

Off Grid camping will set you free!

With the SNU boondocking or off grid camping, isn't a special event, it is our standard rally preference. Boondocking is essentially a choice of rally sites that don't provide any amenities. Things like water, electric, or sewer hookups. Usually they are unpaved and dispersed sites, sites with no restrictions on where or how you park. If camping in this type of site is new to you or something you might not be totally comfortable with then

we highly recommend you come to an SNU rally. We will introduce you to "off grid", unstructured, boondocking Airstream camping like Wally Byam did when he designed this special trailer to travel the world. Quoting Wally from *Fifth Avenue on Wheels* "Personally, I like pavement for making time, but I like to get off of them to find interesting camp spots."



Getting Started

Boondocking isn't just for older Airstreams. Many SNU rally participants have brand new rigs. Among the many experiences we have had and things we have dealt with at SNU dry-camping rallies were batteries that ran flat, water systems that sprung a leak or weren't functioning in the first place and flaky refrigerators. Some members enjoy watching TV or movies at night. Some like to use a lot of water for showers or other washing. One member, for medical reasons needed to run a generator all night. They parked in such a way that it didn't impact others. We've had waffle brunches using an electric waffle iron with fruit smoothies using an electric blender. With a little care and caution, we run air conditioners to keep us cool and heaters to keep us warm. Even the newer Airstreams with their controller boards and alarms that use some residual power do just fine dry-camping as long as you pay attention.

Off grid camping essentially means that you will need to think about what makes a camping experience enjoyable for you, what resources you have, what you will need, and how best to utilize those resources to accomplish the results you want. It means adapting some of the things you do at home or at a full service site to accommodate more limited resources. For instance to make the propane go a little further, keep the heater a little lower or use a catalytic heater. BBQ instead of using the stove and oven. Batteries go a little further if you don't turn all your lights on for long periods at night and limit the use of other battery draining equipment. Consider other power sources like solar or generators to augment your on board systems. Water is a big issue with dry-camping. Having enough water and disposing of water properly make an impact on your enjoyment of dry-camping. With a little planning and consideration you can be totally comfortable while minimizing the amount of water you use. In regards to disposing of gray water, SNU members have utilized a variety of commercial as well as other methods for handling the water if the tank starts to get full. The thing to keep in mind about dry-camping is it is a state of mind. Dry-camping is not about doing without, it is about thinking about what you do and the systems you use. It is about how to use these systems most effectively and efficiently.

At an SNU rally you will have a whole support system to help you out if your batteries go flat, you run out of water, a few rivets come loose, you are not sure what to do about gray water, or you forgot to bring bread for your sandwiches. The most important asset to dry-camping with the SNU is the experience of our members. Most of us have been there, done that for a very long time and are more than happy to introduce others to off grid dry-camping. There is always somebody at an SNU rally who can assist with any problems that might arise including charging batteries, sharing extra water or propane, or providing refrigerator space. We usually have a fair supply of tools and have frequently done a little repair and maintenance work on various Airstreams at rallies. And if necessary, we can even take a trip into the nearest town for parts or supplies. After learning to enjoy dry-camping SNU style, you'll have a lot more options of places to visit and things to enjoy.

Resources

* SNU Rally Information – All about SNU rallies from site recommendations to planning, to participating

<http://sierranevadaairstreams.org/snu/rally-docs/index.html>

* Owner's Guide – Anything and everything related to the RV experience

<http://sierranevadaairstreams.org/owners-guide/index.html>

* Zephyrs blog - a weblog for RV enthusiasts

<http://sierranevadaairstreams.org/snuze/>

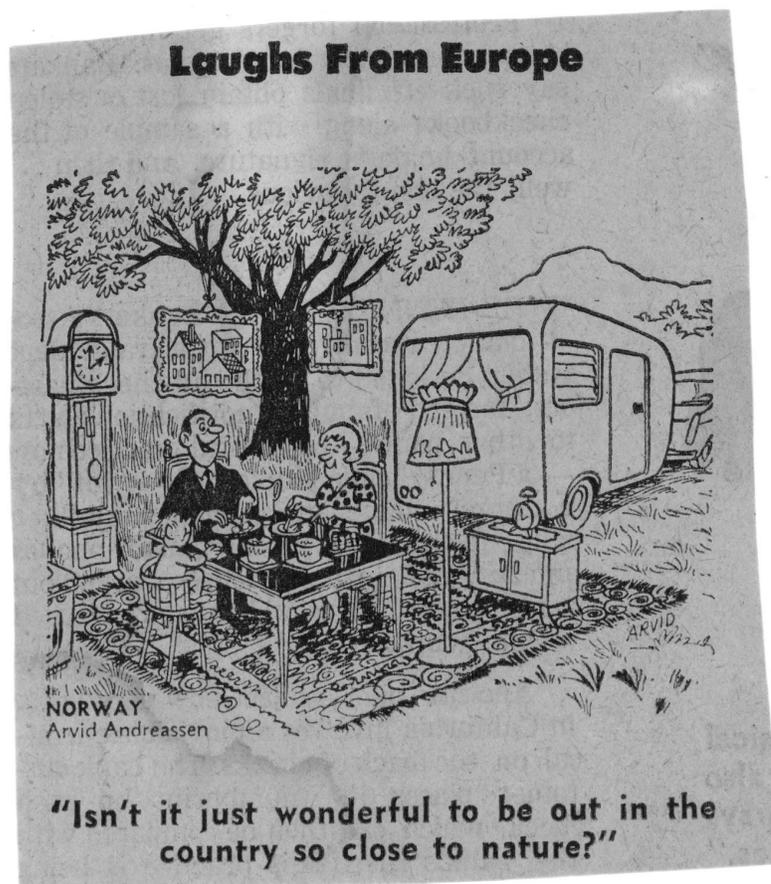


Dale Leipper (#1183) Written July 24, 1960

“Camping isn't too rough when you have two double beds in a trailer, food in the ice box, gas to cook on, cupboards for food and clothes, as much space as we had in the car and trailer and electric and gas lights.”

Note: Dad is talking about this 16ft trailer we bought from our Uncle in 1960. He doesn't mention a thing about bathroom facilities (there were none)

My family, parents and four kids traveled many a mile with this trailer, including to Mexico and Alaska. On the Alaska trip we had five kids as we took along the son of family friends.



Washing



In your home you turn on the water tap, take a shower, start the dishwasher or the laundry, water comes on and goes out the drain and all is well. It doesn't require a second thought - usually. When you are out in your RV water usage does require some thought, especially if you like dry camping (depending upon your RV tanks only).

One of the most common habits of new RV'rs is to run the water until it is hot and then fill up the sink to wash the dishes. The next thing you know the gray water tank is full and there is no water left in the fresh water tank. If you are parked in a full facility lot - no big deal and easy to remedy. If you are out on your own then you have a problem. The following tips provide some ideas of how to use water wisely when water is scarce and disposal requires planning.

The most important thing to remember is to use the majority of your water on rinsing and minimize the amount you use for washing. This is true whether it is dishes, your hair, or yourself.

Tips for dishes

I prefer to heat my washing water on the stove. You are less like to run out of propane than water and you can get the water hot without having to run the faucet until it is the right temperature. This saves water for other purposes such as bathing.

- After you have used dishes for cooking and eating, wipe them off with paper towels for an initial cleaning. This is especially important when you have cooked something greasy or have something sloppy like spaghetti sauce. Get as much of the grease or sauce off the plates and out of the pans as you can before washing.
- Use a small basin set in the sink to wash in. One reason for this is that when you are finished the wash water can go in the toilet and then into the black water tank which usually holds more than the gray water tank. The extra water also helps keep the material in the black water tank more liquefied and easier to clean out. This also keeps your gray water more “environmentally friendly” because of reduced organic waste in it.
- Use only the amount of water needed to ensure a good wetting of the dishes. Use the hot water mixed with tap water to reach the right washing temperature. The basin should only be a quarter to a half full. You can add additional hot water later if needed or start fresh for the dirtier items.
- Sanitize the rinse with a few drops of bleach. See the pages on food safety and water.
- Start by washing utensils and drinking glasses. Then wash plates and any serving dishes. Finish up with the pots and pans saving the dirtiest for last.
- I like to start by washing some fairly clean vessel in which I can put all the utensils. Wash all the dishes before rinsing them. When you are ready to rinse, pour some of the hot water over the utensils. Swish them around in the hot water to rinse then either pick them out or pour the water into a glass or other vessel. Put the utensils in the drain rack ready for drying. Swish the hot water in the vessel around to rinse then pour into another container and continue. When the water is used two or three times, runs out, or gets cool, use more hot water to continue rinsing. If possible rinse over a pot or some other large container. Rinse the plates over this same large container. Rinse pots and pans by pouring hot water from one to the next, then over the outside. Do this over the large container so the water will be collected rather than go down the drain.
- When you are through pour the rinse water into the toilet. If you have already poured some greasy or dirty water in the toilet use the rinse water to clean out the toilet before flushing.

- When you are through use paper towels to wipe out the sink and clean things up.

If I have used a big pot to cook in I often use that for the dish washing basin. First clean out the pot with a paper towel, heat the water in the pot, then proceed washing your dishes.

Tips for bathing

These tips are for bathing in RV's with the proper facilities. Bathing while tent camping or in other circumstances without standard bathing facilities is a whole different topic.

Most RV's are equipped with an on/off shower head which, when used effectively, helps conserve water. When you are ready to bathe, run the water just till the temp is right. Briefly run the water over your head and face and then shut off the water. You should be damp over most of your head and body but not soaking wet. Once you have washed your face, turn the water on briefly and rinse. This rinse will further dampen the rest of you. Turn the water off then soap down the rest of your body including soaping or shampooing your head.

When you have scrubbed and shampooed your hair then - with the water still off - squeegee your hair to get the majority of the shampoo out. Start at the forehead and use your hand to shove the shampoo down the back of your head and out of your hair. Turn the water on just briefly then repeat the squeegee process. When you have gotten most of the shampoo out of your hair then it is time for a good final rinse. Turn the water on, starting with your head rinse your hair thoroughly then work down your body. Give a final squirt to the tub to rinse out and use a cloth or paper towel to clean out the tub if needed.

LED Lights

Bryan Leipper (#772)

In the never ending search to make the batteries last longer, LED lighting is attracting attention. They are replacing fluorescent lighting as an energy efficient light source in RV's.

Where LED lights really shine is that you can put just the amount of light you need just where you need it. That is where they save on the energy budget. Both LED's and fluorescent lights have about the same lighting energy efficiency and will produce several times the amount of light per watt than an incandescent bulb. The problem with fluorescent lights is that they are big and provide a whole lot of light over a broad area. You can't dim them down or focus their light for a specific mood or purpose.

You can find LED replacement lighting for your existing fixtures. See, for instance, Car Auto Bright 6 LEDs Dome Light Lamp Replacement Bulbs or Bayonet Base Single Contact Ba15s 16 SMD 3528 LED Light Bulb 12 Volt by Ledwholesalers, Warm White, 1429ww -- this uses 15 common LED's of a type known as SMD3528 and uses 1.44 watts in warm white color for 90 lumens. A typical RV fluorescent bulb, the F15T8 produces about 800 -850 lumens for 15 watts. There are LED replacements for Fluorescent fixtures like Green LongLife 5050127 LED 18" Replacement Light Tube with T8 base 700 Lumens 12v or 24v Natural White this one uses SMD5050 LED's, a higher power variant, in order to get near fluorescent tube light output from the same space. It costs near \$50 compared to the \$10 or less for the fluorescent. Another option is the battery powered 'puck light'. These are battery powered and can be found in many sizes and shapes. They are good for night lights and background lighting needs. One version adds a motion sensor such as with Mr. Beams MB 723 Battery Powered Motion Sensing LED Stick Anywhere Night Light, 3-Pack.

The real key to effective use of LED lighting will be in lighting design to take advantage of their unique properties. See the Zephyrs blog search on "LED lighting" for entries about custom LED lighting and their use in the RV.

Medical Issues and Off-grid camping



Health and medical issues don't have to prevent you from off-grid camping in dispersed areas. As long as you are prepared you should be fine. The first step is ensuring that you have a properly equipped 1st aid kit. Your medical preparations should include any prescriptions, supplies, and equipment that are needed for your specific health conditions. Be sure to make sure you have extras just in case. It is also beneficial for you to check out medical resources in close proximity to the rally site. Keep in mind, at least with some SNU rally locations, cell phone coverage might be spotty or non-existent. We have dealt with that by using boosters for cell phones, driving a short distance away from the rally site where we could get cell connections, by using ham

radio and just by driving to where we could get assistance.

A contact/information list should be part of your preparations. That list at the least, should include who to contact in case of emergency. Other rally participants should know where to find your list. A contact/information list could also include contact information for your primary care physician, preferred hospital, insurance provider, list of prescriptions, list of major medical conditions, allergies and other information that would expedite any emergency situation. It is also a good idea to let a family member or friend know where you are going and to give them a way to contact you.

The SNU has quite a few members with health issues and it has dealt with it's share of medical related incidents. Among other things, the health issues of SNU members include diabetes, heart conditions, cancer, lung and breathing problems, mobility issues, history of strokes, and age related memory loss and incontinence. Some of the situation that have occurred in the last ten years include one member out gathering wood when a freak accident almost took off his thumb. We were close enough to town, we could take him to an emergency hospital where the doctor fixed him up and he came back to the rally. Another time, a medical emergency created a situation where some members had to meet an ambulance at the intersection of the highway. Again, the situation was resolved and the member came back to the rally. Another member needed to run an oxygen pump all night so they hooked up their generator in such a way as it didn't bother the rest of the rally participants. At one rally location we were about 5 miles from a paved road, approximately an hours drive to the nearest hospital and where it would take approximately 30 minutes to be reached by helicopter. This rally included participants who were dealing with cancer, diabetes, heart conditions, had a history of strokes, COPD, and one was in a wheelchair. Nobody had any problems at the rally and everyone had a great time.

For some ideas on a travel medical kit, check the list on the back of this page. It was compiled by SNU member Milan Wight, a long time rally and caravan participant.

Another advantage of rallies is that you are with a group of friends who can help out if there is an emergency. So make, your lists, gather your supplies, prepare for emergencies then get out and enjoy the wide open spaces.

Personal Medical Need For People On A Caravan

Prepared 10/14/1998 by Milan Wight whose source was Dr. Herb Fischer

1. Any prescribed medication, make sure you have enough for the length of the Caravan
2. Emergency food bars
3. One or two emergency blankets
4. Several 10 to 12 hour candles
5. Packet of moist towlettes
6. Packets of pocket tissues
7. Small plastic bags and ties
8. Large plastic bags and ties
9. Cold pack instant chemical or waterproof ice cube bag
10. One or two gallons drinking water
11. Adhesive band aids, 3 or 3 ¾ inches
12. Adhesive band aids, extra large
13. Q tips
14. Plastic or latex gloves
15. Triangle bandage arm sling
16. Elastic bandage 2 or 4 inch roll
17. Antiseptic wipes
18. Roller bandage gauze, 1 or 3 inch
19. Sterile gauze pads 4X4 Telfa Ouchless Also 2 inch size
20. Pair of scissors
21. Diarrhea medication
22. Laxatives
23. Fleet enema
24. Antacids such as Tums, Alka Seltzer or Graviscon
25. Antibacterial ointment, Polysorin, Neosporin etc,
26. Alcohol, peroxide, betadyne
27. Mosquito repellent
28. Sun screen
29. Pain medication
30. Cortisone Ointment .5% or 1%
31. Sun glasses with UV screen
32. Thermometer
33. Extra pair of prescription glasses or the prescription
34. Antihistamines, Menyadrol
35. Sea sick pills Framamine
36. Dry eye Visine

For emergencies call PCMP or medical which will be posted on bulletin board.

For medical problems try and use MD offices, the Emergency rooms are more expensive

Know your medical problems and have them listed

List the medicines you are taking and those you are allergic to. Put them in a place where paramedics can find them. If the glove compartment of your vehicle or in the refrigerator on the top door shelf. A small zip lock bag works very well