

A BEGINNERS GUIDE TO THE RV JOURNEY



“A life spent chasing happiness is a disappointed life. Happiness will come and go just like sadness and all other emotions. Live a life that you are content with, love each other and make every moment count, that will sustain your soul and allow you to fly.”

Thomas and Melissa Baity

Home On The Hitch

Forward

“What Have We Done?” I believe was the actual phrase that ran through my mind as my wife and I bounced and swayed down the interstate 20 minutes after leaving the dealership with our first RV. We bought a 27 ft travel trailer that weighed 7000 pounds, that we had no business towing, and hitched it up to a 2003 Dodge Durango that we had no business towing with. It was the middle of July in Atlanta Georgia, so hot that people were vacationing on the Sun. We headed towards a park that was about 45 minutes away with the Durango packed so full that I couldn't see anything out the rear windows. We made it about halfway before we had to stop due to our vehicle overheating and spewing hot coolant into the air. After another hour or so, we made it to our destination. With great delight we registered and drove to our site, only to find it lined on each side with pine trees. I hadn't backed anything that big....ever. By pure grace and luck we backed in and set up . Two days later we left early in the morning to make the 1 hour drive to the storage lot where we were going to keep the camper. We left early because it was cool and raining. We didn't have overheating issues on the way back but we almost did not make it up a very steep and very long hill on the interstate. Again, “what have we done?!”

We made so many mistakes as newbie RV owners. I hope that you can learn a little from us and use this information to prepare yourself for what is to come after you get your first RV. Traveling this way is just the best, of course things are going to happen. It is how you react that will set the tone.

We want to inspire people to take the time to “smell the roses.” Traveling doesn't really have to be so expensive. There are countless things to see and do in this country that won't break the bank. Join us and let's get this started!!!

Thank You Melissa for joining me on this crazy journey, I couldn't do it without you – nor would I want to

Thank you to Terry Haynes for taking the time to assist me with this job
***This guide is meant to serve as a basic information service and must be supplemented by the reader's own research and judgment.**
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***Check Out our Website at
www.homeonthehitch.com for your RV needs and
other guides as they become available.***

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Section 1 - What Is An RV

The first question that has to be answered is “what is an RV?” An RV is a recreational vehicle that is set up to be mobile for travel and that is much like a residential setting. Most of the time the RV will have a kitchen area, bathroom area, living space and bedroom. RVs come in several formats like towable, driveable, or haulable units. Examples of these are travel trailers, class A motorhomes, and truck campers. You can find an RV style that best fits your needs. Each style will come with pros and cons.

Towable

Travel Trailers - Travel trailers are exactly that, a trailer that hooks to the bumper or hitch of your tow vehicle, and you pull it behind you as a trailer. Travel trailers come in many sizes from very short and small units that can be towed by almost any vehicle to 38 -40 foot long units that weigh 12,000 pounds or more. So what are the advantages of the travel trailer? Well, like stated earlier the travel trailer is available in small to large sizes so a wide range of tow vehicles can be used. Larger travel trailers will require a ½ ton or ¾ ton truck and some of the biggest travel trailers will require a 1 ton truck. . Travel trailers can be easier to maneuver into smaller spaces, depending on size, and are a good first rig for the beginning rv owner.

Travel trailers are great but do come with some things that could be cons depending on your situation. The travel trailer does require a tow vehicle. The tow vehicle must be large enough to safely tow the trailer and in good operating condition. Sometimes the tow vehicle can cost more than the travel trailer and that can be a large initial expense. If you already own a vehicle capable of towing the travel trailer you are looking at then that is a pro. Storage is one area that the travel trailer can be lacking in compared to other RV types. A travel trailer can be



made without slide out rooms, but most do have slide out rooms to increase space. Some features of the travel trailer may not be accessible during travel when the slide rooms are in, this is important to pay attention to when looking at RVs. You will want access to at least the refrigerator; bathroom and bed while the slides are in.

Fifth Wheels - The fifth wheel is typically a bigger and heavier RV than a travel trailer. They are called fifth wheels after the initial designed carriages in the 1800s that had a horizontal “fifth wheel” up front to allow the front to pivot. The name stuck and the design is similar. The “pin” is in the “fifth” wheel position and attaches to the truck via a specialty hitch mounted over the rear axle of the tow vehicle. The fifth wheel RV requires a larger / heavier 1 ton dually truck , due to the increased amount of weight placed over the axle thus decreasing available payload . You do lose a lot of truck bed space with a fifth wheel hitch in the bed. Fifth wheel RVs have numerous floorplans like travel trailers but typically have increased storage due to the elevated section in the front that rides over the truck bed. Trailer sway is reduced with a fifth wheel because the pivot point of the trailer is positioned over the rear axle of the truck . A fifth wheel RV will almost always have slide rooms. Like travel trailers, some areas of the fifth wheel may not be accessible with the slides in. Again, you really need to evaluate this while shopping for RVs.



Tear Drops and Pop Up Campers - Teardrop trailers and pop up campers may be what you are looking for if you want something smaller and compact with some great comforts of home. These towable RVs are usually light enough to be towed with most SUVs and don't require special hitches. Of course with a smaller unit you have smaller amenities and less storage but you possibly gain access to spots and campgrounds that



A pro of the towable RV is that when you get to the camping spot then you can unhook from your tow vehicle and hook up the RV to the available utilities and not have to worry about getting around to explore. With some of the other types that we will cover, that's not the case.

Driveable

Class A - The class A RV is the largest and typically one of the most expensive types of drivable RV on the list. They are the most expensive to purchase as well as maintain. They are easy to identify, they are the one that looks like a big tour bus. The class A RVs can either be diesel or gas but most modern class A RVs are diesel. You may hear them referred to as a “diesel pusher.” This simply means that the diesel engine is in the back of the RV. The class is the roomiest of the drivable RVs and typically has the most storage. One advantage of a drivable RV is that when you stop somewhere, you don't have to get out to access the inside of the RV. As well, the RV interior is accessible to the passengers while traveling. These things are not an option with a towable R. Something to consider with a class A RV, as well as *all* drivable RVs, is that once you get to a campground or destination and hook everything up, you *cannot* leave without unhooking everything before leaving. This can become a chore and inconvenient. Most people that have drivable RVs have a “toad”. A toad is a smaller vehicle that is towed behind the RV and is used for transportation once at the destination. Class A RVs will have slide rooms and most of the features will be accessible when the slide rooms are in . Maintenance on the diesel pusher is going to be more expensive. It will require a specialty service center and certified mechanics. If you should need a tow, it will require a specialty tow vehicle and that will also be more expensive than a normal tow truck.



Class B - The class B driveable RV is sometimes referred to as a “camper van.” These are very small in comparison to the class A and are the smallest of the drivable RVs. Although small, the class B offers all the comforts of the larger units, just in a smaller package. They are much easier to drive and maneuver. The modern class B RVs are expensive but are more economical to operate than the class A. Most class B RVs do not have slide rooms but some models do. Class B RVs can fit into smaller spots than class A RVs or the larger towable units.



Class C - The class C RV is a drivable RV that is larger than the class B. The class C is built upon an existing van or truck chassis so it can accommodate a larger living unit than a class B and is better for larger groups. Class C RVs are able to tow vehicles as well and a great deal of the class C RVs do have slide rooms for the kitchen or the bedroom to increase the amount of living space. The class C RV can usually be serviced mechanically by the manufacturer that builds the chassis.



Super C RV - The Super C is an RV model that is built on a truck chassis just like a class C. The difference is that the super C is built on a very heavy duty chassis like an International Chassis. Along with the class A RV, the class C is among the most expensive RVs you can purchase. They are able to tow heavy loads and are very roomy inside with slides. They require service at specialized service centers.



Haulable

Truck Camper - The haul able RV is known as a “truck camper.” The truck camper is loaded into the bed of the pickup truck and secured. These units can be removed from the bed of the truck once you arrive at a destination but most places do not allow a truck camper to be removed from the truck. A drawback to the truck camper is that they are very heavy and require a large truck , usually a 1 ton dually with a high cargo capacity rating since the entire camper is loaded in the bed of the truck . The truck camper can make the truck very top heavy and unstable if care is not taken to match the truck with the camper. However, the truck camper can be taken into many locations that other RVs cannot reach. This is a big attraction to the truck camper.



So there are many different styles of RV and many different sizes . Sometimes it's difficult to know which one is right for you . I always tell people that ask about how to pick the best RV for them to not rush and shop around. It's a great idea to visit as many dealerships as possible and look at as many different RVs as you can. Camping shows are an excellent resource as numerous manufactures will be present with several models on site for you to tour. If you still have questions or concerns then try a short trip with a rental unit. There are several websites now that offer a VRBO type RV rental experience, such as RVshare.com. Renting before you buy can help you make up your mind when you just dont know.

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Section 2 - Buying Experience

The buying experience with an RV can be both exciting and terrifying if you have never dealt with RVs before. In this section we are going to discuss the buying experience and some common mistakes that you should avoid. The key to a successful purchase will be patience, research and education.

There are a few choices that need to be made .

1 - **Type of RV** - you should have a good solid idea of what type of RV you are looking for at this point based upon your needs and expectations. If not, go back and read section 1 again and do some more research until you can settle on what type of RV it is you are looking for.

2 - **Budget** - You will need to set your spending budget based upon your own situation. Make sure that you have set aside enough from your budget , possibly 10 %, to buy the things you will need to *actually* go camping- we will talk about these things in a different section.

3 - **New or Used ?** - There are pros and cons to either side of this coin.

- New RVs are easy to find and easy to walk through and see many different models at one location.
- New RVs usually come with some type of limited warranty on the structure as well as individual warranties for the appliances within.
- Some buyers are more comfortable feeling like they have a dealer standing behind the purchase of a new RV
- New RVs depreciate quickly, sometimes 30% as soon as they leave the lot, this makes the used RV less expensive. With some effort you may be able to find a slightly used model at big savings.
- The used RV may or may not have remaining warranties that are transferable.
- A new RV is going to...I repeat...**going** to have some issues somewhere. They all do. A used RV may have already had these issues dealt with by the first owner.

- Buying a used RV will require more patience by the buyer. Meeting times will have to be set up to see the RV, and looking at multiple models means meeting with multiple owners at different places and at different times .
- A used RV may not have been properly maintained and therefore shortened the life of the components. Evidence of this may not be easy to spot.

Whether you choose a new or used RV, make sure you research the RV year, condition, features, and price range to make sure you are getting the best possible deal on your RV. (*brand specific forums are a great place to get a “feel” for a brand or model that you are interested in*) Going to RV shows is a great way to see a very large sample of different models and types of RVs. The RV show is also a great way to figure out what it is you like and don't like.

Another advantage that today's RV buyer has is the ability to rent before you buy. A *trial run* if you please. With there being several peer to peer RV rental sites like rvshare.com, you can rent any type of RV for a long weekend and give it a go , see if it's a fit for you.

Avoidable Mistakes

There are several common mistakes that can be avoided with patience and research.

Buying an RV that does not meet your specific needs - Usually this is because the buyer did not do proper research or seek advice on the type and size of RV that would best meet their needs and expectations. This mistake is often because of a quick impulse buy and will most likely lead to disappointment. Do yourself a favor and try to curb the enthusiasm and take the time to make sure you are making the best choice for you. Shiny and expensive does *NOT* always equal quality. Make sure you sit in the chairs and evaluate the TV viewing angle from the couch or recliners. Sit on the toilet. Do you have room in the shower? These are all questions that need to be answered. Spend some time in the RV with the slide rooms closed(if applicable). Make sure the important parts of the RV are accessible when they are *closed*. You will want access to at

least the bathroom *and* the bed if you are making a quick overnight stop somewhere you cannot extend the slides. ***I cannot stress this point enough.***

Pre delivery inspection either used or new - A common mistake made by first time RV buyers is to fail to have a used RV inspected by a professional RV tech. A professional tech will be able to tell you if a used RV has been well maintained and is structurally sound as well as provide you information on how the systems of the RV work. They will also be able to warn you of problems and concerns. The same mistake is often made with new RVs as well. When a dealer receives a new RV from the factory they do a PDI which is a pre delivery inspection. This is an inspection prior to the delivery to the customer. It is intended to identify any defects with the unit and correct them. Before you take possession of the new RV you should ask to see the PDI inspection sheet and you should ask the dealer to demonstrate and test every system. This way everyone can be sure that everything is working properly.

Not doing a full walkthrough of all RV systems - You should request a full walkthrough of all RV systems to make sure you know how everything operates in the RV. This should be a stress free time where you are not rushed and are able to ask questions and become familiar with the RV. You should request the same walkthrough by the private seller if that is how you are purchasing the RV.

Buying a towable RV that is too heavy for your tow vehicle - It is important to know the limitations of your tow vehicle prior to settling on a travel trailer of fifth wheel. It is a very unpleasant wake up call to buy a towable RV only to find out 30 miles later that you have made a big mistake and may have to invest in a new tow vehicle. (see the forward of this guide)

It is VERY important that you are keenly aware of your tow vehicle's appropriate towing /payload numbers as well as how to interpret them. The salesman at the RV dealer will NOT know your specific tow vehicle numbers and will more often than not they will reassure you that you "will be fine." It is your responsibility to make sure you can safely tow and stop your rig. It is an in depth topic but we will talk through some important basics in another section .

Not knowing the overall height of your RV - This may seem unimportant to the new RV owner. This applies to ANY RV type. Make sure you know what the height of your RV is. Measure from flat ground to the top of the A/C unit if equipped, if not, then measure to the top of the highest point on your RV . That may be a skylight cover or some other fixture. Add an inch or two to that

measurement and post it on a sticky note or label in plain sight for easy viewing while you are driving. Some secondary road overpasses or bridges are much lower than interstate bridges. It is wise to be able to know at a glance how tall you are so you don't have to replace an expensive A/C unit or roof after you rip it off the top.

Not taking the time to practice driving / backing - I always recommend that you do the exact opposite of what I did (*we left immediately from the RV dealer and headed out on a trip with absolutely no idea what we were doing*) and take some time to find a large empty parking lot and practice maneuvering your RV and backing your RV. Especially if it is a towable model. Backing can prove difficult if you have no experience with it.

Not having the correct type of insurance - RV insurance is very different from regular auto insurance. Towable RV insurance will be very different from a drivable RV. You should talk to a qualified insurance agent prior to your RV purchase so you can make sure you and your new home away from home are well protected.

Bottom line , learn from others and save yourself some headache. Make sure you do your research and price comparing to make sure you get the best deal on the best RV for YOU!!!!

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Section 3 - What Comes Next

Ok, well, you've done your research , gone to RV shows and dealerships...and you bought that RV!!! What comes next?? What are you supposed to do now???

A lot of times dealerships will sell you the RV and the support afterwards can be tough to find. That is not written in stone but just be aware and do your research. With some research and this guide, we can help you get the basic things that you need to start your adventures!!!!. This list is not an extensive all inclusive list of luxuries but a list of things you HAVE to have . All of the things we discuss you can find on our website at www.homeonthehitch.com/store We will talk more about wants and nice to haves in a little bit. **** We are not sponsored by any brands that may appear as examples. They are for example only and do not represent any endorsements or recommendations****

RV Essentials Checklist

- Surge protector - Ok, This isn't an absolute need item but it really is if you catch my drift. You don't physically have to have this but you should NEVER plug your RV into a campground pedestal without some form of surge protector/voltage monitor. They come in several styles and brands,some are hard wired in and some are not.



- Electrical adapters - These adaptors really are things that you need. You may have a 50 amp RV but pull into a campground that only has 30 amp service or 20 amp service. If you don't have the correct adaptor, or "dogbone" as they are sometimes referred to, then you will not be able to plug in that shiny new RV!!!.

We recommend that if you have a 50 amp RV then you have a 50 to 30 amp plug as well as a 30 amp to 20/15 amp adaptor. This should cover you in most every situation. If your RV is 30 amp then you only need the 30 amp to 20/15 .



- Toilet chemicals - This will assume that you have a standard RV toilet with a black tank. There are other types of toilets but in this guide we are only covering the standard RV toilet. In

the RV section at the big blue store, you will find several brands and styles

of toilet chemicals. You will see dry drop in packs and small liquid bottles of chemicals. We prefer to use the liquid that is blue, in our mind it works much better. We use one small bottle each time we empty the black tank.



There are chemicals that are for your grey water tanks, don't use those on the black tank, they will not work.

- Sewer kit - These items may be sold as a kit or each piece may be separate. You will need at least 2 - 10 foot sections of quality brand name sewer hose with permanent fittings. Don't buy a hose that uses hose clamp connections, it won't last long and it will leak . You need a clear elbow fitting for connection to the RV . You will need a threaded sewer connection to the ground and a rubber donut gasket in case you are at a park that has non threaded sewer connections. Some parks require a

rubber donut connection. It's always a good idea to buy extra rubber gaskets for your sewer hose connections as well.

- RV-friendly toilet paper - You will find many opinions on this subject. Some say that you don't need to use rv friendly TP. We use it but we always buy the brand Scott TP for RVs . It is definitely the best option in our opinion . The other brands are just way too thin and horrible.
- Water pressure regulator - You never know what you are going to get...with water pressure that is. RV parks will vary widely and some can even have water pressure that is dangerous for your RV pipes. The cheaper regulators you can find at any rv supply store, these actually work as flow restrictors and prevent overpressure by restricting flow. For a little more you can get a quality water pressure regulator that you can adjust the pressure on .



- Drinking water hose - This is an absolute need. You need a good hose that is for drinking water ONLY. It needs to be a hose that is certified safe for drinking water. These hoses are usually blue or white. These colors signify for potable water . You should at least have 1- 25ft hose. There are many brands and styles to choose from, we will go over our favorites later on. *** bonus tip - if you see a water spigot in a campground that is blue it is potable water. If it is red , do NOT use it for potable water. *****



- Flush hose/ Black Tank Hose - This hose you use to flush the black tank and fittings with. This water hose is not used for anything else. It should be stored separate from the potable water hose.

Some units don't have black tank flush , you will still need a specified hose for rinsing sewer connections. Most people that don't have a black tank flush built in their RV use a tank cleaning wand that hooks onto a water hose and is inserted into the black tank through the toilet.

- Leveling blocks - Leveling blocks come in different sizes and colors. Leveling blocks are very useful for *ALL* RVs. A lot of class C, class A , and fifth wheel RVs have automatic leveling jacks so you would just use the blocks to support the jack base. It is always a good idea to have some blocks no matter the type of RV you have.
- Tire pressure gauge - correct tire pressure is one of the most important things you can have on any type of RV. Running trailer tires or heavy rigs with under inflated or over inflated tires will sooner or later cause a tire failure and possibly a serious accident. Good tire pressure gauges are readily available and should be high priority for your kit.
- Extension cords - This is *not* an absolute have to have but it should be. I recommend that you have at least 20 ft of extension cord appropriate for your rig, either 30 amp or 50 amp. You may run into a situation where the power is further away than your built in cord will reach. You should also have a good outdoor extension cord to run other things outside of your RV.
- Wheel chocks - Wheel chocks are an absolute need for safety. Your Rv should always have the wheels chocked when it is stopped or set up. It aids in stability as well as prevents the RV from rolling freely into trouble. Chocks come in different styles and we will list our favorites in another section of this guide.
- Camping Shovel - This might not seem like a needed item but it is. Camping shovels are great for digging out tires should you get stuck. Chances are you wont need it, but if you do then you will be really glad to have it.

- Electrical and duct tape- I think these two things really are needed for anything in life - Things break, ##it happens. You can fix/save a lot of trips with duct tape and electrical tape. Trust me, you will need it
- Flashlights - Having several flashlights in your RV/Tow vehicle is an absolute must. You need them for walking in the dark, looking under vehicles for problems, seeing if the power is out or if there is bad weather. Always have good, charged flashlights on hand.
- Emergency road kit and first aid kit - We consider these items to be required. You should have an emergency roadside kit with flares, vests, jumper cables etc.... As well as a stocked first aid kit . These items are a matter of safety and therefore should be required.
- Fire extinguishers- Fire extinguishers are also essential. There are numerous different types of extinguishers and you should have several .You need to make sure that you have extinguishers for kitchen fires as well as gas and oil. Keep them in different locations so they are readily accessible. Smoke detectors
- Tools – You will need to carry tools to perform basic repairs and change tires.

Hitch – You will have to have a hitch that is properly set up for your truck and trailer combo. If you have a travel trailer then this will be a weight distribution hitch. This type of hitch distributes the weight of the tongue across the entire frame of the tow vehicle. If you have a fifth wheel you will have a fifth wheel hitch. Both of these hitches need to be set up and you need to make sure you are aware of how to use it properly. It is beyond the scope of this guide to explain hitch use and set up. Make sure your dealer explains your specific hitch to you until your questions are answered.

Of course this list does not contain everything “needed” to RV. You need sheets, food,etc...But the things listed here we consider “must” haves before you can go camping.

Section 4 - Shakedown Trip

One very important thing you should do, no matter if you are a brand new RVer or a seasoned vet, is to have what is called a “shakedown trip.” A shakedown trip is a first trip, or a first trip in a new rig. The idea is to do a short trip, maybe a long weekend that is very close to home. This gives you the opportunity to *give it a go* before you head off cross country only to find the A/C or heater doesn't work. This trip gives you the safety net of being close to home if something goes wrong or needs to be addressed and also gives you the chance to put the rig, and yourself through the paces and make sure you understand everything and have what you need. Even the most prepared will quickly realize they forgot something on the first trip out. This is one thing I definitely recommend for ALL new RVers to do. You can do several shakedown trips if you feel the need , nothing wrong with that .



This photo was taken seconds before we took off on our very first trip - we had just signed the papers on our first camper!

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Section 5 - Maintenance

Each type of RV will have some different maintenance requirements. We are going to be covering some topics that apply to most units. Keep in mind that any driven RV will have its own mechanical maintenance schedule that you should follow , just as you should with your tow vehicle for towable units.

Roof - The roof membrane on your shiny new RV will need to be periodically maintained to keep it clean and water tight. The modern RV roof membrane can be one of several constructions. Mainly a type of rubber roof membrane, a pvc roof membrane and some higher cost units have a complete fibreglass roof.

The RV roof should be inspected and cleaned at least 3 times per year. *Safety is of utmost importance and if you are unable to inspect the roof safely then hire a professional to do this maintenance for you. This guide is for educational purposes only.* Make sure the RV roof is rated as a walk on roof if you plan to climb up there. You definitely do not want to get up on a non walk on roof.

1 - The roof should be swept or blown clean of all debris prior to washing. Next, the roof should be washed with an appropriate roof wash. You want to make sure whatever you are using wont damage the roof membrane. Please follow manufacturer recommendations.

2. - After the roof has had time to dry, all the seals around the plumbing vents , sky lites, fans, etc.... Should be checked . Check the sealant for cracking or peeling and separating from the roof. If the sealant needs replacing then use a RV roof sealant , Dicor is the usual brand, and follow all manufacturer instructions.

3. - Check the front cap of the RV where the roof meets it for cracks or leaks, check the edges of the roof membrane where they meet the gutters and make sure the gutter trim is sound and has no issues.

4- Make sure you check the entire roof field as well for rips or tears from tree limbs and such. Patch materials are available.

5- Fibreglass roofs will require specialized materials to patch or seal the roof. Make sure you consult a professional if you have any questions.

Tires - The tires on your RV are another very important item that must be properly maintained. There are many things to discuss about RV tires, for the purpose of this guide we will only be covering the basics.

1- **Air Pressure** - probably the most neglected thing with tires and the most frequent cause of issues. Always make sure that your RV tires are properly inflated to the manufacturer recommended PSI on the tire sidewall. Under or over inflation will cause premature and uneven wear on the tread of the tire and may cause a blowout at some point.

2- **Tire condition** - Keep an eye on the tread of your tires. Keep track of the tread depth as well as the wear pattern. It is very important to look over the tires every chance you can for defects such as bubbles or bugles in the tread, and more importantly for bubbles and bulges in a sidewall, which will always mean a blowout sooner rather than later. Remember to check the inside sidewall of the tire, due to its restricted view this usually goes unchecked and is more often the area that causes an issue.

3- **Axle alignment - (towable)** - If you notice uneven tire wear that is not due to improper air pressure then you need to check your axle alignment.. Make sure the trailer is being pulled in a straight line behind the tow vehicle prior to measuring. Measure from the coupler or pin back to the center of one of the tires- the measurement should be close to the same on the other side within a ¼ inch maximum deviation. If this is the same on each side then measure between the tires, if you have more than one axle, and make sure the distance is the same on each side. If you find deviations then this needs to be corrected by a professional and you should contact a dealer or certified service center.

Brakes - For the purpose of this guide you need to know that drivable RVs and towable RVs will be equipped with brakes (depending on the state for towable - each state is different) that need to be checked and maintained. It is beyond the scope of this guide to discuss these procedures. Please contact your dealer or authorized service center for assistance

Wheel Bearings - For the purpose of this guide you need to know that towable RVs have wheel bearings that need to be checked and packed with grease every year. This job can be done at home but if you have any questions at all it is best to contact a professional for the job. RV dealers usually offer this service. Drivable RVs may require bearing service but it will be on a much different schedule than towable and should only be done by a professional .

Exterior Cleaning - You should wash and clean your RV with an appropriate cleaner. If your rv has fibreglass side walls then you need to make sure you are using a detergent safe for the finish. Any washes made for fibreglass boats will work just as well on RV.

Mechanical - Drivable RVs will have a maintenance schedule for the base “chassis” they are built around. You should check the manufacturer's recommendations for that schedule

Appliances - The appliances in your RV will be much like, if not exactly the same as your residential appliances and will at some point require maintenance. Such appliances might be the RV furnace, refrigerator, Air conditioner, water heater, etc... Your RV should come with registration cards and manuals for each appliance in your RV.

Slide Rooms - If your RV has slide rooms then they will require preventative maintenance to keep them running smooth. There are several different types of slide room mechanisms . Make sure you are aware of which type of slide out unit you have and be familiar with its maintenance requirements. At minimum you will need to make sure the tracks /travel path stays clear of debris and that any parts requiring lubrication are lubricated periodically with the correct type of oil/lubricant. Slide seals must be lubricated with slideout seal conditioners as well, to keep them flexible and prevent dry rot.

Section 6 - Campgrounds

In this section we will talk about campgrounds and what you can expect . We will cover basic generic information that will aid you in getting to your first parking spot. Speaking of parking spots, in this guide we will cover the three main types of RV parking you will encounter as a beginner. Campgrounds, RV Parks, and RV Resorts.

Rv Campsites can range from small dirt spots to very large wide paved level lots. You will need to know the length of your RV and if it is a towable RV, you will also need to know your total length including your tow vehicle. These numbers will become important when booking your sites . Some campgrounds, like national park campgrounds, may not be able to accommodate larger rigs over 35 ft.

Some campgrounds will offer “full hookups” which means you will have power, water, sewer, and possibly cable TV. Others will offer partial hookups , this usually means no sewer but the campground will provide a dump station

Most campgrounds are set up in a similar fashion. There will be an office that usually has a “camp store” in it that sells basic rv supplies although at a healthy markup, as well as firewood and some grocery items. This is usually where you check in upon your arrival to the campground. There will usually be RV parking spots out front for people checking in. When you check in you will need all your relevant information and possibly your vehicle tag numbers so have those handy. You will almost always be given a campground map that shows the layout of the campground and directions to your site. Sometimes you will have a camp host or employee that will guide you via golf cart to your site.

Campgrounds usually have one way streets so pay attention to that . You will find different types of sites at each campground such as pull through, back in, pull in. It should be mentioned here that it is the norm for all the hookups to be located on the drivers side of the campsite. The right side , if you are standing in the street looking into the front of the site.

Pull through - It is exactly what it sounds like, you don't do any backing up - you pull into the site from the back and when you leave you pull out from the front. A Lot of times these sites are much better for the beginning RV traveler , they tend to be much less intimidating than the back in sites. Like most, not all RV sites, the sites are angled to the street to provide easier access. (good for traveling)

Back In - Back in sites are just that , sites that you back into . These sites may also be angled to provide easier access. It can be intimidating for new RVers to back up a long trailer but it really isn't that difficult and with practice you will be a professional in no time!! Always remember to take your time and stop and get out and look when you need to.

Pull In - Pull in sites are typically reserved for Class A RVs to pull into and then back out of. The utility hookups will be on the opposite side due to pulling in and not backing in. These sites are not typical.

Types of camping / campgrounds

For the purpose of this guide we will focus on the three main types /classes of campgrounds that you will find or use as a beginner RV camper. There are many more places that you can camp with your RV but those are beyond the scope of this guide.

Campgrounds - Campgrounds tend to be more secluded in nature and most of them are run by some type of government sector. For example, national parks, state parks, Army corp of engineers camping, These campgrounds may or may not have full hookups but usually come with a more secluded experience .

RV Parks - Rv parks are campgrounds that are elevated up a notch or two. They usually have amenities such as a hot tub, swimming pool, laundry , multiple bath houses, and full hookups with internet offered, although the internet is usually very slow. They may be near local attractions and offer group activities.

RV Resorts - RV Resorts are the top tier resort parks that take the RV park experience and elevate it even more. The amenities will be nicer, the sites will usually be larger with better landscaping . A Lot of RV resorts will have community centers , central fire pits, brick pizza ovens , etc.... The resorts are nice but they also come with a higher cost.

The type of accommodations you seek out should be determined by the experience you are looking for. If you really like all the comforts of home then a RV park or resort will suit you just fine. If you want a more secluded experience that may be in between tent camping and full on glamping, a state park campground or national park campground with limited or partial hookups may be what you are looking for.

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Section 7 - Setup / Breakdown

****NOTHING IN THIS GUIDE SHOULD BE SUBSTITUTED FOR HANDS ON TRAINING AND PRACTICE USING YOUR HITCH OR ANY OTHER DEVICE INVOLVED IN USING YOUR RV OR SETTING UP OR BREAKING DOWN . THIS GUIDE IS MEANT ONLY AS A REFERENCE***

So the next task at hand is to get into the campground and campsite and set up so you can start using that RV for relaxation!!

There will be some differences in how you approach this process depending upon what type of RV you have. Class A owners will face different challenges than a travel trailer owner. The important thing with both setup and with breakdown is to find a routine that works for you and this is the important part...**DO IT THE SAME EVERY SINGLE TIME...MAKE A CHECKOFF LIST AND FOLLOW IT EACH TIME YOU SETUP/BREAKDOWN.** Do not get distracted during this time by a passerby or anything else because I assure you this is when the problems will occur. Check out our video on youtube about this <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bdAY-BRoywY&t=449s> This is when you will forget something important or not check something, and it will bite you in the a\$%.

Despite the differences in RV types, many things during setup/breakdown will be the same. In this guide we are going to talk about some basic things that apply to all.

- **Always look at your site closely.** Get out of your vehicle before you pull in / back in , and inspect the site. Does it appear to be level side to side or front to back ? Where are the utility hookups located? Are there obstacles to be aware of when backing in or parking on the spot? Don't ever skip this step, a few moments looking around your site can save you many headaches.

- **Always have a spotter.** This is someone who is outside watching you back in or pull in to the site. There are many t-shirts and stickers to reference the arguments that ensue between a husband and wife at this moment. *“I'm sorry for the things I said when we were parking the camper”* This is funny but sadly true as well. Remember that this is not a race. It is however a campground sport to watch others try and back in..get over it...don't rush. Soon you will find yourself standing outside watching some poor sap try and back his new 40 ft trailer into a narrow site.

- **When you get into your spot, before you shut down or decide to start unhooking, make sure you are close enough to be able to plug in power and reach the water supply.** I know this sounds silly but nothing stinks like unhooking and leveling and setting up only to find that your power cord won't reach!! You then have to hook back up and move...no fun and it will make you mad...dont ask me how I know.

- **Make sure you are level side to side first,** either by leveling blocks or Anderson type levelers. You will level front to back after you unhook, if you are in a towable. (some RVs will have auto leveling systems - make sure you understand how to properly use these systems before attempting to level your RV)

- **Make sure you use wheel chocks.** If you are in a towable RV you should chock the wheels after leveling side to side and BEFORE unhooking from your tow vehicle.

- **Once you are all level, make sure you use your stabilizer jacks to prevent excess movement in the RV.** This will vary from model to model. Some will be power , some will not. Stabilizing jacks are NOT intended for leveling your RV. There are some auto leveling systems out there, basic stabilizer jacks are not designed for that and you will damage them or your RV if you use them as such.

- **Always use a surge protector at the campground power pedestal.** Plug it in first and check the lights on it to make sure the

wiring is correct inside the plug. All quality RV surge protectors will warn you if the pedestal is not wired correctly or the power is weak or fluctuating. Only plug in your RV after you have verified correct power.

- **Always use a water pressure regulator of some type to protect your RV plumbing from excessive water pressure or water pressure spikes.** Always clean the water spigot with a disinfectant spray of some type before you hook your fresh water hose up to it. Who knows what the people before you used the bare spigot to clean, sewer fittings, etc. just disinfect it, it's easy to do.
- **If you are hooking up cable to your RV , go inside and make sure the powered tv antenna is turned OFF.** If it is not then the cable channels will not come through and the TV wont recognize any channels. As well, if you are just using over the air channels, make sure the antenna is turned ON or you won't be watching anything. (if your antenna is a batwing crank up antenna, pay attention, it only goes down one way, there will be a mark on the dial on the ceiling.
- **Put toilet chemicals in the toilet.** You should be using the liquid blue chemical, if you use a powder pack, make sure you dissolve it in a toilet bowl full of water before you put it into the tank.
- **To go along with the above, use water when you flush.** You have to use water to help everything dissolve. And when you dump the black tank, alway put several gallons of water back in it when you are done then add new chemical, the water will help disperse the chemical and keep things smelling nice.
- **When you are hooked up to the sewer at the campground (full hookups) you should leave your grey valve/valves open.** This is so the sink water and shower water will drain and not fill up the tanks. Do NOT leave the black open. You open it only when you empty the tank. If you leave the black tank valve open all the liquid will drain out and all the solids will remain in the tank. Soon you will

literally have a tank full of S***T and no way to get it out. As well, if you leave the black tank valve open all the time then the sewer gas/smell will make its way from the sewer connection to your RV interior.

- **Close your grey tank valves and build some shower/dishwater up in the tank the night before you move.** This is so you have a good amount of water to flush through the hose after you empty the black .
- **It's a good idea to clean off the tops of the slide outs before travel.** A broom or battery powered blower can be used. This will keep debris from building up and keeping the slide from operating correctly and keep the slide seals working properly as well
- **Prior to putting the slides in or out you should always check the path of travel both inside and outside to make sure there is nothing that will interfere with proper operation.**
- **The slide room seals need to be lubricated a few times each season.** This keeps the rubber soft and pliable and prevents dry rot.

Once you have settled into a setup rhythm and have a checklist for it, make sure you ***do it the same every time.***

Take that set up checklist and do it in ***reverse*** for breaking camp. Doing things this way will prevent incidents due to forgetting things. And if you don't pay attention, sooner or later you ***WILL*** forget something.

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Section 8 - RV Clubs And Orginaztions

There are many clubs and orinaztions to join as an Rver for saving money and meeting other campers. A quick internet search will find many options. Below we will list just a few to get you started.

Camping

- **Good Sam**
- **Passport America**
- **Thousand Trails**
- **Harvest Hosts**
- **Boondockers Welcome**

General RV Clubs

- **Escapees**
- **Family Motorcoach Association**
- **Rvillage**
- **North American Family Campers Association**
- **Family Campers and Rvers**

Facebook is also a great place to find brand specific groups for all manufacturers of RVs . As well, you can search the internet for RV Forums to join but make sure you do your research and join positive and helpful community. You can always drop us a line at contact@homeonthehitch.com and we will try to point you in the right direction.

Now Get Out There!!

So this guide provides you with the very basics and information that you need to research you RV purchase, get the things you need, and get to the campground!. But remember this is only the beginning . There is always something to learn every day about Rving. So keep your eyes open !