped previously, often including camper-made fire rings in many locations. Pay attention to signs indicating where you should NOT park, as these are policed by local rangers.

There are paid dump and water fill options in the town of Quartzsite, "The RV Pit Stop" on North Central Blvd/Hwy 95 being the largest and most popular. You can also dump and fill at many of the local RV parks (for a fee) or stay overnight to do your dump, fill, laundry, and enjoy a nice long shower.

## Services available at the Long Term (LTVA) areas

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The advantages of the LTVA's are a two-lane dump station, a separate "blue-boy" tote dump station, four potable water fill stations (both of those at the La Posa South LTVA), and trash dumpsters available in each LTVA area.



## Where did we camp?

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Since we decided to hang out in the desert for two full months, and didn't want to have to move, we purchased the \$180 LTVA permit. Essentially, our average nightly rate is working out to be \$2.73 per night! There are staffed visitor buildings near the entrances to purchase the permits (You'll need exact cash; no credit cards accepted).

Jeanne and I, and Hershey pup, have been boondocking at La Posa Tyson Wash BLM Long Term Visitor Area (LTVA) for seven weeks, (just a couple miles south of Quartzsite on the west side of Hwy 95). We'll be here through January 31st and the "Big Tent RV Show".





## How to Choose a Campsite in Quartzsite

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The sheer size of the BLM areas in Quartzsite – over 11,000 acres – and the huge number of site options, was seriously overwhelming to us when we arrived!

What worked well was to unhook our tow vehicle, and use it to drive around all of the areas to get a feel for each one and scope out preferred sites. Then we brought the coach to our top pick, set up camp, and settled in for the duration.

The BLM/LTVA main entrance roads are paved for a short distance and then you take gravel access roads to get to sites. The roads are all in good shape with 15mph limits. It is getting busier every day as the Big Tent RV Show nears, but there are still tons of dispersed camping sites available, and it gets more open the farther you look away from the town.

More information on camping on BLM lands in Arizona can be found here:  
<https://www.blm.gov/programs/recreation/recreation-activities/arizona>





## **Other Lesser Known Camping Areas in Quartzsite Arizona**

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Another lesser known dispersed camping option, one found in many areas around Arizona, is public camping on Arizona State Trust lands. These parcels are open to public recreational use, including dispersed camping, for a nominal fee. Individual permits are \$15 and family permits are \$20. They are valid for one year. In Quartzsite, there is a small area of State Trust lands adjacent to the town border on the NW side.

More information and the permit applications can be found at the Arizona Land Trust website: <https://asld.secure.force.com/recreationalpermit>

Permits can be easily downloaded and printed to display in your RV.







## What Else You Should Know about Quartzsite

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Another thing to know is that this place is DUSTY, pretty much everywhere! Our coach and toad are both going to need a serious cleaning inside and out, top to bottom!

### Winds and dust

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We found that the prevailing winds are fairly consistent out of the NW, so one should use that fact to help pick a site that is upwind, and maybe on the west side, of any road you may be near. As cars, trucks, RVs, and OHVs travel through the areas stirring things up, that NW wind will (sort of/sometimes/maybe) take the dust away from you. Just accept the dust, though, as it is part of the adventure, and plan on a thorough cleaning after leaving.

### Stay on safe ground

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Be sure also to keep your rig out of the “washes” (dry stream beds) or too close to them. It’s very hard to imagine them as raging torrents of water, but it can definitely happen. And avoid driving across them, especially if you have a low clearance rig. Stick to the roads to avoid bottoming out.

### Drinking water

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Quartzsite has a few salt-free, reverse osmosis water fill stations in town for drinking water. We're using the ones at The RV Pit Stop which costs \$0.25 cents/gallon or \$1.00/5 gallons. The machines take bills or quarters and are very convenient.

## Services

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There are plenty of services in Quartzsite...light groceries at the Roadrunner Market, gas, hardware store, restaurants and fast food places, and a plethora of diverse and eclectic vendors. For more substantial grocery and retail shopping, most folks will travel 35 minutes north to Parker, AZ, or 25 minutes west to Blythe, CA. A public library, mail/package shipping and receiving services, a post office, a large dog park, and more are also available in Quartzsite. Firewood can be found for sale in at least two places right near the Tyson Wells showgrounds.



## Mail and Internet / Cellular Connectivity in Quartzsite Arizona

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We heard horror stories about the Quartzsite post office becoming overwhelmed at this time of the year, so we've been having our mail forwarded to one of the local services, Quiet Times, on Main Street. They are super nice and helpful, and the least expensive mail and package receiving option at \$3.00 per piece (slightly higher for larger packages).



When you get into Quartzsite and settle in, look for the local monthly paper the “Desert Messenger”. It has lots of timely information on local services and events.

Cell/WiFi signals have been strong with both our Verizon and AT&T phones, tablets and MiFi hotspots. However, while we have been getting 3-4 bars consistently, as more and more campers arrive we see the speeds slowing down. We hear that it’s terribly slow in the days leading up to and during the RV Show week. Since I work remotely, this is a challenge and I am finding the connection faster during early mornings and speeding back up after 10:00 p.m.



## Temperatures and Wildlife in Quartzsite

We haven’t seen much wildlife, just an occasional rabbit and many birds, especially little flocks of quails, But, we do hear several packs of coyotes every night and early morning before dawn. So, if you have a dog(s) or kitties with you, keep them close and secure!

The famous Arizona sunsets and sunrises do not disappoint around Quartzsite! And, the desert sky and stars are amazing at night! The days have been beautiful, sunny and mid-60’s to 70 degrees. Night-time temps have been chilly...40’s and some nights down into the mid-30’s, but the beautiful sunny days make up for it.

If you venture out to Quartzsite for The Big Tent RV Show and choose to boondock in the desert, you are sure to have a very interesting and memorable experience!

Jeanne and I feel that it is something every RVer should do at least once in their RVing journeys. Safe and happy travels to all!





## Author Bio: Erik Anderson

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Erik and his wife Jeanne have been traveling full-time around the U.S. in their Class A motorhome since July 2020. They love hiking, biking and kayaking, and adventuring with their beloved Cavalier King Charles spaniel "Hershey pup". Erik also moderates the Living the RV Life Facebook group community.



## More Quartzsite and Boondocking Content

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- [29 Tips for Successful Boondocking](#)
- [Our First Time Boondocking](#)
- [Meet the Naked Bookseller of Quartzsite, Arizona](#)
- [Video: All About Quartzsite, AZ – Tips for Boondocking and The Big Tent](#)
- [Video: How to Survive the Crazy of Quartzsite: Tips from 9 Full-time RVers](#)

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## GOT COMMENTS OR QUESTIONS?

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## More Boondocking and Camping Content

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Want to check out more boondocking, and RV camping related content? Here are a few of our other related articles we recommend for you.