

BOONDOCKING



Chapter Outline

1. Essential Boondocking Tips
2. Finding Locations for Boondocking



Key Chapter Takeaways

- Boondocking offers a unique camping experience.
- Boondocking requires different preparations than staying in designated parks and campgrounds.

What's the Big Idea?

If you want a more rustic, primitive RVing experience, boondocking may be for you.

Some RVers are drawn to this style of camping due to the off-the-grid experience it provides. Some appreciate the privacy, the views, and the affordability.

If you plan to boondock, there are some preparations you should take to ensure a safe, comfortable experience.



PART I:

Essential Boondocking Tips



What Is Boondocking?

Parking overnight in open spaces on public lands, such as national forests and those managed by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM).

May also include business or store parking lots and other facilities. Chapter Seven will talk specifically about overnight parking at establishments.

What Are the Pros of Boondocking on Public Land?

- Usually free
- May offer privacy
- Offers independence
- Offers an off-grid experience

What Are the Cons of Boondocking on Public Land?

- May be isolated
- May be in an area that is hard to reach
- Must prepare for dry camping
- Need to research appropriate locations
- Sites are first come, first served

Is Boondocking Always Free?

Not always.

Some locations charge a fee for access, but it's usually less than \$20 per night.

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What Is the Difference Between Boondocking and Dry Camping?

Boondocking usually involves dry camping (which is camping without hookups).

Boondocking involves camping outside of designated campgrounds.

Dry camping is sometimes done in designated campgrounds.

What Do You Need to Know Before You Boondock?

1. What will the weather be like?
2. How long will you be camping?
3. What gear and items do you need to camp comfortably in your rig without hookups?
4. How will you find a site?

Why Is the Weather Important While Boondocking?

You will typically be camping without heat or A/C.

Boondocking is popular where the temperatures are moderate, like higher elevations during the summer and desert regions during the winter.

Rain and snow can limit access to roadways.

Wildfire season can endanger campers or limit campfires.

Why Is It Important to Know How Long You'll Be Boondocking?

If you are camping for a lengthy time, you need to prepare well.

BLM does not allow camping for more than 14 days at a time within a 25-mile region, even if the days are non-consecutive.

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| How Do You Camp Without Electrical Hookups?

1. Generators
2. Batteries and inverters
3. Solar panels

| How Do Generators Help You Boondock?

Some motorhomes come with onboard generators.

You can purchase generators to use with rigs that don't have one.

They provide strong, stable power fueled by gasoline.

They are powerful enough to run items that draw a lot of electricity, including microwaves and A/Cs.

| How Do Batteries and Inverters Help You Boondock?

Heavy-duty RV and deep cycle marine batteries can be connected to an inverter.

This provides enough power for items like your outlets and refrigerator to run for a short time.

| What Are the Drawbacks of Batteries and Inverters?

- Battery life is limited
- Not meant for heavy-duty electrical usage
- Not a long-term power source (must be recharged with your vehicle, a solar system, or a generator)

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How Does a Solar Power Help You Boondock?

Solar panels generate energy to run batteries and inverters.

Free after the initial setup.

Environmentally friendly.



Some new RVs come prepped for solar or with a solar panel system as an optional add-on.

What Are the Drawbacks of Using Solar Power While Boondocking?

- Must camp with full view of the sun (not in shady spots).
- Cloudy days impact power availability.
- Cost to invest in solar panels, installation, and other necessary gear.

What Water Preparations Do You Need to Take Before Boondocking?

1. Fill your freshwater tank 100% full.
2. Fully empty your black and gray tanks.
3. Consider taking along extra sources of water.
4. Consider purchasing a portable waste transport tote (for emptying tanks).

How Do You Boondock Without Shower Access?

1. Use gym showers (may require a fee).
2. Clean up in a park or business restroom.
3. Use shower wipes.
4. Jump in a lake or river.

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What Toilet Access Will You Have While Boondocking?

Most boondocking areas do not have public restrooms or showers.

You may use these options:

1. Use your onboard toilet carefully to conserve water and tank space.
2. Buy a composting or portable toilet that doesn't use water or tank space.
3. Go outdoors, but be prepared to bury your waste 6 to 8 inches deep and at least 200 feet from trails, campsites, and water sources.

How Do You Limit Dishwashing While Boondocking?

1. Use paper plates and plastic utensils.
2. Grill instead of using pots and pans.
3. Prep foods ahead of your trip to limit dish usage.
4. Eat more packaged foods.
5. Carefully monitor water usage while dishwashing.

What Should You Do If You Fill Your Gray Tank While Boondocking?

Drive to a location with a dump station.

These are sometimes found at other campgrounds, gas stations, rest areas, and parks (some require a fee).

You can also use a portable waste transport tote to free up more room.

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Can You Dump Gray Water on the Ground While Boondocking?

Some RVers do, depending on the location.

This practice is discouraged because of the following:

1. It's often illegal.
2. It exposes wildlife to foods and chemicals.
3. It creates a bad smell.
4. It can lead to erosion.
5. It may harm the flora and fauna.

Will You Have Cell Phone Service While Boondocking?

You will not have WiFi while camping on most public lands.

You may or may not have cell phone service.

Use resources such as Campendium or Allstays to find reviews of coverage.

Consider bringing a signal booster.

How Can You Stay Safe While Boondocking?

1. Always let a friend, family member, or park ranger know your location.
2. Respect the wildlife.
3. Check the weather.
4. Take along extra supplies.

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| What Else Do You Need to Prepare for Boondocking?

- Plan to arrive during daylight hours.
- Charge all batteries.
- Bring small appliances that don't draw a lot of energy.
- Stock up on groceries, including some easy-to-prepare foods.
- Take fresh laundry.
- Plan appropriately for the weather.
- Prepare for your water, electrical, and sewage needs.

| What Gear Is Recommended for Boondocking?

- Water bladder and water pump
- Biodegradable soaps
- Composting toilet
- Water filter
- Leveling blocks
- Generator
- Bug spray

| If You Plan to Boondock, What Rig Features Are Helpful?

- Large holding tanks
- Built-in cell phone signal boosters
- Solar system
- Energy-efficient appliances
- Refrigerator that can run off of propane
- Higher ground clearance and wheelbase

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| What Types of RVs Are Better for Boondocking?

- Trailers under 30 feet in length
- Class B or C motorhomes
- Vans
- Truck campers
- Teardrops



Match the size and setup of your rig to the types of locations you wish to visit.

| Additional Notes:

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Finding Locations for Boondocking



| Can You Boondock Anywhere?

Towns and municipalities have laws concerning overnight camping on streets and in parks.

Businesses may or may not allow you to camp in their parking lots.

Federal lands have guidelines and protections in place.

| Where Can You Boondock Legally?

1. On public lands, in accordance with regulations
2. At businesses with permission



One form of boondocking is called “moochdocking,” which is camping on a friend’s or family member’s land. You need to be aware of local ordinances.

| Which Public Lands May Offer Boondocking?

- BLM areas
- U.S. Forest Service lands
- Local, state, and national parks
- Public rest areas

| What Is BLM?

BLM = Bureau of Land Management.

Controls almost 250 million acres of land in the U.S.

Mostly found in western states.

Offers campgrounds and dispersed camping.

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| What Is the U.S. Forest Service?

Controls over 193 million acres of land.

Covers 154 national forests and 20 national grasslands.

Found across the U.S.

Offers campgrounds and dispersed camping.

| What Is Dispersed Camping?

Camping in an area without established campsites.

Will not have hookups or services.

May or may not require reservations or fees.

| What Should You Know about Boondocking in Public Parks?

Most local, state, and public parks don't allow boondocking.

Look for regulations on the park website or check with a park official.

| What Practices Should You Follow While Boondocking?

- Pay attention to signage that designates camping locations, rules, and expectations.
- Follow leave-no-trace practices to limit your impact on the location.
- Respect your neighbors.
- Only drive on existing roads.
- Review regulations for the area where you are camping.
- When in doubt, ask a park ranger, BLM office, or other official.

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| Can You Boondock in Rest Areas?

Some states allow RVs to park overnight in rest areas.

Some designated rest areas offer basic hookups or dump stations.

Check with the state's Department of Transportation to learn more.

| What Happens if You Boondock Where It Is Not Allowed?

You may be asked to leave.

Local law enforcement may ask you to move or issue a ticket.

| How Do You Find Boondocking Locations?

The following resources will help you find boondocking locations:

- Campendium
- Allstays
- U.S. Public Lands App
- Boondockers Welcome
- Harvest Hosts

| What Is Campendium?

This free website has a database of campsites, which includes details about amenities, hookups, and more.

- Members can add reviews, photos, and blog posts.
- Compiles data from reviewers about cell phone service.
- Filter for "free camping" to find boondocking locations.
- May also find dump stations and water fills.

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| What Is Allstays?

This \$10 app and free website is popular with boondockers for its extensive directory of free and low-cost camping locations.

- Better for finding overnight parking locations than dispersed camping locations.
- Works offline.

| What Is the U.S. Public Lands App?

This \$3 app is popular with boondockers seeking dispersed camping sites on public lands.

- Allows you to easily see boundaries of public and private lands.
- Retrieves rules and regulations for the type of public land you are on.
- Works offline.

| What Is Boondockers Welcome?

For a \$50 membership fee, this site helps you locate people who will let you camp for free at their house or property.

- Includes almost 3,000 sites worldwide.
- While some offer electric hookups or other basic services, most do not.

| What Is Harvest Hosts?

For a \$99 membership fee, this website and app helps you locate wineries, breweries, farms, and other unique sites where you may camp for free.

- Togo RV Plus members receive a membership discount.
- Includes over 1,400 locations.
- While some offer electric hookups or other basic services, most do not.
- Purchasing items from the onsite business is recommended as a token of appreciation.