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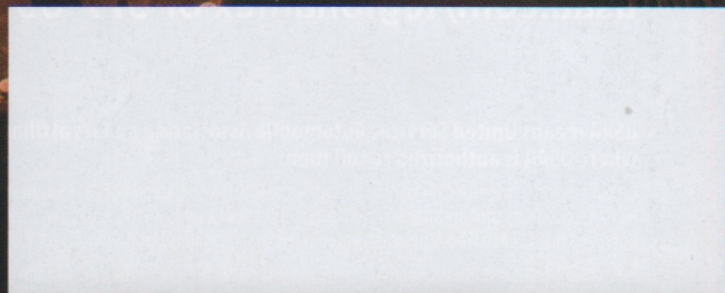
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# Wide Open Spaces

*Plan ahead to make your first RV trip smooth, safe and fun.*

BY LYN METTLER

**A**re you itching to camp at one of our national parks, or do you have friends who RV part of the year and you want to give it a try, too? RVing is a fun way to see the country while bringing the comforts of home with you. Here are a few basics to help you get started:

**KNOW WHERE YOU'RE GOING** Get the most out of your RV time by planning ahead as much as possible. "Plotting your route in advance can lead to less time on the road and more time enjoying your destination," says Zoe Macfarlane, vice president of marketing and business development for JUCY ([jucyusa.com](http://jucyusa.com)), a company that rents

minivans-turned-RVs in Las Vegas, San Francisco and Los Angeles. Once you know your dates and itinerary, look for campsites, as popular places can be fully booked far in advance.

According to Bryanna Royal, who blogs at [crazyfamilyadventure.com](http://crazyfamilyadventure.com) about living full time in an RV with her husband and four children, space matters. "There are some really amazing campgrounds out there, and there are some that pack you in like sardines," she says. "If you are only there to go out and explore, a tight spot isn't so bad, but if you want to hang out, have a bonfire and just be at the campground, you will appreciate more space."



Visit more than 2,000 museums free through Labor Day as part of the [Blue Star Museums](http://arts.gov/bluestarmuseums) program. Active-duty, National Guard and reserve families receive free admission to fine arts, science, music and children's museums, such as the Blues Hall of Fame Museum in Memphis, Tenn., and the Guggenheim Museum in New York City. For a complete list of participating museums, visit [arts.gov/bluestarmuseums](http://arts.gov/bluestarmuseums).

Photo courtesy Tagger Yancey IV, NYC & Company

Active-duty military visiting the [Fort Myers, Fla.](http://edisonfordwinterstates.org), area can enjoy free admission to the former winter estates of Thomas Edison and Henry Ford year-round. Learn more at [edisonfordwinterstates.org](http://edisonfordwinterstates.org).

Keep in mind that it takes longer to travel to your destination in an RV than a car, so Google Maps' estimated time may be too short. "Google Maps determines time by the speed limit, yet when in an RV you should really stay around 60 to 65 miles per hour," Royal says.

**CHOOSING AN RV** Even if you're planning to buy an RV, try renting one first to see if you enjoy the trip. "Make sure you love life on the road before making a large financial and lifestyle commitment," Macfarlane says. For those who plan to stay somewhere for weeks or months at a time, consider a larger RV. If you want to move around a lot, RVs less than 30 feet allow more opportunities and ease of travel.

Dan Wulfman of Tracks & Trails ([tracks-trails.com](http://tracks-trails.com)), a vacation planning service for RV camping trips, agrees. "Don't get lured into renting or buying an RV that's bigger than what you really need," he says. "A smaller RV rental can save you a bundle of money and is also easier to drive and park."

As refitted minivans that use less fuel than large RVs, JUCY RVs are easy to navigate into smaller areas. Bonus: JUCY offers a year-round 10 percent discount for all bookings with no blackout dates for active and retired U.S. military.

As for driving, don't let being behind the wheel of an RV intimidate you. First, be careful when making a right-hand turn. Wulfman advises pulling out a bit further than you would in a car, though you may jump the curb the first few times. Second, watch for overhangs. Royal suggests getting a truck GPS app or a truck atlas to be sure you aren't going anywhere that can't handle your RV's height or weight.

**HOOKING UP LIKE A PRO** When driving a JUCY RV, you won't need to hook up to get electricity, water and sewage access, but you will with larger RVs. Wulfman says a full hook-up takes only about 10 minutes and is simple and straightforward.

"There's an electrical cord you pull out of the RV that attaches to a utility post at your campsite, so you can power up the air conditioner and microwave," he says. "There's also a water hose that hooks up to a faucet so you can shower and wash dishes. And, of course, there's the sewage hose. Just put on some dish gloves and relax."

Something else you'll want to do after you arrive at your campsite is find a local grocery store. Even so, plan ahead what meals you'll cook so you don't run out of items when you traveling.

"RVing isn't like a typical vacation where you get to a hotel and everything is taken care of for you," Royal says. "For that reason, be sure you approach your trip with patience and the right expectations. If you do, RVing can be one of the best vacations you ever have." 🌟

*Lyn Mettler is a freelance travel writer who blogs at [GotoTravelGal.com](http://GotoTravelGal.com).*



Blogger Bryanna Royal's family sold its Wisconsin home to live and travel in an RV. Photo courtesy [crazyfamilyadventure.com](http://crazyfamilyadventure.com)

## Your RV starter kit

When packing for an RV trip, it's good to know the difference between must-haves and nice-to-haves. Blogger Bryanna Royal says to take as little as possible.

"The more you bring, the more you have to manage and clean," she says. "Bring the essentials – one plate, one cup, one set of silverware per person, a couple of pots and pans – and then plan meals accordingly."

Dan Wulfman of Tracks & Trails recommends a portable DVD player and e-readers for books to stay entertained while inside the RV and on rainy days.

Mini-RV rental company JUCY has suggestions too, including:

- Packing cubes instead of suitcases so you can easily find what you need
- Ear plugs in case the campground is noisy
- Flashlights
- Wet wipes
- Trash bags
- Laundry detergent
- Dish soap
- Clear plastic zip bags
- Campfire games

Don't worry too much, though. "There is almost always a store close by, so if you forget something you really have to have, you can always go and get it," Royal says.



More than 4.5 million people visited the [Statue of Liberty](#) and [Ellis Island](#) in New York City in 2016 – an all-time high. Statue Cruises, the only authorized concessioner for ferry service to the Statue of Liberty National Monument and Ellis Island, has a discounted military and veteran rate of \$14 for cruises to see these classic U.S. landmarks.

Photo courtesy Marley White, NYC & Company



According to a 2017 Travel Trends survey by CheapOair.com, [international airfare](#) is at its lowest since 2013, though international travel is up 170 percent in the same period. The survey also found that Thursday is the most popular departure day.

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