

OVERNIGHT RV PARKING



Key Chapter Takeaways

- Overnight parking is free and convenient.
- There are rules and practices you must follow.

What's the Big Idea?

If you're setting out on a long drive, you may not always know how far you'll make it before you need to stop for the night. Other times, you may be heading out on a trip or full-timing with a limited budget, hoping to get in as many free overnight stays as possible.

In these situations and many others, overnight parking is one way to find a free and convenient place to stay for the night.

This chapter shares best practices for overnight parking in your RV.

What's the Difference Between Boondocking and Overnight Parking?

While overnight parking is a type of boondocking, there are some differences. Mainly, instead of looking for camping areas on public land, you get permission to stay in a business parking lot for the night. Secondly, boondocking on public land usually involves setting up a campsite, something that is limited while overnight parking.

When Should You Plan on Overnight Parking?

- If you want to break up a long drive
- If you're in a hurry
- If you don't know how long you'll drive on a given day
- If you want to save money
- If you need to stop in a location without any campground access

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| What Are the Pros of Overnight Parking?

- Free
- Convenient to your driving route
- Little advance planning necessary
- Some businesses have security
- Not isolated
- Easy access to shopping
- Usually have good cell phone service

| What Are the Cons of Overnight Parking?

- Can't set up camp
- May be bright and noisy
- No hookups
- Usually can't stay more than one night
- No scenic views
- May attract attention
- Not appropriate for pop-ups and hybrids

| Which Businesses Allow Overnight Parking?

Not all of the following businesses' locations allow the practice, so always call ahead.

- Walmart and Sam's Club
- Cracker Barrel
- Flying J Travel Centers
- Camping World
- Costco
- Kmart
- Cabelas
- Love's Travel Stops
- Select casinos, visitor centers, churches, and others

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What Practices Apply to Overnight Parking at Businesses?

- Keep your setup simple. Don't put out awnings, chairs, etc.
- You may or may not be able to extend slide-outs.
- Buy goods at the business as a gesture of appreciation.
- Always call ahead for permission, even if you've seen online that the location allows camping.
- Park at the edge of the lot or in a designated area.

What Should You Know About Boondocking at Truck Stops?

Some truck stops have designated RV spots to separate them from tractor-trailer parking.

Some offer showers, laundry facilities, WiFi, dump stations, and more (which may involve additional fees).

Always call ahead to find out the regulations for the individual stop you plan to make.

Be respectful of truck drivers, who are on the job and need a location to sleep.

Can You Park on Streets and Roadways Overnight?

Sometimes, you may park along streets and roadways.

Check local ordinances and posted signs.

It helps if you have a small vehicle. For example, Class Bs, vans, and truck campers can do this more easily than Class A motorhomes or long travel trailers.

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What Practices Apply to Parking Along Streets and Roadways?

- Keep your blinds drawn.
- Don't set up camp.
- Don't park near schools or playgrounds.
- Look for meters and pay appropriately.
- Stay alert.

Where Can You Find Overnight Parking Spots?

Since these locations are not advertised in formal ways, you can depend on fellow RVers who share info with apps and websites that compile recommendations.

These include:

- RVParky
- Overnight RV Parking
- AllStays
- The VanLife App

What Is the Overnight RV Parking App?

This subscription service provides you with access to the largest database of free overnight parking locations in North America, with over 15,000 spots.

- Uses your phone's GPS to show your location on a map.
- Shows nearby free parking spots.
- Can integrate with map apps to provide directions.
- Included with a Togo RV Plus membership.

Additional Notes:
