



Ryj's Boondocking Guide

(Updated For 2024)

First of all, what is boondocking?

Boondocking is simply using your rig without hook-ups. In other words, your rig is self-contained.

So, what's dispersed camping?



Dispersed camping is generally thought of as using government land such as BLM, National Forest, etc. on which to boondock. In other words, public lands.

Think of those beautiful pictures with an RV sitting out in the middle of nowhere. And it's still functioning. That's dispersed camping/boondocking.

Well, that's our preferred method of living. And once you have mastered the skill set of finding land to boondock on, you may never look at an RV park again if you're in the western US. I can't (except to dump stations and fill fresh water as a last resort).

I learned most of what I'm discussing here through trial and error (by doing). My way certainly isn't the only way.

But it's a tried and true method for the time being.

1) What kind of setup do you need (where to begin)?

If you're going to boondock, your rig needs to have a way to run the systems as a self-contained unit.

At the least, you need:

- Batteries and a way to charge your batteries. That can be in the form of solar panels or a generator. I find we need both.
- If you want to run your outlets, you need an inverter that converts DC to AC. Or you need a generator.
- You'll need a way to store your water for consumption and cleaning.
- Lastly, you'll need a way to store your wastewater, so that it does not end up on public lands.

Most rigs don't leave the factory well set up to boondock for long periods. So, you may have to invest in your rig. No need to get carried away though.

2) How do you find great boondocking spots?



Here's the million-dollar question. Especially for a newbie!

There are a lot of apps to choose from. Campendium, ioverlander, Google maps, freeroam.app, The Dyrty, Sekr, etc. This list grows by the week.

Regardless, I still like to use **freeroam.app** and **iOverlander** combined with Google Maps.

1. Start by looking forward a few weeks in your destination area and find options on freeroam.app and iOverlander.com. I prefer to start with iOverlander before narrowing the search.
2. Next, in freeroam.app, layer on the cell reception if you require a connection.
3. Then select plan A, B and C options if the location allows that many.
4. Next, find the locations on Google Maps by copying and pasting the GPS coordinates in satellite mode.
5. Then make sure the sites look like they can handle the type of rig you own. Sometimes the reviews give this information away. If you're pulling a 40' rig or driving a large class A or C, this is even more important.
6. Finally, add them to a list starting with closest to furthest on your moving day, so you don't have to backtrack.

That's the basic low down on how to find boondocking sites.

A few other options include speaking with other boondockers and getting their suggestions, using boondocking-based FaceBook pages, stopping by a Ranger Station or using BLM/USFS maps. It's easy to go down the rabbit hole of data-based location hunting.

3) Necessitates for boondocking

There are a few things that you need to enjoy boondocking in an RV. You don't need a \$20k solar and battery setup to get by. Although, it's nice if you have the funds.



You do need:

1. A decent amount of water storage. Eighty to one hundred gallons is enough for a family of four. We average 10 gallons a day for our family of four when we're pushing for a longer duration.
2. Additional emergency water, such as a Scepter tank or bladder.
3. A storage vessel for your "personal excrement," aka the black and gray tank.
4. Enough battery power to run the DC systems in your rig for 1-3 days. Two 12V deep-cycle marine batteries will work fine for a small rig.
5. A way to recharge those batteries in good or bad weather. That's solar and a generator.
6. A way to heat your rig in cold weather. Propane is the typical solution. It also runs the fridge if you avoid a residential fridge, which I suggest. The best option is a DC fridge.
7. A way to cook food without high wattage. That means a propane-based stove top at the least or a camp stove.
8. Finally, you need a good set of tools and essential replacement parts to do self-repairs when you're away from civilization.

4) How Do You Find Water When Boondocking?

I use freeroam.app, iOverlander.com and sanidumps.com to find water.



A lot of the more recent reviews mention if water is available.

Be VERY cautious about taking "potable" water from faucets right next to the dump station. They're frequently unsanitary and may result in sickness even if it's potable water.

Technically, red handles signify non-potable water, but we've encountered safe red-handled drinking water. So, question everything and ask when you are unsure.

All else fails, we call RV parks in our area to ask the price to fill water and dump our tanks.

Most will allow you to do that for a fee. If it's inexpensive, we swing by, dump, fill and return to dispersed camping. If it's expensive and the only convenient option, then we ask the rate for the night. If the prices are close, we stay the night.

At least we can take a longer hot shower. And if it's time, sanitize our fresh tank.

5) How Do You Find Dump Stations?

Again, iOverlander, freeroam.app and sanidumps.com are great resources.



Many of the states out west make them available for free because of the popularity of RVing.

Also, many of the gas stations in the West offer it for free or for a small fee.

If I'm using a gas station's dump, I always purchase diesel from them as a thank you.

It gets easier to find them the longer you're on the road. You'll stop looking at the high prices at gas stations and instead look for dump stations.

I make it a point to find everything I need on the way or close to our next dispersed location. In other words, I have a plan.

*Tip: Once you're settled in your boondocking site, search for water and dump sites. Then scope them out when

you're away from your site exploring. That way you'll know exactly where to go when you leave and if your rig will fit.

6) Boondocking Do's and Don'ts

When you're boondocking, there are a few unwritten, but understood rules.

Please Do:

- Pack out your trash.
- Be friendly to neighbors.
- Minimize your noise (generators, etc.)
- Police the area and remove any trash that's not yours.

Please Don't:

- Stay for more than fourteen days (unless it you're in an extended stay area).
- Park too close to another camper. Especially when there's ample room.
- Leave trash in the fire ring (if there is one).
- Annoy your neighbor if they appear to want to be left alone.
- Run your generators super early or late if you have neighbors.
- Dump your black tank anywhere except for a designated dump station.
- Dump your gray water unless you have confirmation that it's allowed.

I'm sure I've left some out. But, simply, be smart about your use of the land.

7) Is boondocking dangerous?

I haven't experienced anything that would make me uncomfortable. The few "sketchy" individuals I came across, actually had great stories.

I always offer anyone that fits that criteria some water and I make a friend. Water is like gold when you're dispersed camping.

I keep an unopened gallon of water in the truck bed just for this reason.

You can also get a vibe of those who want to be left alone. Respect that situation and all is well.

Worst case scenario, you feel really uncomfortable or get a bad gut feeling, so you move to your plan B or C. It's that simple.

8) Can you leave your RV unattended when boondocking?



Yes, you can. But I suggest putting all of your belongings away and locking everything out of sight. We never had a single problem with theft or vandalism.

I'm not suggesting it doesn't happen, but we never had any issues. If there are other campers nearby that are friendly, get to know them and you'll find everyone looks out for one another.

If it makes you more comfortable, use a hitch lock if you're leaving a trailer. Thieves are generally opportunists, so eliminate opportunities.

Happy Boondocking!!!