46 Neat Little RVing Tips & Tricks

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by Ray Burr
1. Dozen Eggs in the fridge

When you buy a dozen eggs take a sharp knife and cut the carton in half. Now they will stack nicely in the small RV fridges.

2. Window foil

Use bubble foil, like in the car front windows in your rig windows to reduce heat in summer and keep heat inside in the cold. You can buy it by the roll and cut to fit each window. Also works well in the bedroom to block out early daylight, or for nice darkness during afternoon naps.

3. Remove pesky flies with Windex

Too get rid of flies instead of swatting them just spray them lightly with Windex and they will fall to the ground temporarily incapacitated. Then just remove with Kleenex. Better than fly guts everywhere, you actually are cleaning the rig at the same time! :)
4. Alternative to commercial waste tank cleaners

Rather than buy nasty and expensive chemicals for the waste tanks try using a 1/2 cup of good old Borax laundry detergent and 1/4 cup of Calgon Water Softener. The Borax detergent helps control odor and cleans the tank. The water softener makes the water softer and more slippery, preventing waste from sticking to the walls of the waste tank. I've been using this combo living and traveling full time for the last few years with good results. Rarely do I have an odor problem and never had a tank plug up.

5. RV sewer hose flush

When dumping the tanks, do the black tanks first, then the gray tanks. This way the soapy gray tanks water will help clean out the sewer hose.
**6. Remove bugs from front of rig**

Use Bounce Dryer Sheets and a little water to scrub off stuck on bugs. Works best if rigs front is waxed regularly.

**7. In case of fire have a ladder near the bedroom window**

Leave a step ladder near your bedroom escape window in case the rig is on fire and you have to leave out the window. Extra handy if you own a fifth wheel. Also handy for doing any work up high on the RV or rescuing cats from trees.
8. Is the black tank almost full?

Just before the black tank gets to the right full stage the toilet will start to sound a little different and a small burp or bubble of air will happen. This means the waste level is above the vent pipe and it's time to dump!

9. Turn your water off when away from the campsite

A good habit is to turn off the campground water supply when you're away from the rig for a while. If your RV plumbing was to fail this tip could save you from a major flood and possible expensive repairs.
10. Get more even heating from your RV oven

Pizza Stone in RV Oven Tip

Find a cheap pizza cooking stone and place it at the bottom (not right on the burner) of your RV gas oven. It will stop things from getting burnt on the bottom and even out the oven temperature. Make sure to measure your RV Oven and by one the right width and length. Before placing the stone on our oven sometimes the bottom of our baked food would burn, especially things like cookies or biscuits. The pizza stone solved that.

11. Water Regulator

Use a water regulator at the campground hookup to prevent too high of pressure from damaging your rigs pumping. I like the adjustable type like the Valterra brass unit. It costs a little more but gives much better flow for nicer showers.
12. Water Splitter

Use a water splitter on the campground water supply, this way you can have an extra feed for washing things. Also you can vent off the pressure when you go to disconnect. Saves getting water sprayed on yourself.

13. Wireless thermometer to monitor plumbing temps

I use a indoor/outdoor wireless thermometer to monitor how cold my rig gets around my critical plumbing areas. This way I know if I need to take action to prevent a freeze up in my pipes.
14. Keeping the RV shower stall clean

Use a sham wow type cloth and dry out the shower stall after each use. This keeps the shower stall from growing mold and removes any hard water deposits right away.

15. Help prevent black streaks on the RV

Wash your roof often, most black streaking is caused by dirt and grim from on the roof. Clean roof equals less black steaks. Also buy gutter spout extenders or attach a cloths peg the gutter spout to cause the water to drip further from the RV walls.
16. Vent cushions help regulate inside temperatures

**RV Vent Insulator Cushions Tip**

Cushions designed to fit in the square vent openings on the RV roof can be made or purchased. When it is too hot or cold outside the vents are a major source of temperature exchange, by blocking them you can better regulate the inside temperature. Gives your AC or furnace a little break, which saves money off electricity or LP Gas costs. Another extra bonus is they block out the noise and light coming through the vents making it nicer for those afternoon naps and lazy day sleep ins.

![RV Vent Insulator Cushions](image)

**Uses:**

- Keep Heat out of the RV in the Summer
- Keep Heat in the RV in the Winter
- Block Light Out for Better Sleep
- Block Noise Out For Better Sleep
- Extra Sofa Cushions
- Saves money on heating/cooling costs

Along with Vent Covers these are one of the first things I would pick up for an RV. We use them not only for temperature regulation but for blocking out light and noise. It's amazing how much sound comes in through the vents. Helps a lot when overnighting in truck stops.
17. Cup Holders

Need a cup holder in the RV. My wife likes to have water at night or hot tea at bedtime and needed a secure place to keep it. I picked up this great cup holder which works perfect for her, is right next to the bed and folds out of the way.

18. Boondocking solar light tip

In order to save our batteries, we use solar lights which you find in lawn and garden centers. We have a couple of pots of petunias outside with a solar light and we bring them in at night and put one in each room. The flowers make our camper smell so nice! A couple of solar lights without the stake can be placed on the table to play cards by or you can put one in the bathroom and one wherever you need a night light.
19. Portable steam cleaner

Since we travel with a dog full time the carpet areas in the rig get quite dirty. I found a
great solution was a portable stream cleaner. They are designed for stairs and spot
cleaning but since the RV area is so small it's perfect and does a great job.

20. Led replacement lamps save power

Replacing your regular incandescent lights in the RV with LED type can reduce power
consumption dramatically. Some LED lights use 1/10th the power. This means when
camping without hookups you will get longer battery life and need to recharge less often.
21. Utilize RV space with wire storage baskets

In our RV there is a lot of high cupboard space. So we can use it, I have installed various sizes of wire storage baskets. This lets us use the otherwise wasted space and they hold items secure during transit.

22. Get rid of ants in the RV

While RVing through Florida we picked up some uninvited guests. Sugar Ants were everywhere. We were able to get rid of them by using Raid Ant drops. Just a few drops wherever we saw them swarming and in a week they were all gone. Love the stuff. Now my candy is safe again. :}
23. RV thermostat upgrade


24. Duct tape and bailing wire are your friends

It's a good idea to carry duct tape and bailing wire in the RV for temporary repairs on the road. They can be very handy to hold on a damaged part or a piece of the RV that has come loose. Other tapes to carry include electrical, double sided and my favorite Gorilla Tape.
25. Better RV Shower Tip

Replace your OEM shower head with one from Oxygenics and enjoy a more powerful spray and save water. Ideal for boondocking. Even with low campground water pressure you'll enjoy a better shower. It also looks a whole lot nicer I'd say.

I have recently installed this unit and very pleased with it and my new faucets. Check out this posting for details and a video of the install with demo.

26. Cork board on RV cupboard door

Use a Cork board on the inside of your cupboards or pantry door for recipes or little notes. Found this little gem of a tip making the rounds on Pinterest
27. **Small fan in RV fridge to aid cooling**

By placing a small battery operated fan in the RV Fridge it will cool more efficiently and odors are reduced. There are several types available, some come with a small charcoal filter.

![Image of small fan in RV fridge](image1)

28. **Battery operated weather alert radio**

It's a great idea for safety to keep some kind of battery powered weather alert radio handy when RVing. Storms can come up quick and are much more dangerous to us in our RV's. High winds, hail, tornadoes, flash floods can cause damage and injury. Get one with an automatic alert mode.

![Image of battery operated weather alert radio](image2)
29. Soak Shower Head in a Bag of Vinegar

If your RV shower head is difficult to remove a neat trick is to fill a sandwich bag with white vinegar and use an elastic band to secure it to the shower head. Let soak overnight and the vinegar will dissolve the hard water mineral and calcium deposits.

30. Make the RV mattress more comfortable

OEM RV Mattresses are notoriously uncomfortable, especially after some use. The springs soon poke through and stick into your body. A new deluxe mattress would be ideal but expensive. A cheaper solution is a memory foam topper. Since we added ours the RV bed is much more comfy now. Another tip is when the topper gets old and needs replacement don’t throw it out, use it under the mattress for a little more insulation for those cold nights.
31. Well stocked first aid kit

When embarking on your RV journey always carry a well-stocked first aid kit. During your travels you may encounter road accidents and need to apply first aid until help arrives. Many times our camp sites are out far from the nearest medical center so help may take a while to reach you. Also if you have pets make sure to include things for their possible first aid needs as well. Stay safe and have fun, but be prepared, accidents are more likely in unfamiliar surroundings.

32. Clean stained porcelain toilet

One time when camping in a park with heavily iron concentrated water our porcelain toilet bowl got badly stained by the iron. I tried many things to get rid of the reddish-brown stains. Finally I gave whitening toothpaste a try and voila the stains scrubbed right off.
33. Stop toilet bowl from leaking

RV toilet bowls usually use a rubber seal to keep the water in the bowl. This water is essential to seal off the waste tank odors preventing them from getting into the rig. If your seal dries out it can start to develop a slow leak draining out the water and causing a dry bowl. I've found when this happens or as preventive maintenance a coating of silicone based plumbers grease on the seal works wonders at keeping the seal nice and supple and leak proof.

It is available in a small container for 5-10 dollars at most hardware stores. Just apply some to your rubber gloved fingers and spread on the round rubber seal. Do it with the water source off.

34. RV Waste Tank Valve Tip

I've just finished replacing the black waste tank valve on my Keystone Cougar 276RLS fifth wheel and have a little tip for you. The main reason my black tank valve needed to be replaced was due to a crack forming near the pull rod output hole. I believe this was from me having to use extra pressure to open and close the valve. It tended to get quite sticky and require a lot of force. A good way I learned to keep the waste tank valves running smooth is to spray a little silicone lubricant on the push rod shaft every so often. Make sure you use 100% silicone spray. Silicone won't harm the rubber gasket material used inside the waste tank valve. I don't recommend using WD40 as it is petroleum based and may eat the rubber gaskets.
If your valves are easily accessible it might be a good idea once a season to remove, disassemble and clean them. Before reassemble coat the gasket rings with some silicone plumber’s grease. If not easily accessible a little olive oil down the toilet seems to help keep the black tank valve lubricated.
35. Ten simple things to help maintain the RV

1. **Lubrication** – A little lube goes a long way. Keep all the hinges, locks, sliders, and basically anything that moves well lubricated. I find the best lube to keep on hand is a dry silicone type. Works well in almost all applications and resists attracting dirt.

2. **Tighten** – Our RV is basically a house on wheels and exposed to minor earthquakes during every trip. Things are going to come loose. Every so often grab a screwdriver and a wrench and give everything a re-tightening. This little preventative maintenance can save you big time. Pay special attention to items attached to the outside that may fly off during transit and safety risks like the ladder rungs.

3. **Clean it** – Mechanically everything works better when clean, dirt and grit cause wear. A good coat of quality wax and UV protectants will keep the rig looking sweet and extent the life of many of the materials.

4. **Tires** – Inflate to recommended specifications and check them often. Inspect for any imperfections before travel. Keep lug-nuts tightened to proper torque settings. Minimize exposure to the sun.

5. **Detectors** – Check your Smoke, Propane and Carbon Monoxide sensors on a regular basis. Make sure they have power or fully charged batteries.

6. **Lights** – Carry spares for every type of bulb your RV uses. Check the signal and marker lights for proper function before every trip.

7. **Seals and Seams** – Keep very close tabs on the external seals and seams. Look for any cracking or holes, especially on the roof. Water penetration generally causes the most damage to RVs of anything. One reason is the leak can go unnoticed inside a wall for a long period of time and causes rot and worse mold to develop.

8. **Voltage Checks** – Get yourself a cheap multimeter or tester lights and keep tabs on your main voltages. The main coach batteries should be between 12.4 volts - 12.8 volts when not being charged, anything below 12 volts is definitely too low. As far as the AC voltage goes, below 108 volts is too low and higher than 130 volts is too high. I highly recommend getting an EMS (electrical management system) to monitor things for you and provide protection when needed.
9. **Look underneath** – I know it’s a pain but it’s well worth inspecting under the rig every once in a while. Have a look for loose, corroding or broken items. A quick inspection can save you from being stranded on the side of a highway.

10. **Exercise all systems** – Systems that are left dormant in the RV for long periods of time should be run periodically. As an example when on full hookups for extended periods it’s a good idea to use the water pump occasionally and run the generator for a half hour or so every month.

### 36. Water thief tip

In some cases when RVing and wanting to acquire fresh water you may run into a source where your standard filling hose connection won’t work. Maybe the threads are worn, the wrong size or there are none. I ran into this situation last fall in Joshua Tree National Park. They had perfectly good potable drinking water but the water taps had no threading to hook up my hose to. I used duct tape in that instance but it got me looking for a better solution. What my research yielded was a nifty little device called a water thief or bandit. The way it is constructed allows you to attach it to many different types of taps and get your water out without making a mess. I’ve tried it and it works much better than tape. ;}
37. Avoid overloading the RV

It’s one of the easiest things to overlook as far as RV safety goes. RVs can be substantially overloaded but not outwardly show it like a car or truck when it is obvious the back end is riding low. Unless you weigh your RV you may never know it may be dangerously overloaded and a safety concern. RVs leave the factory at a safe weight and most give plenty of extra weight capacity for us to load them up with our stuff. But sometimes over a period of time we add things and invent extra storage areas until almost imperceptibly we have bypassed the safe weight.

Things That Cause Overloading of the RV

- **Carrying to many tools** – I fell into this trap myself. Since I like to do most of my RV repairs and maintenance tasks myself I brought along a crap load of tools and supplies. These types of things tend to be very heavy and it doesn't take much to easily add a few hundred pounds on the rig. Now I’m much more selective and consider each item carefully with its weight in mind.

- **Adding Extra Batteries** - The extra power sure is nice but each additional battery will add somewhere between 50 and 75 pounds, so keep that in mind when building that battery bank. My 2 – Trojan T105 batteries weigh in at 62 lbs. each so right there the rig gained 124 lbs. when I upgraded the power.

- **Generators** – Another item many carry in the RV are generators and will typically add 50 –100 pounds.
**Dishes and Kitchen Appliances** – With the popularity of slide outs the newer RVs are providing more and more kitchen cupboard space. It’s tempting to carry a lot of extra dishes and many more kitchen appliances like blenders, mixers, can openers, etc. But keep in mind just because the manufacture has created extra space doesn't necessarily mean they adding any extra weight capacity.

**Canned Goods** – It’s nice to stock up and not have to hit the grocery or beverage store as much but canned goods, pop and beers are heavy so you may want to limit the quantity stored on board.

**Books** - Books and magazines can add up in weight quickly. every so often donated them or get yourself an E-Reader device.

**Outside Stuff** – Things like lawn chairs, barbeques, tables, decorations, etc. also all add up. Weigh the pros and cons and decide if the extra weight of an item is worth it. Do you really use it?

**Water** – This is a big one! Every gallon of water on board weighs a little over 8 pounds. When I fill up my 60 gallon fresh water tank I’m adding an extra 500 pounds, give or take to the rig weight! If say I also have full waste tanks, I could easily be carrying 1200 pounds of water. Not that this is likely to take place but it gives you an idea of how water can dramatically affect the weight and cause overloading of the RV.

**The Specs**

You’ll find there is an alphabet soup of weights out there to consider. Your main concern is to not be overloaded on any of your RV’s axles or tires capacities. [ChangingGears.com](https://www.changinggears.com) has a good write-up explaining all the acronyms. I find the easiest thing to do is find a closed highway weight station and see if the scale is on. Pull in with the RV fully loaded and weight each axle, add them all together and you have the total weight of the RV. Make sure you have the normal amount of humans and pets on board as well as a full tank of fresh water to get an accurate approximation of max weight. To get the most accurate measurements it’s worth it to have each of your rigs wheels weighed individually. You'll find this service offered at many RV rallies, shows and anywhere large numbers of RVs gather.

**Conclusion**

The problems caused by overloading of the RV can be very serious. Overloading causes tire failures, excessive wear to the suspension and frame, and can degrade the handling characteristics of the RV. It’s in an RVers best interest to know the weight specs of the RV and keep under the maximum by in my opinion 10-15% for a good margin of safety. A bonus of keeping a lean RV is better fuel economy and don’t we all need that.
Tips for RV Fire Safety

Change Detector Batteries

Make sure all your detectors like smoke, propane and carbon monoxide have fresh batteries in them at all times. A good rule of thumb is to change all the batteries every 6 months on the time change day when we change our clocks.

Certify Propane System

Check and make sure the rig has been certified by a licensed technician. It’s a good idea to have it re-certified every few years. Check your local laws regarding propane regulations. They will inspect the propane system and check for any leaks. If you ever smell propane vacate the RV immediately, call the fire department and if possible turn off the external propane tanks.

Fire Extinguishers

I like to keep several fire extinguishers on board the RV and inside the truck. One is in the entrance/kitchen area, another in the bedroom, a third inside an outside storage compartment and a fourth in the truck’s cab. This way an extinguisher is always handy and I have several backups if needed. Also it’s good to know the type of fire extinguisher you have. I advise ones that can be used on many types of fires. Also don’t forget to maintain and replace them.

Plan Exit Route

In the event of a fire do you have a plan to escape the RV? Say you are awoken in the middle of the night by the smoke alarm and there is a fire blocking the main exit. What do you do? It’s important to think about it and have a plan in place. In our fifth wheel there is an emergency exit window in the bedroom. I always leave a small step ladder underneath the window. Our plan is open the window throw the bedding across the sharp edge of the window sill and lower ourselves down to the waiting ladder.

Don’t Overload Electrical Circuits

RV wiring is only rated to handle so much electric current. Not much extra margin is usually built into these circuits because they are always trying to save weight and cost when building the RV. Having said that my advice is to not plug too many things into one outlet, especially high draw appliances or heaters. Occasionally feel the electric outlet plates and see if they are getting hot. If you feel they are excessively warm to the touch call an electrician and have them checked out. Pick up an wattage meter and test how
much current you may be drawing. Get yourself a good quality surge protector. If an overload in the shore power occurs it can cause damage and possible fire in the RV circuits. See my review on the one we use and recommend for our 30 amp RV, the Progressive Industries hard wired model EMS-HW30C. It also comes as a portable unit. It will shut the power off instantly if an overload should occur.

Maintain Appliances

It’s especially important to keep the RVs appliances cleaned and maintained. The number one on that list is the refrigerator. It is one of the more common causes of RV fires. Open the access panels of the RV appliances a couple times a year and make sure there is no dirt or debris build up taking place. Also visually inspect the wiring and circuitry for any signs of overheating or loose connections and if you’re suspicious call in an RV technician to take a look at it.

Careful Cooking in RV

Our RV kitchens are generally cramped with tiny amounts of counter space. Therefore we must be extra careful when preparing our meals. Keep the stove area clear and never leave a burner on when not present in the RV. I keep a couple boxes of baking soda above the stove in case of a flare up. Fast action may save the RV and a ruined vacation.

Tires and Axle Bearings

You wouldn’t think tires and bearings would be a fire threat but think again, they are a not so uncommon cause of burnt out RV’s on the highway. What happens is an axle bearing fails and gets extremely hot to the point of igniting the tire. Once the tire gets fully engulfed it is very hard to put out and generally the fire spreads and the whole rig goes up in smoke. There are several ways to avoid this happening. First, always maintain the wheel bearings. Have them inspected and re-greased at the recommended times. Second, keep tires inflated to proper levels. Third after every tow feel the wheels and tires for heat. They should be warm but not too hot. Do it often and you will get a feel for normal heat and know when one is out of acceptable range. If you can afford it I recommend installing a quality tire monitoring system. A good system will not only monitor air pressures but also temperature alerting you to any changes before catastrophic failure happens.

Battery Ventilation

The lead acid type batteries used in most RVs can emit explosive gases and need to be provided proper ventilation. To avoid any problems make sure the batteries area is adequately vented to the outside. If you keep the batteries inside a sealed box a vent hose needs to be installed and generally a second hole is opened beneath the battery as well. Fresh and well maintained batteries will also produce less gas so avoid using the batteries too long and always maintain the water levels. Of course avoid smoking and
causing sparks around the batteries. One tip I can give you – if metal things in the area around the batteries are showing signs of corrosion then you likely have too much battery gases developing.

**Storing Combustible Items**

Check over what you have stored inside the RVs storage compartments. Avoid storing combustible items like gasoline, oily rags, camp fuel, etc. inside any sealed compartments where gases may build up. Most RVs will have some compartments which are ventilated, like the propane tank storage areas, which would be a better place for combustibles. I use the back of my pickup truck in a ventilated metal box.

**Barbeque and Campfire**

Keep the barbeque (unless it is a specially built on unit from the manufacture) and campfire well away from the RV. It would suck to melt a sidewall area or damage the awning with excessive barbeque or campfire heat. Also when grilling we tend to create occasional large flare ups, especially juicy burgers. A little extra distance is only prudent.

**Conclusion**

In conclusion I’d like to say I’m not an RV fire safety expert, only an avid full time RVer, so take what I say with that in mind. Spend some time and research the web, there are many good resources out there, educate yourself. Who knows you may save your rig one day or even more importantly you and your loved ones.

**39. Rice cooker to heat up leftovers**

Great for heating up leftovers. I did a bit of research and there are many online sites with recipes and ideas for using rice cookers for many things beyond rice. This is a good idea for the RV especially if the weather is hot. Rather than firing up the oven and creating all that heat, a tasty meal can be made up in the rice cooker.
Portable CB Radio in the RV

When you’re traveling it's a good idea to have several methods of communications on board. One old school method is to carry a CB Radio in the RV. Now the CB radio is almost an obsolete technology but is still used by truckers on the highways to relay information about traffic conditions, construction zones and the best routes through a busy city. It can also be useful to talk to other RVers you may be traveling in caravan with.

In big emergency situations like natural disasters many of the newer communication networks go down, like for instance the cell networks or the internet, but CB's will still work. Also most CBs come with built in NOAA weather monitoring capabilities and broadcast weather alerts.

Now a days there are CB models available that are truly plug and play and cheap. Just plug them into a 12 volt cigarette lighter type socket and turn them on.
41. Conserving fresh water during dry camping

**Use the dish water for toilet flushing**

When we are out dry camping the thing that limits us the most is fresh water. Our fresh tank holds 60 gallons and our waste tanks add up to 120 gallons. A way to make the fresh water tank last a bit longer is to not waste it for flushing the toilet. Instead we collect the dish water instead of letting it go down the kitchen drain we use it to flush the toilet. Some folks collect shower water. A pitcher sitting by the toilet does the trick and the soapy water actually helps clean the black tank.

42. Carry a Torque Wrench for RV Maintenance

As a full timer, snowbird and even a regular vacation type RV user it’s a good idea to carry and know how to use a torque wrench to maintain proper tightness on critical nuts and bolts. As our motorhomes, trucks, tow vehicles, and trailers are rolling and sometimes bouncing along down the road things are bound to come loose. Things are even worse if you head to off-road areas or spend any time on some of the big transport truck pounded interstate highways. Small screws and nuts are easily tightened up by hand but what about the bigger sized stuff like wheel lug nuts, hitch bolts, suspension hardware, etc.. This is where having a good torque wrench and knowing all the proper settings for the various bolts can help prevent premature wear and tear on the RV or even stave off a catastrophic event like a wheel flying off the rig.
A **torque wrench** is a tool used to precisely apply a specific torque to a fastener such as a nut or bolt. It is usually in the form of a socket wrench with special internal mechanisms. It was invented by Conrad Bahr in 1918 while working for the New York City Water Department. It was designed to prevent over tightening bolts on water main and steam pipe repairs underground. A torque wrench is used where the tightness of screws and bolts is crucial. It allows the operator to measure the torque applied to the fastener so it can be matched to the specifications for a particular application. This permits proper tension and loading of all parts. - [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Torque_wrench](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Torque_wrench)

On my rig the most critical items I check often are the trailer wheel lug nuts. Because of the large sideways forces placed on these wheels being made from aluminum they are the most likely nut to come loose. I check them before just about every tow.

Next every few weeks to a month depending on how much we are traveling I check the suspension bolts and truck lug nuts. A little less often maybe every six months I’ll give the hitch and kingpin nuts and bolts a check over. The ones that seem to come loose the most
often on my RV are the trailer wheel lug nuts and the U-Clamp bolts on the axles. Not usually by much but if left unattended they could get worse.

You can pick up a decent enough torque wrenches these days for around $70 dollars and it takes just a few minutes to check things on your rig. Something that will pay dividends down the road with less wear and chance of a break down leaving you stranded on the side of the road. I find while performing the torque checks I also can at the same time inspect things like tires, hitch and suspension hardware catching early any signs of problems.

*Not only can this little tip save you money it may save your or some else's life. Safe travels - Ray*

**43. Check your RV tires age**

**Using old tires can be unsafe!**

Check the age of your tires and change them if they are getting too old. Most RV and Trailer tires should be changed at around 5 years and vehicle tires 7 years. These are just general rules of thumb that I use. To be sure check with your tires manufacture. Also check the DOT code on the tire to see the exact day the tire was produced, they may have sat on a shelf for some time before being sold. An old tire can look great and have perfect tread on the outside but be rotted on the inside leading to a blowout.
Don't be like this girl riding on old tires

44. Hummingbird feeder for the RV

The last few seasons RVing we have noticed quite a number of rigs put out a hummingbird feeder. After seeing this over and over again we decided to see what the attraction was and finally, we purchased ourselves one for our RV. We attach it to one of the big picture windows on the large fifth wheel slide out by a suction cup hanger. The feeder we bought is small so it doesn't take much storage space. The suction cup hanger makes it quick and easy to put up and take down.
It is located on the window beside my wife's work computer and the table we eat our meals on, so we have plenty of chances to watch the birds. It didn't take long at all once we put it up to have several visitors show up. I really like this particular feeder because you can see the birds from all angles and there is a circular perch for them to land on. If you're a photographer this is a great way to get a shot of these very quick and elusive creatures. I was able to get the shot of this little guy you see in this blog post through the RV window. It's so cool to see them up close. Amazing animals! Man, why did it take it take us so long to get one? I can hardly wait to put it out next winter's snowbird season down in the desert where there are some really cool looking hummingbirds feeding on cactus flowers.
45. Twist-On Waste Valve

I've seen these twist on waste gates attached to some other RV's sewer outputs and always thought they would be a good idea for my Keystone Cougar fifth wheel. My rig has three waste tanks (Black, Galley, and Shower/Bath Sink). The three tanks output pipes all combine into one big output pipe. Sometimes one of the waste valves will have a small leak and dribble some water building up at the end. So when I open the cap to attach my sewer hose I get sometimes as much as a quart of sewage spill out. Yuck!

I usually have a bucket I place under to catch the nasty dribble of water but with my new Valterra Twist-On Waste Valve that will be a thing of the past. The Valterra attaches right on the end of the sewer output and provides a final waste gate blocking any leaked out water that got by the other waste valves further upstream.

Also if one of my three standard valves fails or I forget to close one of the valves after dumping it will act as a fallback. This actually happened to me once. Our galley valve is tucked way under the slide in between the trailer wheels. I forgot to close it once, well the next dump; boy did I ever get a surprise when I opened the sewer cap! Sure glad it was just dishwater.

Another neat thing I will now be able to do is equalize my two gray tanks making for longer boondocking time. We always fill up the 40 gallon shower tank well before our 40 gallon kitchen tank. With the addition of the twist-on waste gate I can now open both gray valves and let the excess shower water flow into the galley tank. I think it might be a good idea to tape up the bayonet hook attachment though to make sure it stays in place. I wouldn't want it to come loose in transit, spraying fellow travels with gray water. :)}
46. Saving Money while RVing

Introduction

Being that we aren't yet famously wealthy and unable to work the six months we spend down south visiting the United States during the winter, we really have to watch our budget. In the last few years travelling full time in our RV we have figured out some ways to be frugal and save our money. It’s this cheaper style of RVing that has allowed Anne and I to explore more places and spend more time RVing then we would have thought possible. Below you’ll find some of our best advice for saving money when RVing.

Food

There is a big opportunity to save money by cooking your own food. Not only is it generally healthier but almost always far less expensive than dining out. I would say we average maybe 2-3 times per month dining out and the rest of the time we prepare our own meals. To save even more we buy our dry, frozen and canned type goods at Walmart versus a fancy grocery store and pick up fresh fruit and veggies at local markets when possible.

Tips

- Use a slow cooker to prepare meals. Makes the meal very convenient and you’ll get leftovers for the next day. Even a cheap cut of meat will smell and taste great after simmering in the crock-pot all day.

- Make up a nice lunch like sandwiches or wraps before hitting the road, then when the stomach growls you can stop for a nice picnic lunch, rather than pulling into a road side restaurant of fast food place.
Stock up on canned and dried foods when on sale. Our RV’s have small fridges, so keeping bulk amounts of frozen and fresh food is not feasible. Many things are perfectly tasty from a can or dried, so try to use that option for suitable items.

**Entertainment**

We use the roof-top antenna to pick up over the air (OTA) free TV signals. Our rig is equipped with a modern digital type TV which in many locations will pick up plenty of stations to keep us amused. To supplement that we will once in a while use the inexpensive RedBox movie rentals that seem to be everywhere to pick up a flick. If you subscribe to their mailing list they routinely send out deals like 50 cent movie rentals. Also when in a good free Wi-Fi zone we will download TV shows and movies to watch.

![Roof-top antenna](image)

**Tips**

- Don’t watch the latest movies and TV, if you let yourself lag the mainstream by 6 months or a year the TV shows and movies drop in price a ton when renting or downloading.
- Pay the 80$ for a National Parks and Federal Recreational Lands Pass. This gets you into not only the National Parks but many other interesting places like the National Monuments for free.
- Hit up the local visitor center and find out what free activities are available. Some of the better museums I’ve visited were free or by donation.

**Camp fees**

Last snowbird six month season we were able to lower our camping fees to around $250 a month including electric and LP gas use. We did this without sacrificing the quality of places either. We enjoyed Northern California, the Oregon Coast, San Diego, Palm
Springs, Las Vegas, Tucson and several gorgeous National and State Parks. It was accomplished by utilizing a combination of several things. We purchased a yearly membership pass from Thousand Trails for $500 bucks, giving us a free 30 days of camping and $3 a night after that. The membership required us to leave the system for a week after every two week stay. So during our week out of the system we generally camped for free on BLM land or found cheap no hook-up sites in the state/county parks.

Tips

- Outfit your rig so you can go without hookups and water for up to a week. You’ll open up a huge world of cheap camping possibilities. Check out my Boondocking Basics post.

- Attend a few RV shows and stock up on the free or cheap deals offered by RV Parks.

- Negotiate a lower weekly or monthly rate if you’re in an area a longer stretch of time.

Maintenance and Repair

By investing a small amount of time learning a few things and a little money for a modest set of tools you can save a fair amount of cash. Anytime you avoid calling a professional RV tech there is a $100 per hour in your pocket. Many problems that crop up while RVing are very simple and straightforward to repair. This is where the internet is so valuable. Most times a little Google search or a browse through your favorite RVers forum will turn up an answer to your problem. Also a little preventative maintenance will keep things running smoothly. Learning how to lubricate, clean and polish the right things pays dividends in the long run.

Tips

- YouTube is my go-to resource for repair information. You’ll be amazed at the free knowledge being dispensed in how to videos. I'm even there. :)
Do a search for “RV Forums”, join a few, they are a huge fountain of information especially on RV maintenance and repairs. You’re likely not alone with a certain RV problem and most forum members are eager to help.

Most manufactures are have an online presence whether it be a website, Facebook, Twitter, Google Plus, etc. If you’re having issues with a product why not get an answer right from the horse’s mouth.

**Fuel Costs**

Well the easiest way to lower fuel costs is stay put somewhere longer. We do this by trying to plan our route so as to not be bouncing back and forth between distant locations. Any mileage we can save when towing the fifth wheel is big $$$ savings for us. We will park the rig central to the area we want to visit then do day trips with just the truck. Route planning is very important as well. I try and avoid routes that will take me through extremely hilly terrain if possible. Sometimes taking the longer flatter route saves fuel because the truck doesn't waste so much fuel dragging our house up the hills. Another waste of fuel comes from not knowing where you’re going. Make sure to us a map or get a RV GPS device to plot the exact course so you’re not burning fuel trying to find that elusive campsite entrance. I find using the satellite view is a tremendous aid in navigating because you can see the layout of the land and any obstacles so much better than just a map. Anytime you can shorten the trip you've saved money.

**Tips**

- Avoid driving in high winds; they will kill your fuel mileage.

- Watch your speed, anything faster than 55 mph usually takes much more fuel for an RV.

- Pick a route with the fewest stop lights. Having to regain your rigs momentum takes lots of fuel. Cheaper sometimes to take the longer bypass route around a city.

**Conclusion**

Well that is some of our best advice for saving money when RVing. I’m sure there are many more severe ways to save but this is what works for us. We still like to enjoy a certain level of comfort and will open our wallets if it’s a “can’t miss it” attraction. But we know in the back of our minds, the more we conserve the more we can travel.
Hope you found these tips useful. For more great RVing info and to follow our RV travels please explore these links.

Cheers Ray.

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