

Dora & Ed's RV Go-To-Glossary

RV buying, ownership, and living involves a lot of terms and phrases that may not be familiar to new RVers. Some might say that RVers have their own lingo or slang. To help set you up for success when making a purchase, maintaining your RV, or enjoying the RV lifestyle, we offer below our complete Go-To-Glossary.

Styles of Camping

Boondocking: also referred to as dry camping, typically involves camping without any hookups (water, sewer or electric). Often occurs in a state park, BLM land, forest service land, national park or a parking lot.

Full Hookup: camping at an RV park or campground with hookups to fresh water, electric, and sewer.

Moochdocking: staying on a family member's or friend's property, often in the driveway or backyard with limited access to utilities..

Partial Hookup: camping in an RV park/campground with hookup to electric-only, or electric and water, but typically without sewer access.

Primitive Camping: camping that normally happens in places not frequented by most campers. It is also known as "off the grid" camping.

Wallydocking: dry camping in a Walmart parking lot. Some Walmarts allow RVs to park overnight.

Work Camping: a type of exchange where RVers receive a place to park (often with utilities) in exchange for performing tasks at the campground. Sometimes, financial compensation is also included.

Types of RVers

In the RV community there are different types of owners and travelers. Below are the most common types you may encounter during your travel.

Camp host: a person or couple living in their RV at a campground to provide various maintenance and customer service-related services for guests.

Full timer: people who have chosen to live in their RV as their primary residence.

Newbie: a brand new RVer.

Part-timer: people who have chosen to live in their RV as their secondary place of residence and may only RV part of the year.

Snowbird: an RVer that typically lives in their stationary home during the summer and travels to a warmer location in their RV in the winter.

Weekenders: people who generally RV on weekends visiting local RV parks or attractions. These trips usually last about 3-4 days.

Work Camper: someone that is temporarily living at a campground in their RV while working either at the campground, a nearby business, or associated recreational business, like a theme park.

Types of RVs

Bus: a school bus or other type of bus that has been converted into a recreational vehicle.

Class A (Type A) Motorhome: the largest type of motorhome, similar in shape and size to a bus. They range in length from 30 ft to 45 ft and run on gas or diesel. The slang term for a Class A motorhome is a coach.

Class B (Type B) Motorhome: the smallest of the three types of motorhomes that generally sit on a minivan chassis.. Also called camper vans.

Class B Plus (Type B Plus) motorhome: similar to Class C motorhomes, however, the floor plans are generally geared toward two-person travel.

Class C (Type C) motorhome: a medium-sized motorhome with a bed over the cockpit. They range from 21 to 35 feet in length.

Diesel puller: a diesel-powered motorhome with the engine compartment in the front of the RV.

Diesel pusher: a diesel-powered motorhome with the engine compartment in the back of the RV.

Fifth wheel (5th Wheel) trailer: a travel trailer that attaches inside a truck bed. Characterized by its "gooseneck" hitch.

Hybrid trailer: a cross between a pop-up camper and a travel trailer, you have extended sleeping space.

Lightweight trailer: lightweights satisfy the demand for smaller, more fuel-efficient trailers that are easily towed by smaller vehicles.

Park Model: a travel trailer that resembles more of a home than an RV, but can still be moved by a tow vehicle. These models are generally bigger in size.

Pop-up: collapsible and expandable campers with pull-out berths and tent walls, towed in a compact unit behind a vehicle.

Rig: a slang term for an RV. This could refer to a fifth wheel, motorhome, camper or travel trailer.

Teardrop trailer: a compact, lightweight travel trailer that resembles a large teardrop.

Toy hauler: these are travel trailers or motorhomes that have the ability to carry ATVs, motorcycles, golf carts, and small cars. Most toy haulers have a garage in the back end of the RV.

Travel trailer: a RV towed by a truck or SUV. Typically, this includes any towable RV besides a fifth wheel.

Truck camper: truck campers sit in the bed of a truck and often have a bed, kitchenette, wet or dry bath, and a dinette or sofa. They are popular with outdoor enthusiasts because they can take them into the woods for hunting and fishing and not worry about a vehicle towed behind them.

Van conversion/camper vans: a RV where a person will convert a van into a living space. These are very similar to Class B motorhomes.

Parts of an RV

While many parts of an RV are self-explanatory, there are some you might now be familiar with going into RV ownership.

Anode Rod: a rod usually made of magnesium or aluminum installed in water heaters to protect from the build up of rust. They protect the other metal in the water by corroding first.

Arctic Pack: an optional kit to insulate RVs for winter camping. Also referred to as three-season or four-season camping.

Auxiliary battery: an extra battery that 12V devices or appliances can operate off.

Awning: an awning is installed on the side of an RV to provide shade and protection and forms a porch. It is generally made of canvas material and metal arms. Depending on the model, it could be an automatic or manual awning.

Back-up camera: a camera installed on the back of a motorhome to assist the driver in backing up. A monitor is usually located in the dashboard of the RV.

Basement: the storage area below the main area of the RV. This houses all of your tank supplies, outdoor gear, and supplies. Also, commonly referred to as under-storage area or bays.

Batwing: a TV antenna that resembles a pair of wings located on the roof of the RV.

Black tank: the tank that holds the sewer waste (liquids and solids).

Brake controller: located in the tow vehicle and applies the trailer brakes in relation to the amount of pressure being placed on the tow vehicle's brakes.

Breakaway switch: a safety switch that will automatically activate the brakes on the trailer if your trailer becomes separated from the tow vehicle.

Bubble level: a leveler attached to an RV, usually one the front and one on the side to assist in leveling your RV.

Bunkhouse: an RV area containing bunk beds instead of regular beds.

Cabin: the front driving area of a motorhome, which includes the driver's and passenger's seating. Also known as the cockpit.

Cab-over: part of a Class C motorhome overlapping the top of the vehicle's cab, usually containing the sleeping area, storage or entertainment center.

Chassis: the framework from which your RV was built. Typically, refers to the engine, transmission, and other mechanical parts.

Coupler: the part of the trailer that hooks to the hitch ball.

Dinette: a special table made for the RV industry that has the functionality to turn into a bed or table.

Docking lights: a special light installed on the front of the RV to assist while hitching up an RV to a tow vehicle.

Fresh water tank: the holding tank that stores fresh water.

Gauche: soft/dinette bench that converts into a sleeping unit.

Generator: small engine fueled by gasoline, diesel or propane that produces 110-volt electricity, built into many RVs, but also available as a portable option.

Gray tank: the holding tank that stores waste water from the sinks and shower.

Hide-a-bed: a bed that is concealed within a sofa. When fully extended, beds can sleep as many as 2 people.

Hitch: the fastening unit that joins a movable vehicle to the vehicle that pulls it.

Holding tanks: tanks that retain wastewater when the RV unit is not connected to a sewer. The gray-water tank holds wastewater from the sinks and shower; the black-water tank holds sewage from the toilet.

Inverter: a power converter unit that changes 12-volt direct current to 110-volt alternating current to allow operation of computers, TV sets, and such when an RV is not hooked up to electricity.

Leveling jacks: the stabilizer device that extends from the bottom of the RV and keeps the RV in a level position while it is parked.

LP: liquid petroleum, better known to RVers as propane. This typically powers your fridge, stove top, oven, and water heater.

Porta-Potti: brand name for a portable plastic toilet frequently used in folding camping trailers without facilities.

Side cameras: cameras installed on the side of a motorhome to assist the driver when switching lanes or backing up. A monitor is usually located in the dashboard of the RV.

Safety chains: chains installed as a safety precaution between a travel trailer and tow vehicle. They keep the travel trailer from separating from the tow vehicle in case it becomes unhitched.

Shore cord: the external electrical cord that connects the vehicle to a campground electrical hookup.

Slideout: a feature that allows an RV to expand its living space when parked. Different RVs can have anywhere from one to five slideouts.

Sway control: a device that keeps a trailer from moving side-to-side behind the tow vehicle in windy condition, bad road conditions, or erratic driving.

Three-way appliance: appliances, such as refrigerators, that can operate on a 12-volt battery, propane, or 110-volt electrical power.

Tow bar: is a bar installed on the back of a vehicle to tow a trailer.

Undercarriage or underbelly: everything underneath the RV, including mechanical parts, pipes, holding tanks, and more.

RV Accessories and Supplies

Blueboy/Blue-Boy: a portable holding tank used to transport waste from your camper to a dump site.

Drinking water hose: when it's time to fill up your RV's fresh water tank, you will need to use a hose that is rated specifically for drinking water.

GPS: RV-specific global positioning software to help you travel on roads for vehicles that are taller, long, and wider than the average vehicle.

Holding tank treatment: a chemical treatment that must be added down the toilet to break down holding tank debris so it won't clog. It also deodorizes.

Outdoor camping mat: this is a nice-to-have in good weather, but becomes essential during the rain. These outdoor mats keep dirt and debris outside, rather than inside your RV.

Portable solar panel: if you boondock a lot, a portable solar panel or two allows you to still have electrical access.

Refrigerator bars: these are an absolute must-have for RV refrigerators to keep items from falling out or spilling during travel.

Roof vent cover: these covers allow you to leave your RV's roof vents open even when it is raining.

RV toilet paper: you must use toilet paper that is septic-safe or a clog in the toilet black tank will occur. RV toilet paper is available at Walmart or RV supply stores.

Sewer hose: unless you have a composting toilet, you will need a sewer hose to release the grey and black tanks into the dump station.

Shore power cord: a 30- or 50 amp RV power cord. (Never use a regular house extension cord, which can result in a fire.)

Tire covers: the sun's UV rays are the #1 cause of tire deterioration and resulting tire blow-outs. Put the covers over the tires when sitting.

Tow dolly: generally a half trailer that is used to tow a smaller vehicle behind a motorhome, travel trailer or fifth wheel.

Wheel chocks: blocks used to keep the RV wheels in place and prevent it from rolling when parked.

WiFi Booster and Repeater: allows you to still receive WiFi services when you are a considerable distance from a WiFi tower.

Types of RV Sites

Back-in RV site: a campsite that requires you to back your vehicle into it. Once you've backed your rig into place, you can connect it to the campground's hookups.

Dry hookups: these hookups offer a power source for your RV, but no water or sewer hookup.

Extended Stay Site - a campsite where you can stay very long periods of time; up to months or even a whole season.

Full Hookup: a campsite with hookups to water, electricity (30- or 50-amp service), and sewer.

Patio site: includes a concrete paved area next to the trailer parking spot that may include a picnic table, seating area, fire ring, and more amenities.

Pull-through site: a campsite that allows you to pull in without having to disconnect. This is especially convenient for those towing trailers.

Waterfront sites: a campsite adjacent to a water feature, sometimes with direct beach access.

Miscellaneous RV Terms

Brick-and-Mortar: a stationary home, such as an apartment or dwelling that is not an RV.

Dump station: the only place you can legally dump your black and gray water tank. Also referred to as a sani-dump.

Front kitchen: a type of RV floorplan that optimizes for a kitchen in the front of an RV.

High profile: a fifth-wheel trailer with a higher-than-normal front to allow more than 6 feet of standing room inside the raised area.

Hookups: stations at RV campgrounds where you can connect your RV to water, electricity, and sewer services.

Kingpin: a device that connects a fifth wheel to the towing vehicle.



Rear bathroom: a type of RV floorplan that optimizes for a bathroom in the rear of an RV.

Rear bedroom: a type of RV floorplan that optimizes for a bedroom in the rear of an RV.

Rear entertainment: a type of RV floorplan that optimizes for TVs and comfort in the rear of the RV and is perfect for having company.

Rear kitchen: a type of RV floorplan that optimizes for a kitchen in the rear of an RV.

Rear living: a type of RV floorplan that optimizes for living space in the rear of an RV.

Self-contained: an RV that needs no external connections to provide short-term cooking, bathing, and heating and could park overnight anywhere.

Shore power: electricity that is received from electrical hook-ups.

Sleeping capacity: The number of sleeping spaces in an RV. There are several different types of sleeping arrangements available: standard queen and king size beds, hide-a-bed or jack-knife sofa beds, convertible booth dinettes, and drop-down bunks.

Tow car: a car towed by an RV to be used as transportation when the RV is parked in a campground; also called a dinghy.

Triple tow: refers to towing two different vessels at once. This could include a truck towing a fifth wheel and a boat or another trailer, a motorhome towing a trailer and a toad, or even a motorhome towing a vehicle and a boat.

Winterize: to prepare the RV for winter use or storage.

