

STATE & COUNTY PARK CAMPGROUNDS



Chapter Outline

1. Exploring the Range of Public Campground Options
2. State Park Campground Guide
3. Build Your State and County Park Campground Bucket List



Key Chapter Takeaways

- As with private parks, there's a wide range of offerings within the public park category.
- You'll often pay less for these sites, but you may find fewer amenities.
- Many public parks have beautiful, spacious sites, but that's not always the case.
- Booking a popular park can be a challenge. Understanding the reservation system and booking window is helpful.

What's the Big Idea?

When people think of camping, they often think of the types of campsites found in public parks. Words like rustic, beautiful, peaceful, and relaxing may come to mind. There are RVers who love this type of experience so much, they can't even imagine staying at a private resort.

As you discover your camping personality, you may be drawn to one type of experience or the other. Or, you may find that you truly enjoy both. That's okay! This chapter will take a broad look at camping in public parks and specifically county and state parks.

PART I:

Exploring the Range of Public Parks



What Are the Types of Public Campground Options?

- Local and county parks
- State parks
- National parks
- Corps of Engineers (COE) campgrounds

This chapter will focus on county and state parks, while upcoming chapters will cover national parks and COE campgrounds more in depth.

What Can You Expect at a Public Park Campground?

As with private parks, there truly is a range of public park campgrounds.

Some are rustic, with limited or no hookups or additional amenities.

Others are more developed, offering hookup options and diverse amenities.

Let's take a look at the range of typical options, including basic, mid-level, and high-end public parks.

How Much Does It Cost to Stay at a Public Campground?

Prices often correlate to the level of amenities, services, and experiences offered.

Basic public parks typically range from \$10 to \$25 per night.

Mid-level public parks typically range from \$25 to \$50.

High-end public parks may cost anywhere from \$50 to \$100.

PART I:

Exploring the Range of Public Parks



What Should You Expect at Basic Public Campgrounds?

- Gravel or grass sites.
- May or may not offer advance reservations.
- Limited or no utility hookups available.
- Often don't have onsite restrooms or showers with running water.
- Inexpensive rates (i.e. under \$25 per night).
- Some are not able to accommodate RVs.

What Can You Expect at a Public Campground?

- Some campgrounds managed by the U.S. Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management (BLM), or the National Park Service (NPS).
- Less-developed city or county parks.

What Should You Expect at a Mid-Level Public Campground?

- May or may not need reservations.
- Low cost (can range from \$30 or less to \$50).
- Often use online reservation booking systems.
- Most offer sites with either water or electric hookups; some have both.
- Will have restrooms and shower houses with running water.
- Usually have basic onsite recreation (i.e. swim beach, playground, trails).

What Are Some Examples of Mid-Level Public Campgrounds?

- Most state and county parks.
- Most Corps of Engineers campgrounds (more on these in Chapter Five).
- Some NPS campgrounds (more on these in Chapter Four).

PART I:

Exploring the Range of Public Parks



What Should You Expect at a High-End Public Campground?

- Reservations required; often need to book well in advance.
- May need to book immediately after reservations open.
- Use online reservation booking systems.
- Most offer water and electric at sites, while some have full hookups.
- Most offer well-maintained restrooms, shower houses, and laundry facilities.
- Usually have diverse recreation options onsite (i.e. pool, marina, trails, nicer playgrounds).
- Often in scenic locations or near popular tourist areas.

What Are Some Examples of High-End Public Campgrounds?

Select state and county parks (see the “bucket list” recommendations in Part III of this chapter).

What Are the Pros of Public Campgrounds?

- Scenic beauty
- Low cost
- Quiet
- Allow you to disconnect
- Large sites
- Privacy
- Able to enjoy the wildlife

PART I:

Exploring the Range of Public Parks



What Are the Cons of Public Campgrounds?

- Difficult to book popular parks
- Lack of hookups
- Lack of additional amenities
- Wide variety of upkeep and cleanliness
- May be difficult for larger RVs to navigate
- Some campgrounds don't accommodate RVs over a specified length
- Some are remote, with no nearby stores or restaurants
- WiFi is usually not offered by the campground, and cell phone service may be unavailable or limited.

What Do You Need to Research Before Booking at Public Campgrounds?

- Find out which hookups and amenities are offered.
- Consider how close you are to restaurants and stores, so you can plan accordingly.
- Research the rules of the campground (i.e. generator use).
- Determine how easy it is to navigate to the park and to campsites within the park.
- Be aware of any booking windows at popular campgrounds.

How Do You Prepare to Camp at a Public Campground?

Since many don't have full hookups, you need to plan accordingly.

No electricity?	Consider solar or generator options, or plan to live without. Your RV battery can power some items.
No water?	Fill your freshwater tank, bring bottles of water, and consider using the shower house.
No sewer?	Consider using the onsite restrooms or taking along a portable water tote to empty tanks.

PART I:

Exploring the Range of Public Parks



| Can RVs Over 30 Feet Fit into Public Campgrounds?

You may have heard that RVs over 30 feet won't fit in public park campgrounds.

While that's true for some public parks, it's not absolute.

Remember that many parks were developed decades ago and were not built to accommodate today's large RVs.

Some locations have invested in upgrading roads, campsites, and facilities to make it easier for large RVs to access the park.

The bottom line is that you'll have more campsite options with a smaller RV, but that doesn't mean larger RVs can't fit at public parks.

| Additional Notes:

PART II: State Park Campground Guide

What’s the Big Idea?

One of the most challenging parts of state park camping is navigating the online reservation booking system. We’ve developed a state-by-state campground guide to help you navigate booking windows, campground amenities, pet policies, and more. You can download the guide for free with this course.



Additional Notes:
