



# Beginner's Guide to Small Travel Trailers

by Denny Johnson

*Learn how to...*

- Choose a small travel trailer
- Plan your trips
- Setup & maintain your trailer
- Find great campgrounds
- Prepare your tow vehicle
- Setup when you get there
- Get ready to travel
- ... and much, much more!*

# **Beginner's Guide to Small Travel Trailers**

**Denny Johnson**



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**Cover Photo** Shot by the author at DeSoto State Park in Fort Payne, Alabama

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## A Note from Denny...

Thank you for using this guide. It is intended to be an introduction to small travel trailers, but please realize that I am not a professional and don't claim to be an expert. The entire guide is based upon my own personal experience, gained from owning two small travel trailers and traveling with my wife Fay. The information presented is only my opinion. As the author, I have made my best effort to focus on things I consider to be helpful for someone getting started, but no guarantee is made as to the accuracy or safety of the information provided.

- Denny

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## INTRODUCTION

# Introduction



Hi! My name is Denny Johnson. My wife and I live in Knoxville, TN, having moved here in 2020 from Orlando. We have traveled a lot since purchasing our small travel trailer in 2014, from Florida to Washington State, into Canada, to Michigan, and to New England. In other words, we spanned the United States from coast to coast. In the beginning, we thought there was a lot to learn, but we've since found that it never stops!

When we were first getting started, I felt overwhelmed with all there was to learn. As I searched for information, I found the Internet full of conflicting opinions and information. I decided at that time that I would create a website all about what we were learning...things that worked well for us. The result was my <https://tinyTowable.com> website, the first section of which was the original online version of this guide.

You will find that this guide is based upon the things we've learned and experienced while buying, owning and traveling with our 17' Casita (as well as with our old Coleman Pop-up years ago). I hope you find it helpful and that it saves you time searching all over the Internet for the information you need.

## SECTION 1: BUYING a Small Travel Trailer

If you've never owned and traveled with a small travel trailer before, you may feel overwhelmed at all there is to learn. But don't worry, thousands of people jump in every year! You will find that it's easy, fun and quite affordable when compared with other means of traveling.

This part of the guide is all about the trailer itself. It covers everything from buying a small travel trailer to taking care of it. The main sections are...

- **Choosing a small travel trailer** Things to consider as you decide on the model you want to own.
- **Buying a small travel trailer** How to go about making your purchase.
- **Owning a small travel trailer** What you need to think about if you are going to be an owner.
- **Maintaining a small travel trailer** How to take care of your prized possession.
- **Making it Your Own** Some ideas to personalize your trailer and make it stand out from the crowd.

### Types of RVs

Before we begin, let's make sure we are familiar with the main types of RVs available.

There are two broad categories of RVs: motorized and towable.

### Motorized RVs

Motorized have engines and are called motorhomes. They offer everything for driving and living under one roof and avoid hitching and

## BUYING

unhitching a vehicle. (A lot of people end of towing a small car behind their motorhome to use once they get to their destination.)

**Class A** These are the biggest and pretty much look like a bus. The largest ones often have separate bedrooms, full-size kitchen, dining room, living room, and sometimes a laundry. I've even seen one with a fireplace.

**Class B** These are generally the smallest, and are basically RVs that have been built into a van.

**Class C** This is the mid-size motorhome. It is built on a truck frame and has the standard truck front-end.

### Towable RVs

Towable RVs do not have engines, and depend upon an existing vehicle to transport them.

**Fifth-Wheel Trailers** These are the largest. They can be as luxurious as the top motorhomes, but are towed by a large pickup truck. They attach to a large hitch installed in the truck bed.

**Truck Campers** These slide into the bed of a truck, and usually have a portion for the bed that extends above the truck cab.

**Travel Trailers** These attach to a standard ball hitch on the back of the tow vehicle. They come in all sizes, but what we're focused on in this guide are the small ones.

## So What Constitutes a Small Travel Trailer?

Well, some of them...

- Are fancy, some are not
- You can stand up in, some you must crawl into
- Have a stove and sink, others you must cook outside

## BUYING

- Even have a bathroom, but certainly not all of them!

When you start shopping, you will find that there are a lot of options to choose from. You will have to decide what's important to you and set your priorities. If you are like us, you probably won't know exactly what your priorities are until you've been out looking. Seeing a lot of different small trailers will definitely give you ideas and help you decide.

So what actually constitutes a small travel trailer? To be honest, that is up to you, but members of the tinyTowable Facebook Groups decided to settle on anything 23' or less.

## BUYING

Our little trailer has everything the big ones have...  
*Except all the space!*



Well, maybe the camera angle exaggerated this one a bit!

## So why not a Motorhome, Fifth Wheel, or Larger Trailer?

I'm not saying that something small is for everyone. Certainly the larger recreational vehicles have some real advantages. Unfortunately, they have disadvantages too. You have to decide your priorities and what's important to you. Keeping it small and simple has been perfect for us, so to help you, here are some of our key considerations.

## Reasons to Consider a Small Travel Trailer

### Easy to Store

We store ours beside our garage. Keeping it at home like this makes it much easier to get ready for travel, cleanup afterwards, and perform maintenance. It's also just nice to be able to check on it whenever we want to. Of course the cost savings of not having to pay for storage is a plus too.

## **BUYING**

### **Easy to Tow**

We tow ours with a 6 cylinder Toyota Tacoma. We have no problems getting up hills or getting blown around by big trucks on the highway. It's also very easy to turn, pull into gas stations and pull into other parking lots along the way.

### **Easy to Park**

Being small makes it easy to back into a campsite. (Once you get used to backing up that is!) You will often see people struggling with their big rigs.

### **Easy to Come and Go at the Campground**

It's easy to disconnect once we get it parked at the campground. After that, we can use our tow vehicle for getting around town and for day trips. Obviously, this is a big challenge with a motorhome. As a result, the common solution is for people to tow another vehicle behind the RV for their entire trip.

### **Less to Maintain and Clean**

There are fewer things to break, less to maintain, and it's pretty easy to clean once we get back home.

### **More Affordable**

It's less expensive to buy, maintain and insure. You will spend less gas when you travel, and at the end, you'll lose less value to depreciation.

### **Help's You Enjoy The Outdoors More**

So I don't really know if this is true or not and you may not see this as an advantage, but it seems that when we are camping the people with small travel trailers are spending more of their time outside. People with big rigs seem to be relaxing inside, frequently watching their big screen TVs. (Obviously there's no place for a big screen in ours!)

## Choosing your Small Travel Trailer

Things to consider as you decide on what you want to own

### A few suggestions...

#### Go look at as many trailers as you can

Start off by just looking at a lot of trailers. You may visit an RV dealer, but many of the smaller ones are sold direct from the factory. The majority of the people that have small trailers are excited about them and usually happy to show them off. Visit a campground, walk around, and don't be afraid to talk with people you see about their trailers. If they don't offer to show you the inside, just ask. The worst they can say is no, but you'll be surprised at how many will love to show you and tell you all about it. When we travel, people approach us at gas stations, rest areas, and parking lots. We always ask if they'd like to see inside.

#### Make a list of your *must have* criteria

Seeing a variety of trailers will help you zero in on what's really important to you. After you've looked at a few, start making a list that you can tweak as you go along

#### Research on the Internet

Spend time searching the Internet to find the trailers that interest you the most. Check out the manufacturer's websites to get the specs and see photos.

## BUYING - Choosing a Small Travel Trailer

### Get input from existing owners

Once again, campgrounds are great places to do this. You'll find most people very friendly and they love to talk about what they have and about where they've been. But what's easier and often even more informative is to join various Facebook groups. If you search Facebook, you'll find a ton of them. There are general groups on small RVs, campers and traveling, as well as groups on the specific models such as teardrops, pop-ups, Airstreams, Scamps, and of course our favorite...Casitas! You will learn so much by browsing through all the existing posts and also posting your own questions. Start with my tinyTowable groups (see the [tinyTowable.com page](#) in the [appendix](#)).

### Make your decision

Once you've narrowed it down to just a few choices, go find some, take a good look, and compare it to your *must have* list. Many of the makes that don't sell through dealers have an arrangement with their customers to show theirs. Call the manufacturer and see. Casita (which is what we have) will make arrangements for you to visit an owner in your area, or as close as they can find.

## How We Chose Our Casita

One of my best friends keeps telling me that his trailer isn't much larger than ours. He really considers it small. To me, it's huge! It's probably twice the size of ours on the inside.

For me, a small travel trailer is one that's big enough to include everything we need, but no larger. When we were out shopping, here's the list of *must haves* we considered. It had to have...

- A comfortable double bed
- A permanent small table and seating for at least two, that doesn't have to be taken down to setup the bed each night
- A small inside stove and sink for times when we're stuck in bad weather and don't want to go anywhere
- A toilet and shower. Sometimes we use the campground's bathhouse, so it could be small. We wanted something however that we could use if the bathhouse is nasty.
- Quick and easy set up. We used to have a pop-up camper which we loved. At this point in our lives however, we want to be able to pull in anywhere and be able to get inside quickly without having to deal with any significant setup. This has been very helpful when we've been in bad weather and stopped for an overnight stay while on the road.
- Air conditioning...we were living in Florida!
- Enough inside height that we could stand up and walk around

We were committed to getting the smallest trailer we could find that would meet our criteria. As we looked, we also decided that we liked the durability of the fiberglass models, and eventually decided that the interior of the Casita was our favorite.

## Purchasing a Small Travel Trailer

How to make your dream come true!



Our Casita - Like new, but actually 7 years old when we purchased it

### Will it be New or Used?

So you've decided what you want, at least more or less. Your next decision is whether to purchase new or find a used one. While a new one will give you that brand new smell, it's not like buying a car. A small travel trailer does not have hundreds of hidden mechanical parts that can be worn out and ready to fail. Of course, there could always be surprises with anything used, but when buying a used trailer, the most significant aspects will most likely be things you can see.

There are usually a lot of great, used trailers for sale in most areas. People often get rid of relatively new ones either because they love the lifestyle so much that they've decided to upgrade, or they've found that camping is not for them. Depending on what you are looking for though, it could take some time to find exactly what you want. We wanted a 17' Casita with a specific floor plan. We got lucky at the time, but it's very seldom that I come across other Casitas that are available within a reasonable distance from us.

You've probably done an analysis in the past of whether to buy something new or used. A small travel trailer won't be a lot different. I'm not going to give you an exhaustive list of the obvious pros and cons, but let me give you just a few things to think about.

## BUYING – Purchasing a Small Travel Trailer

- **Condition** Do you want a project or something that is ready to go? Consider this in advance. (You'll find all kinds.) If it is well taken care of, a used trailer can be a great deal. Others can become a major project.
- **Cost and Depreciation** Most small travel trailers depreciate. If you purchase new, it will likely be worth a lot less when you sell it. This may not be a problem if you keep it for a long time, but it could be if you decide you don't like camping or decide you really want something bigger. The small fiberglass trailers (Casita, Scamp, Escape, etc) often hold their value better than most because they tend to hold up better over time. You can generally save some money by purchasing a used one in good shape, although they are sometimes difficult to find. Another consideration is whether it is sold by a dealer or direct from the manufacturer. Trailers sold through dealers often have a lot of markup. The good thing here is that you can frequently negotiate a significant discount. The bad thing is that if you can't, you may realize an even larger loss if you go to sell it.
- **Maintenance** A new trailer will obviously be ready to go. A used trailer may need some maintenance. Other than the obvious things you can see, be sure to check out the following (at least before taking your first big trip):
  - Tires (See [tires](#) in the **Taking Care of a Small Travel Trailer** section to learn about when to replace them.)
  - Brakes (if equipped)
  - Wheel Bearings (If you don't have the service records, you should have them replaced to be safe)
  - Water and Sewer System (if equipped)
  - Propane lines and devices (if equipped) – check for leaks
  - Electrical System – both high and low voltage systems

## BUYING – Purchasing a Small Travel Trailer

(See the [Taking Care of a Small Travel Trailer](#) section for more information.)

- **Risk and Warranty** There's always a risk of something breaking when you are on the road, even if it's new. A new warranty may cover the cost, but you still could find yourself stranded somewhere. If you are going to be traveling beyond your local area, consider getting Roadside Assistance and Towing coverage. Your automobile insurance company may have it available. You may also want to check out a specialty insurance company that is more focused on RVs and Travel Trailers.
- **Enhancements and Upgrades** Once you own your trailer, you will likely come up with enhancements and upgrades to add (see the [Customizing](#) section for a few ideas). All these things take time and money. If you purchase used, you may very well inherit changes made by the previous owner. These changes may save you time and money...but only if you like them!

## BUYING – Purchasing a Small Travel Trailer

### Buying New

If you decide that you want to purchase a new travel trailer, there are two possibilities:

- **A Dealer** Be sure to check out several. They carry a lot of different brands that are often quite similar. The price when purchasing a travel trailer from a dealer is often negotiable.
- **The Manufacturer** Some brands are only sold directly from the manufacturer. Search for the manufacturer's website. You should find all the details there if they sell direct. There will frequently be a dealer locator page on the site if they use dealers. If they do sell direct, the price is less likely to be negotiable, but sometimes they do have sales.

### Buying Used

If you decide to purchase a used trailer, it can be challenging to find exactly what you want. Here are a few places to look:

- [RVT.com](http://RVT.com) A lot of new and used ads from both private owners and dealers
- [RVTrader.com](http://RVTrader.com) More new and used ads from both private owners and dealers
- [Fiberglass RV's For Sale](#) Ads focused on small fiberglass travel trailers
- [Facebook Small Travel Trailers Marketplace](#) I originally started this group, but am no longer affiliated with it. It's always been a good place to browse trailers for sale by owner, and to post what you're looking for.

In addition, there are other groups on Facebook focused on used Travel Trailers and RVs. Many of the groups that focus on particular brands also allow their members to post trailers for

## BUYING – Purchasing a Small Travel Trailer

sale. Just do a few searches in Facebook and see what you find. If there's a group for the specific brand of small travel trailer you are looking for, you might also try to post there stating what you are interested in.

### **Watch out for scammers**

I've seen several cases where people have reported finding an online ad for a small travel trailer that turned out to be a scam. Be cautious and check it out thoroughly. Be particularly skeptical if the price sounds too good to be true.

## **SECTION 2: OWNING a Small Travel Trailer**

Congratulations...hopefully you will love yours as much as we love ours! You can now stop thinking about *what if* and begin thinking about what's next. Before you start making all your travel plans, however, there are a couple of things you need to start thinking about...right away!

## OWNING – Keeping it Safe

# Keeping it Safe

Protecting your investment

## Insurance

You'll want to be sure your trailer is protected. There are some insurance companies that specialize in RVs, but you may find that your automobile insurance provider can take care of your needs. Be sure you review the coverage details for any policy you consider. Sometimes they don't cover much. If you want to be thorough, get a copy of what a specialized RV insurer covers (like Good Sam's) and then compare other offerings to it.



Our Casita stored beside our home (photo from our security camera)

## Where to Keep It

As you can see above, we are very lucky that we live somewhere that allows us to keep our Casita beside our home. If you are not as lucky, you will need to find a place to store your small travel trailer. Here are a few things to consider:

- Security  
You have three basic options:

## OWNING – Keeping it Safe

- Locked up indoors
- Outdoors in a secured, gated facility
- A generally safe location

You might even consider somewhere with security cameras. Just make sure you choose somewhere you won't worry about.

- **Convenience**

We find a lot of reasons to go to our trailer. Storing it at home makes it very easy. We go to do work on it, clean it, and just to look it over when we are considering trips, enhancements, etc. Sometimes I even go sit in it and work on my computer...just because I can! Make sure you choose a location that is convenient. You don't want to dread the trip to get there and end up avoiding going when you should.

- **Rules**

You will probably find times you need to work on your trailer. Your storage location should accommodate this or you'll have to hook up the trailer and take it somewhere else to get your work completed. Make sure they have electricity available, or be prepared to take a generator with you if needed.

- **Covered or UnCovered**

Living in Florida as we used to, we realize that the sun can be very hard on a trailer. If you choose an uncovered, outdoor location, you might want to consider getting a fitted cover or tarp to protect it from the elements. Regardless of where you store it, be sure to wax it on a regular basis.

## Taking Care of a Small Travel Trailer

Taking care of your prized possession

When we bought our small travel trailer it was seven years old, but it could have passed for brand new. The previous owners took great care of it. We've now had it for over 7 years and it's still in as good of shape as when we bought it.

Maintaining your trailer is actually quite easy if you do it as you go along. I go through everything before each major trip (usually 2-3 times per year). While we're traveling, I keep a *to-do list* of things I discover that need to be addressed when we get back home.

The following are the key items I pay attention to. (Your trailer may not be equipped with everything listed.) Each Spring I also review all the suggested maintenance in my Casita owner's manual to make sure I'm not overlooking anything.

### Clean the Inside of the Trailer after Each Trip

This job is actually handled by my wife. She is obsessed with keeping everything in great condition.

### Wash & Wax

When we return from a trip we always wash it before putting it into our storage area. Before leaving on a new trip, we always wash it so it looks its best when we travel. I also try to wash and wax it twice a year. Be sure you do some research and pick products that are good for your type of trailer.

## Wheel Bearings & Brakes

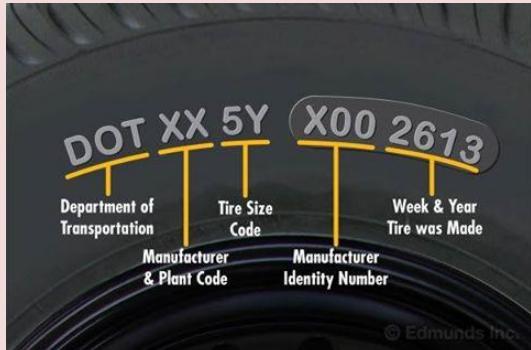
A wheel bearing that fails can leave you stranded on the side of the road. I've heard all kinds of recommendations, but to minimize this risk, I replace our wheel bearings every two years or after no more than about 10,000 miles of travel. It's pretty inexpensive and helps avoid one of the worst scenarios I want to run into on the road.

Years ago when we had a pop-up camper, our trips were rarely far from home and I would just inspect and repack the bearings myself. At this point, I pay to have it done by someone whose entire business is trailers and have found it's usually no more expensive to have them replace the bearings with new ones than it is to repack the old ones.

The wheel hubs must be removed in order to replace the wheel bearings. If you have brakes, this is the time to check the condition and service them if needed.

By the way, all the trailers I'm aware of have bearings that need to be serviced. It's possible however, that some trailers may have sealed bearings that don't require it. Be sure to check your owner's manual to see what's recommended for yours.

## Tires



### How to read the data on a tire sidewall

The most significant item here is the date the tire was made. When you purchase new tires you should always check this date and make sure you are not purchasing tires that have been sitting around in a warehouse for a long time. Keep in mind that the tires can deteriorate with age and will often wear out from the inside without any visible signs on the outside. To be extra safe, a lot of people get new tires every 3 to 5 years whether they think they need them or not. Keep in mind however, that even a brand new tire can fail. Always have a good spare and be prepared to change it.

Trailer tires generally fail before the tread is worn out. In other words, don't depend upon a visual inspection of the tread like you do on your automobiles. The biggest causes of tire failure seem to be the following:

- **Improper Inflation** Be sure to check the pressure frequently when you are on the road. I check mine each day before we drive.
- **Dry Rot** This often results from deterioration by the sun. Keep your tires covered if they are exposed to the sun, and visually inspect them for signs of dry rotting.
- **Heat Buildup from High Speed** Trailer tires are normally rated for a maximum speed of 65 mph. The faster you drive, the

## OWNING – Taking Care of a Small Travel Trailer

more heat will be built up. We generally drive back roads as much as we can and keep the speed down to around 60 mph. It does take a bit longer, but we can usually afford the time and enjoy seeing the small towns.

- **Tires Provided with a New Trailer** By the way, the tires provided on some new trailers are the minimum required. Check and see what you got. You may want to consider upgrading to a better tire that can handle more weight & speed.



New vs Worn Out Water Heater Anode

## Water Heater and Anode Rod

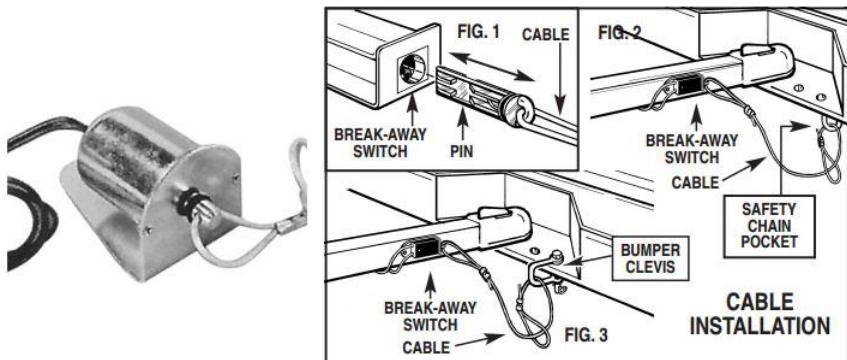
Be sure to drain your water heater after each trip. Use a tank rinser (info on the one we have: <https://tinytowable.com/accessories/>) at least once or twice a year to clean out any sediment that remains inside.

Depending upon your specific water heater, it may require an anode rod. If it does, it's extremely important to make sure you always have a good one installed when you have water in the tank. The purpose is for the anode to deteriorate instead of the inside of your water heater. Be sure to check it at least once a year and replace it when it is worn out. (Watch the video listed in the [appendix](#) for more info on anode rods.)

### Tip

When replacing the anode, wrap the threads with PTFE thread seal tape (available in any plumbing department). This will make it easier to remove.

## OWNING – Taking Care of a Small Travel Trailer



The Breakaway Switch for the Brakes

### Breakaway Switch for the Brakes

If your trailer has brakes, you should have a breakaway switch. This switch activates your trailer brakes if the trailer ever separates from your tow vehicle while you are driving. There is a small cable of which one end is attached to your tow vehicle hitch, and the other end connects to a pin that goes into the switch on your trailer frame. If your trailer ever separates from your tow vehicle, the pin will be yanked out of the switch and the trailer brakes should activate (assuming the battery is charged and connected).

You should test this breakaway switch periodically. I'm not sure if this works on all trailers, but here's the easiest way I've found on ours. Have one person hold a compass beside each wheel while another person removes the pin. The electromagnet that works the brakes in each wheel will cause the compass to move when it is activated.

### Coupler Clamp

Check the coupler to make sure it snugs up against your hitch ball when attached. It should not be lose or have a lot of play. If unsure, have someone that services trailers check it for you. I've listed a video that shows you how to check and adjust it in the [appendix](#).

## **Fire Extinguisher, Smoke Detector, Light Bulbs, General Lubrication**

I try to check these items before each trip and address anything that needs attention. I also go through and lubricate everything when I wax the trailer in the Spring.

## **Fresh Water System - Sanitizing**

You should sanitize your fresh water system periodically and also whenever water has been left in it for a period of time, any time you have smelly water, and after you have winterized using RV antifreeze. If you purchase a used trailer, you should certainly sanitize it before you use it. If you have an owner's guide, refer to it for specific instructions. Here are the steps I use which should work pretty well for most trailers.

- Drain the fresh water tank. It may be impossible to get it completely empty, but do the best you can.
- Completely fill your fresh water tank with a mixture of 1 oz of household bleach to every 8 gallons of water. The easiest way to do this is to determine how much bleach you are going to need, add it to a pitcher, then fill the pitcher with fresh water. Pour it into your freshwater tank then completely fill the tank with fresh water.
- Turn on the water pump, and then open the faucet which is furthest away from your fresh water tank. When you smell bleach, close the faucet and open the one next to it (ie. cold then hot). Continue this process of opening one faucet until you smell bleach, closing it, and opening the next one until you have run the water through all of the faucets in your trailer.
- Wait 15 minutes, allowing the sanitizing solution to set in your tank and throughout the plumbing system.
- Open the drain on the fresh water tank until it is empty.

## OWNING – Taking Care of a Small Travel Trailer

- Completely fill the tank back up with fresh water.
- Open all the faucets and turn on the water pump. Run it until all the water has been drained.
- If necessary, repeat the process of refilling with fresh water and draining until you no longer smell any bleach. How many refills you will need varies from trailer to trailer, mostly depending upon the size of the fresh water tank and the amount of plumbing being sanitized.

## Fresh Water System - Winterizing

If you live in an area that gets freezing weather in the winter, you will need to winterize your water system. This will prevent any water remaining in the lines from freezing and creating leaks. Since water can remain trapped at various places in the system, simply draining your water is not sufficient. The basic process is to drain the water from your system, blow out any that remains, and then fill it with RV Antifreeze.

### Things you will need

**Air Compressor and hose with quick connect fitting** This is used along with the Blow-Out Plug below to force remaining water out of the system after draining.



**Blow-Out Plug** This attaches the compressor hose to your water inlet.

**RV Antifreeze** Be sure to get the pink stuff for RV water systems, not the poisonous kind used in your automobile radiator. Check your owner's manual to see if it says how much you'll need. For our trailer, I've found that if I raise the front a bit so all the liquid runs to the back of the fresh water tank, I need 2 gallons.

## The Procedure I Use

### Please Note

This is the procedure that works well with our Casita. Be sure to confirm the steps to be used with your trailer. Everything should be similar, but there could be some differences.

1. Turn the water heater bypass valve to the position to prevent water from entering the water heater.
2. Crank up the front of the trailer a bit to help water drain from the fresh water tank and better fill the system with anti-freeze. (You will need to check your trailer to see if this makes sense in your case.)
3. Drain the sewer storage tank(s), fresh water tank, and water heater tank.
4. Open the sewer storage tank drain valves, all water faucets, and prop open the toilet drain.
5. Connect the blow-out plug to the city water connection and also to the compressor hose.
6. Make sure the compressor is set to a maximum pressure of exceed 50 psi, then turn it on to blow out all remaining water from the system. Once I start the compressor, I close faucets and leave only one open at a time to make sure every line gets blown out well. To avoid creating any leaks, I always make sure that there is at least one faucet open while the compressor is running, just in case the pressure was too high.
7. Close the sewer storage tank drain valves.
8. Add the RV anti-freeze to the fresh water tank.
9. Open the faucets and turn on the water pump to push the anti-freeze into all the lines. Turn off each faucet once you see the

## OWNING – Taking Care of a Small Travel Trailer

- anti-freeze flowing out of it. Also, be sure to flush the toilet until you see anti-freeze flowing into it.
10. Pour some additional RV anti-freeze into each of the drains if needed to allow a little to go into the sewer storage tanks.

## Fresh Water System – DeWinterizing

As the weather starts to warm and you are sure there will be no more freezes, you need to get your water system ready for use again.

### Please Note

As with winterizing, note that this is the procedure that works well with our Casita. Be sure to confirm the steps to be used with your trailer. Everything should be similar, but there could be some differences.

1. Open all faucets and turn on the water pump to push most of the RV anti-freeze out of the system. Close faucets selectively as needed until all lines are cleared. Don't forget the toilet flush valve.
2. Open the sewer storage tank drain valves and drain the anti-freeze.
3. Add water to the fresh water tank. I put in about 5 gallons, but you will have to monitor the process in the next step to determine how much you actually need.
4. Open the faucets and turn on the water pump to flush the remaining traces of anti-freeze from the system. (I do this with my sewer drain valves open, allowing the water to run out on the ground. You may need to do something different depending upon your location and circumstances.
5. After all the water is flushed out, I perform the [Fresh Water System – Sanitizing](#) procedure described previously.

## Storing a Small Travel Trailer

Minimizing surprises

You should take care to prepare your trailer for storage if you are not going to be using it for an extended period of time. For me, I consider anything over three months an extended period. Here are the few things I do in preparation.

### Tires

Leaving weight sitting on your tires for an extended period of time can create flat spots in them. Fill your tires with air to the maximum pressure, then put your trailer on jack stands to take the weight off the wheels. You also need to keep your tires out of the sun. Cover them if your trailer will be getting direct sunlight. Some people even remove the wheels and keep them inside while they have the trailer. If you leave them on the trailer while in storage, you should move the trailer at least every three months

### GOODYEAR RECOMMENDATIONS

Goodyear's website recommends overinflating your tires by 25% while in storage, if left on the trailer. (Be sure you check and don't exceed the rim manufacturer's inflation capacity.) If you do this, be sure to lower the pressure to normal again before traveling.

### Battery

Try to keep your battery fully charged at all times. When in storage, you should disconnect the battery and keep it connected to an automatic trickle charger. As an alternative, you can connect it to the trailer system and charge it for one day each month.

### WARNING

Some of the newer inverters built into the trailer provide a trickle charge when left plugged in. If your inverter does not, leaving the battery connected continually and charging via the trailer can over charge and destroy it.

## **OWNING – Storing**

Be sure to also check the electrolyte level in your battery monthly and refill with distilled water when needed. Clean the terminals if they have any corrosion.

## **Insects**

You don't want to get ready for your next camping trip to find your trailer full of bugs! Be sure to prepare and treat it properly for wherever you live. For us, it's a matter of spraying everything that touches the ground with good insect killer, and also putting some screen over all vents and any other openings. I try to go back and re-spray everything monthly.

## **Moisture Control**

Humidity is a big problem where we live. I keep a container of DampRid inside the trailer anytime it's stored even for short times, then check it on a regular basis. Within a month or two, the container will be full of water and needs to be replaced.

## Customizing your Small Travel Trailer

A few ideas to personalize and make it your own

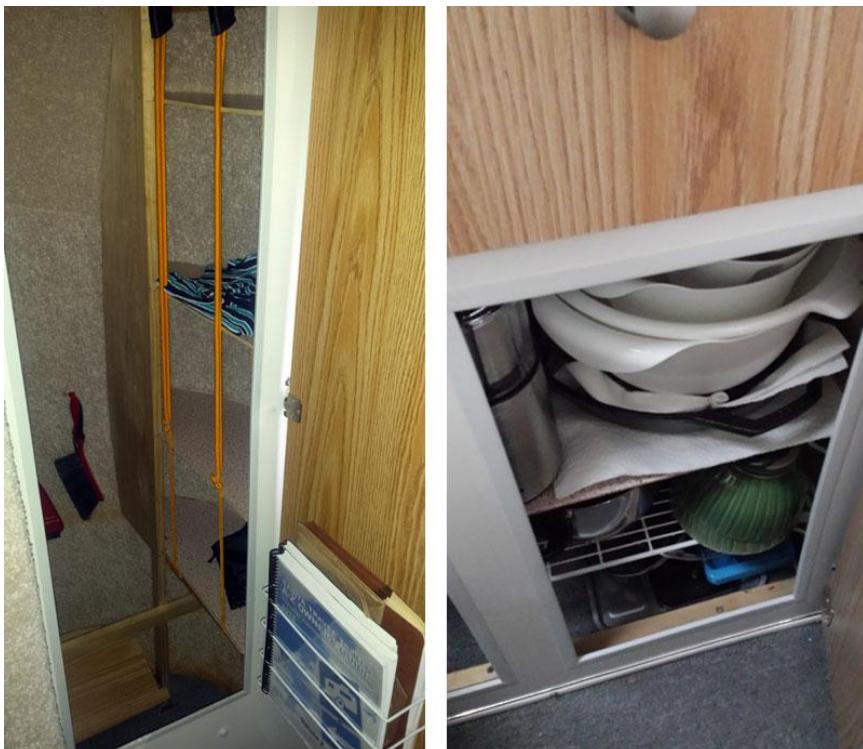
Once you have found the perfect small travel trailer for you, you're likely to start thinking of changes you'd like to make. You will meet people that have come up with great little enhancements, and other folks that undertook some major renovations to their trailers. A good source of ideas and photos are the various Facebook Groups on RVs and Travel Trailers. They are also great places to post an idea you have and get suggestions from others who have already made similar enhancements.

We have not had the need for any major projects, but have made a lot of simple modifications and enhancements. They are less about appearance and more about making things a little easier when we travel and making us more comfortable. To get you thinking, I've given you a sample of our changes on the next few pages. Be sure to also checkout the articles I've written in my blog on the tinyTowable website for more ideas.

<https://tinytowable.com/myblog/>

## OWNING – Customizing

### Shelving



Our Casita has a lot of cabinets for storage, but Fay wanted more shelving. The first photo shows shelving I built into to our closet. Originally the entire space was for hanging things, but we always have less hanging clothes and more that get folded. I left some hanging space, but now we have a place for all our folded things. The bungees keep everything in place while we are driving. The second photo shows under the sink, which was originally just a large open area.

## Sink Cover



I made this simple cover to give us some more countertop space when we aren't using the sink. The block on the bottom allows the cover to wedge between the faucets and the sink inside. It always stays in place while we are driving.

## Trash Bag Holder



Fay wanted a good place to keep plastic bags for our trash basket. I used hot glue to mount an empty container from anti-bacterial wipes. We stuff it full of plastic grocery bags and can pull one out the end when needed, the same way you pull wipes out of a new one.

## Bathroom Ventilation



We like to keep the bathroom door cracked a bit for ventilation. The problem is that our bathroom door normally tries to stay closed. For my solution I first mounted two small pieces of velcro to a four-inch section of foam pipe insulation. Then I mounted a long strip of velcro across the top of the bathroom doorway. We can now stick the foam piece at various places along the door frame to control how wide the door stays open. I also stuck two small pieces of velcro to the inside of the door where we keep the foam when we want the door closed.

## Sewer Parts Storage



I hated putting the sewer fittings in the truck bed with other things . I got a marine battery box from Walmart and mounted it to the trailer tongue behind the hitch. I painted the words **Sewer Parts** on it to discourage anyone from thinking it contains a battery and being tempted to steal it. I keep the sewer parts inside, along with a supply of disposable plastic gloves.

By the way, check out the article I wrote on the tinyTowable website about two things I use to make cleaning out the black water tank a little easier. Here's the link: <https://tinytowable.com/sewer-items/>

## SECTION 3: TRAVELING with a Small Travel Trailer



### Can I really do this?

Picking out your small travel trailer is fun. Thinking about taking trips with it is exciting. But thinking about what may go wrong can be a little scary in the beginning. If you've never owned a trailer or camper before, it may seem a bit overwhelming when you think about it. But relax! You will quickly find that it's all really quite easy.

If you are like most people, pulling a trailer will be uncomfortable at first. Every little bump and jerk gets your attention. You just need to take time to get ready and make sure you are properly prepared. Before you know it, you will settle in and be focused on where you are headed.

### Of course you can!

Before traveling, two of your top goals should be:

- Have confidence that you have everything set up correctly
- Know that you haven't overlooked something important

This section will help you with that. It starts with choosing a tow vehicle and getting it set up. It then covers things about planning and making your trip. It ends up with a list of things you should do when you get

## TRAVELING

back home. You want to make sure everything will be ready for your next journey. There are many ways to go about most of the things covered. What I've included is based upon our own actual experience and what works well for us. (Rest assured that in the beginning, we tried a lot of things that didn't work so well.) My hope is that I save you a few mistakes of your own.

There's a lot to learn and think about. As you do, be sure to use my information only as suggestions and make adjustments for what works best for you. As you get closer to taking an actual trip, use my [checklist](#) in the Appendix as a starting point to create your own. Having good checklists is the best thing you can do to assure that you don't forget things.

## TRAVELING – Tow Vehicles

### Tow Vehicles

All about the vehicle you will use to tow, and getting it set up



### Our Tow Vehicle History

Going back to the days of having a pop-up trailer, we've had three very different tow vehicles over the years. There have been pros and cons of all of them. Here's a recap of what we've had and how they've worked out for us.

#### Jeep Wrangler-V6

This was our camping vehicle when our son was young and we tent camped. We really enjoyed having the jeep along with us for local touring. It had plenty of power once we got a pop-up trailer, but the short wheelbase caused a lot of swaying. It felt unsafe at times, even with an anti-sway bar. Other issues we had were:

- We struggled with not enough storage space on every trip beyond our home area.
- The noise from the canvas top and sides got extremely annoying when traveling long distances on the highway.
- The suspension was very bouncy and would get very uncomfortable after a while.

## TRAVELING – Tow Vehicles

### **Chevy Astro Van-V6**

Again, this was when we traveled with our pop-up and our son was young. We used to take the middle seat out to provide a large area for him in the back, kind of like his own little den. There was room for a small TV and video games to keep him entertained on long trips. We also had easy access to snacks and a cooler with drinks while we were driving.

The back of the van still gave us a pretty good bit of storage, but with the minimal storage in the pop-up camper, we would still run short on space at times. The van had plenty of power and was generally very stable on the highway, but being the shape of a big box, I would definitely feel it getting blown around on a windy day.

### **Toyota Tacoma-Extended Cab-V6**

This is our current tow vehicle and we travel with just the two of us. It has plenty of power, is very stable, and is comfortable for long trips. The best part though is that we have plenty of storage both inside the cab and in the bed.

## **Choosing a tow vehicle**

You don't want to have the wrong tow vehicle when you travel. It will keep you on edge and leave you worn out when you arrive at your destination. Problems you can encounter are:

- Loss of control
- Fighting with your rig trying to sway
- A bumpy ride
- Trouble stopping
- Difficulty going up big hills, or even just getting started from a stop

## TRAVELING – Tow Vehicles

- Damage to your tow vehicle

It's important that you are safe, confident, comfortable, and relaxed when you drive. Review the following items and do your homework. You want to minimize any of the problems listed above.

### Things to consider when selecting a tow vehicle

#### **WARNING**

Read the Owner's Manual to find the manufacturer's recommendations for any tow vehicle you are considering. DO NOT JUST TRUST SOMEONE'S OPINION! It's easy to find a lot of conflicting recommendations from well intended individuals. Even the people that sell small travel trailers will sometimes give you the wrong advice. ONLY THE MANUFACTURER CAN GIVE YOU GUIDELINES AND INSTRUCTIONS DETERMINED BY THEIR ENGINEERS FOR THE SPECIFIC TOW VEHICLE.

#### Weight

Know how much weight you are dealing with before you evaluate a tow vehicle. It probably won't be possible to actually weigh everything beforehand, so be sure to consider the following:

- Start with the weight of the trailer as it comes from the manufacturer.
- Add to that a good estimate of everything you will be carrying in the trailer. Obviously, this includes everything you put inside. Don't overlook however the weight of water in your fresh water tank, as well as wastewater and sewage you may be carrying. Remember to also include extra weight you add to the outside of your trailer, such as propane, bikes, generator, etc. You can get a lot of input from other travelers to help estimate this by checking various Facebook groups and forums on the Internet.
- Now estimate how much weight you will carry in your tow vehicle itself, and don't forget the weight of the passengers!

## TRAVELING – Tow Vehicles

Plan for extra capacity with your vehicle as you compare the manufacturer's recommendation to your estimated weight. You will find more and more stuff to bring along when you travel as time goes on. You will also purchase things while on your trips.

### Engine Size

Make sure the tow vehicle has enough power. You don't want to struggle every time you go up a hill and you don't want to increase the wear and tear on your vehicle.

### Tow Package

For most suitable tow vehicles, the manufacturer offers a tow package. You should really consider adding this option if you are buying one new. Upgrades often included in a tow package are:

- Receiver Hitch
- Trailer Power Connector
- Transmission Cooler
- Larger Radiator
- Heavy Duty Suspension
- Upgraded Brakes
- Special Transmission Gearing
- Brake Controller or pre-wire

### Storage

As you travel, there are three different places to store things:

- **Inside the trailer** Make sure you plan to store the right things inside. What will you want handy when you first get up in the morning, you've got your PJs on, you step out of the shower or it's raining outside? Also, check the trailer weight limitations and don't overload it. The trailer will also tow better if it's light, so put what you can in your tow vehicle.

## TRAVELING – Tow Vehicles

- **In your tow vehicle** You'll want a few things convenient to you while you're driving, such as snacks, a cooler with drinks and maybe lunch. Also, think about things you might be traveling with that you will want to keep in air-conditioned space while you're on the road.
- **Outside Storage on the trailer and your truck bed (if you have one)** Everything else can go here. You will be surprised at the amount of stuff you accumulate including tools, camping equipment, things for emergency and *what if* situations, firewood, etc.

### Fuel Economy

I suspect this one is pretty obvious! Pulling our 17' Casita with our Tacoma using premium gas, we generally average about 15mph as long as we're not in the mountains.

### Comfort

Evaluate how comfortable the seats are and whether the ride is too bumpy for long trips. Also be sure to pay attention to visibility and noise levels on the highway.

### Towing Reputation

While narrowing down your choices, post questions in a Facebook group or Internet forum. You will find a lot of people wanting to help who have experience with the most popular tow vehicles.

### Do you really like it?

Once you've decided it's a good choice for towing, step back and take a broader look. Is it a vehicle you really like and will be happy with?

## TRAVELING – Tow Vehicles



### Will it fit in your garage?

If it's a possible issue in your case, check the measurements of the tow vehicle you are considering. Make sure it will fit where you intend to keep it. Many of the larger vehicles may surprise you. I actually had a neighbor a few years back purchase a Chevy Tahoe, then discover that it was too large to fit in his side-entry garage. Unbelievably, he converted his garage into a front entry to solve the problem!

## Preparing your vehicle for towing

Once you have your tow vehicle, you need to get ready for travel.

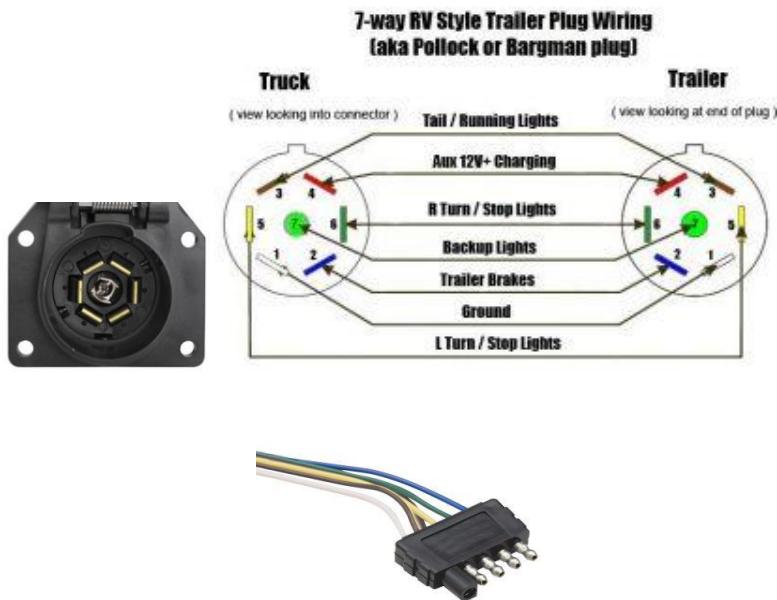
### Tow Package Components

If your tow vehicle does not have the factory tow package, make sure you get it set up properly. Be sure to check the manufacturer's requirements and recommendations. As a minimum, verify that you have each of the following items covered:



## TRAVELING – Tow Vehicles

- **Receiver Hitch** Very few trucks still have a hole in the bumper (like in the old days) where you can mount a ball. I've never seen anyone towing a small travel trailer using this, and doubt that it would last long or be safe. Receiver hitches are the safe method and how it's always done today. This type of hitch mounts to the vehicle's frame and has a removable mount and ball that can be stored out of the way when not being used.



- **Trailer Wiring Connector** There are many different types of wiring connectors used to attach trailers to tow vehicles. Most small travel trailers either use what's referred to as a 7-way or a 5-way connector. This provides the power connections between your tow vehicle and your trailer including Brake Lights and Turn Indicators, Tail Lights, Backup Lights and Trailer Brakes. If you are installing a new wiring harness in your vehicle, be sure you install the right kind to match your small travel trailer. If you already have the wrong kind installed, there are adapters available that may be of help.

## TRAVELING – Tow Vehicles

- **Transmission Cooler** You will probably need an auxiliary transmission cooler. Be sure to check your vehicle manufacturer's recommendation.
- **Larger Radiator** This is a less common requirement for a suitable tow vehicle with a small travel trailer. But again, check your vehicle manufacturer's recommendation to be sure.
- **Upgraded Suspension** To support the extra load on the rear of your tow vehicle, you may need to upgrade your suspension. There are a variety of heavy duty springs, air bags, and air shocks available that can be easily installed.

## Hitch-Ball / Mount



You must have a ball and mount to attach your trailer to the receiver hitch. Both the bar on the mount and the ball come in various sizes. The bar size must match your receiver hitch and the ball size must match your trailer. Two inches for both seem to be what's commonly used for many small travel trailers, but be sure to confirm.

In addition to the right ball size, you also want to have a mount that puts the ball at the right height. When all setup, you want your trailer to be pretty level. Mounts are made to drop or raise the ball a specific amount. Make sure you have the right one for your tow vehicle and trailer.

## TRAVELING – Tow Vehicles

### Brake Controller



You need a brake controller in your vehicle if your trailer has electric brakes. The brake controller senses when you are stopping your vehicle and sends a signal to the trailer to engage its brakes. It has an adjustment as to the sensitivity and comes with instructions on how to get it adjusted correctly.

Some vehicle tow packages include one, some are just pre-wired for it, and some seem to ignore this requirement all together. Trailer brakes help take the stopping load off of your vehicle's brakes and make a huge difference in the comfort and safety when you are driving. Whether your trailer has or needs brakes is a function of the trailer weight and your vehicle's braking capacity. It is also affected by various laws from state to state.

### Sway Control



A Sway Control (often just called a sway bar or anti-sway bar) substantially reduces your trailer's side-to-side sway. This is most noticeable at highway speeds when passing or being passed by large trucks when high winds are present, or sometimes when going around major curves such as a highway exit ramp. When severe, it can be very

## TRAVELING – Tow Vehicles

dangerous and even cause loss of control of your vehicle and trailer. Check out the video listed as **The Extreme Risk of Sway** in the [appendix](#) to see just how dangerous this can be.

Whether a sway control is necessary is dependent upon many things including both your trailer and vehicle weight, and in particular how you load your trailer (weight distribution between front and rear). For peace of mind, I would always use a sway control when driving at highway speeds for any setup where sway occurs at all.

### Tip

Watch the [sway videos listed in the appendix](#). They will give you a good understanding of the need to control sway.

## Weight Distribution Hitch



Another device that has a dramatic effect on the ease and safety of your towing experience is the Weight Distribution Hitch (WDH). This is not always actually a hitch itself, but can be an item used in addition to your receiver hitch. A WDH helps take some of the weight off the rear of your vehicle and distributes it across all axles. It will bring a sagging vehicle rear end up to normal height when properly adjusted and your trailer is properly loaded. Your entire rig will feel much more stable as you drive, and any bounce from dips in the road will be minimized.

Whether you need a WDH is dependent upon the weight and load of both your small travel trailer and your tow vehicle. Unless pulling a very light

## TRAVELING – Tow Vehicles

trailer or towing with a big heavy truck, I would personally always use a WDH. Even when not necessary, it can often add to your peace of mind and provide a more relaxed driving experience.



**Andersen Weight Distribution Hitch**

Andersen Hitches has come out with a WDH with a unique design. They claim their design has many advantages over traditional WDHs including less noise, less bounce and a smoother ride. I have personally been using the Andersen WDH ever since we got our Casita, have traveled across the U.S. with it, and have been very satisfied. In all honesty though, it's the only WDH I've ever used, so I can't really compare it to traditional models.

## GPS & Printed Maps (why you still need them)

Today, most everyone uses (and depends upon) a GPS. Generally, we all use GPS software in our Smartphones as opposed to a dedicated device. You will certainly want to use a GPS as you travel, but if you are taking a long trip or going to unfamiliar areas, you should also have printed maps in your tow vehicle with you.

There are three situations we've run into from time to time where having a map with us has been key:

- **Being in an area without cell coverage** We ran into this a lot when we were traveling across the deserts and mountains out west, and also through the mountains down south. The GPS on our phone would all of a sudden not be able to load a map of the area we were in.

## TRAVELING – Tow Vehicles

- **Being put on a bad road by the GPS** Sometimes the GPS software puts you on the shortest route, with no regard to the condition of the road. When pulling a trailer, this is not always the best. We've had our GPS put us on narrow, twisted roads, and rough roads, just to save a minute or two.
- **Wanting to plan our own route** This may be because we want to go somewhere specific (like see a landmark, small town, etc.), or just to find a bathroom or somewhere to eat.

We have a great Atlas we keep in the truck (info on the one we like: <https://tinytowable.com/accessories-tow/>) that gets used quite often. I generally look at it in advance to get an idea of our general route and sometimes decide on main roads we want to take if the GPS puts us on some minor roads. Other times, I pull it out to find alternatives when needed along the way.

## Truck Bed Storage



Small travel trailers don't have a lot of storage, so you will most likely be storing things in your tow vehicle while you travel. We have a collection of storage bins that we use in the extended cab and the bed of our truck. We started with some large ones, but over time have found that smaller ones are easier to move around and handle as we travel.

## TRAVELING – Tow Vehicles



If your tow vehicle is a truck, you'll want some kind of bed cover to secure the items and also protect things from the weather. We have one that lifts up, like the first photo above. I found it used and it was less expensive than anything else I found. But, I really hate it every time I need to get something out that is up close to the cab. It does have the advantage however of allowing me to get things in and out without getting everything wet in a light rain. We do try to load things that are not frequently used near the cab, but things still do come up and it's always a struggle trying to reach in under the cover, especially if it's something towards the front center.

## Planning Trips

How we go about planning our trips – routes and where to stay

### **So you've been thinking of going somewhere!**

Are you one of those people who love the idea of just getting on the road with your small travel trailer and going? Do you like the adventure of not knowing where? Do you just love figuring it out as you go along? In other words, you don't like the idea of planning trips. If so, you can skip this section.

But that's not me. I'm a pretty organized person. I like the idea of planning trips, although I do try to leave a fair amount of flexibility in them. We often refine our trip as we go along. If you're more like me, keep reading and see if you can get some ideas from what's been working well for us.

Do you have some favorite place to go or people to visit? Do you have places you've wanted to visit for a long time? Or maybe you've just been browsing places on the Internet or watching TV shows and thinking about places for your bucket list. In any case, there are two things you will need to do when planning trips...determine your route and find places to stay.

### **Planning your route and schedule (free tools)**

#### **Tip**

When estimating the time a trip will take, be sure to factor in items that will affect you that are not considered by the mapping programs. How fast you drive, rest stops, stop lights and traffic, etc. all come into play. In our case, we use Google Maps to get a rough idea when we first start planning a trip. We refer to the time it comes up with as "Google Time". We typically find that multiplying it by 1.25 gives us a better idea how long it is going to take us.

First, you need to decide on the route to take. If it's a short weekend trip, you may already know your route and there's nothing new to consider. But if it's a longer trip to somewhere new, you should do some planning.

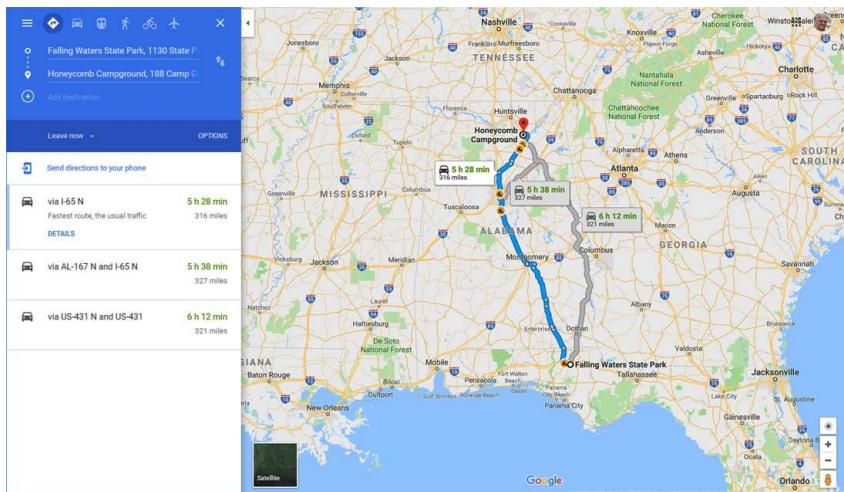
## TRAVELING – Planning Trips

Do you want to get there the fastest way possible? Or are you like me and want to take more time, avoid the Interstate traffic (with all the stress of big trucks passing you and the boredom) and take old highways and back roads? Whatever the case, you should explore your options and estimate how long the trip will take. Once you've settled on your route, you'll need to document your plan and get your schedule organized.

Over time, you will come up with your own approach for planning trips and choosing your routes. But to get you started, let me tell you about the free web-based tools I use and how I go about it.

### Google Maps

<https://maps.google.com>

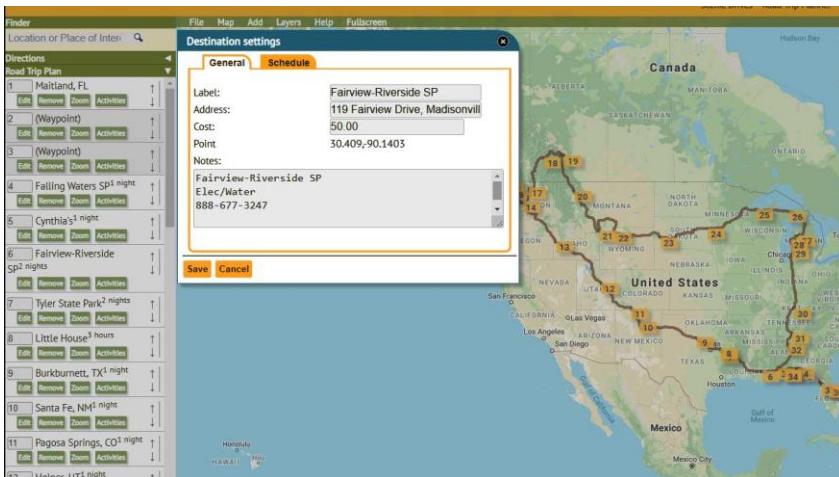


After trying a lot of mapping tools, I always end up starting with Google Maps. It's very easy to drag your route around on the map to explore alternatives and see how it affects the time. I also like the fact that you can switch and see actual photos along the way on most main roads and streets. If you're not already familiar with Google Maps, you really need to give it a try. It is great for deciding on a route when planning a trip and may be all you need for a short trip. It does, however, have limitations as to the number of stops you can add and has no provisions for adding notes along the route.

## TRAVELING – Planning Trips

## My Scenic Drives

<https://myscenicdrive.com>



After trying several possible solutions to documenting our routes, I've settled on the MyScenicDrives website.

As you add your stops, it allows you to enter other details such as time planned for the stop, as well as notes. I use it just to document our trips, but it can do much more. You can actually enter the amount of time you wish to drive each day and it will suggest where to stop. You can also enter costs and it will develop your budget. After you have everything entered, it will generate your route map with stops, as well as your basic itinerary. You can really go crazy with this tool if you want!

## TRAVELING – Planning Trips

### Google Calendar

<https://calendar.google.com>

May 2016							Day	Week	Month	5 Days	Agenda	More	Settings	
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat								
May 1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Chipley, FL - Falling Waters SP	Pensacola, FL - Cynthia's	Mandeville, LA - Fairview-Riverview SP					
8	9	10	11	12	13	14	Tyler, TX - Tyler State Park	Santa Fe, NM - Santa Fe State R	Pageosa Springs, CO - Blanca I	Hopcat, UT - Blue Cat RV Park	Caldwell, ID - Ambassador RV R			
Mother's Day		10 Little House-afer 9:00												
15	16	17	18	19	20	21	Ole Elum, WA - Eagle Valley Carr	Oak Harbor WA - Deception Pass State Park	Point Roberts, WA - LeFours					
Winthrop, WA - Pine Near RV Pa	Revelstoke, BC - Lempighter G	Banff, AB - Tunnel Mountain Trailer Court Campground			Kellogg, MT - Rocky Mountain HI Campground					West Yellowstone, MT - Campf				
29	30	31	Jun 1	2	3	4	Cody, WY - Ponderosa Campground	Mt Rushmore - Hill City, SD - C	Summit, SD - County Line Camp	Ashland, WI - Ashland City RV P	Multidling - Munising Tourist Park Campground			
	Memorial Day													

Once I have my itinerary complete, I put the schedule for my trip plan on a calendar for easy reference. There are a lot of calendar programs, but I use the Google calendar because I can access it from my phone and it is easy to share with others. It's also very quick and easy to use.

## Researching Places to Stay

So where are you going to stay? With a small travel trailer, you can stay great places that the big RVs can't always squeeze into. You need to decide what kinds of places you are interested in before you begin. Personally, we don't like to rough it. We always stay at places with water and electrical hookups. We want to be able to plug in our microwave and sometimes even our TV.

The following tools are what we use to do our planning.

## TRAVELING – Planning Trips

## Tip

When you read reviews, keep in mind that traveling with a small travel trailer is much different than with a large one or a motorhome. Both positive and negative comments by others may not matter in your situation. Be sure to pay attention to comments and not just depend on the ratings.

# **tinyTowable website: Campground Reviews**

<https://tinytowable.com/campground-reviews/>



My wife and I have done reviews of every campground and RV Park we've visited. There are almost 100 places (maybe more by the time you read this) that we've documented. All the reviews rate the items that are most import to us and others that travel with a small travel trailer. Most of the places have lots of photos, including shots of the bathhouses. All the listings are organized by state here in the U.S. and just a few by province in Canada. Please check this out first and see if we've been anywhere you're interested in.

## TRAVELING – Planning Trips

### Facebook group: Campgrounds-Trailers and RVs

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/CampgroundsTrailersRVs/>

The screenshot shows the Facebook group page for 'Campgrounds for Trailers and RVs'. The left sidebar includes options like Discussion, Announcements, Members, Videos, Photos, Group Insights, Recommendations, and Moderate Group. The main content area features a large image of a campsite with a green picnic table, a chair, and a white RV. Text overlay on the image reads 'Campgrounds - Trailers and RVs' and 'Reviews and Information about places to stay'. A sponsored post from 'tinyTOWABLE' is visible. The right sidebar shows group statistics (1,963 likes), member invites, and suggested members.

This is a group I started in 2018 and have managed ever since. As of Oct 2021, it had over 8,000 members and thousands of posts with lots of comments and photos. The only posts allowed in the group are photos and info on places the members have stayed, and questions by members searching for somewhere in a specific area.

It's a private group so you do have to join to view the posts. This is important because it enables me to restrict access to anyone that can't follow the rules. (The main rules are that all posts must be about a campground, and posted by an individual not affiliated with the place. Also, everyone must behave well and be nice to one another!)

I try hard to get the members to add the state or province name and closest city for each campground posted. This gives you the ability to use the Facebook search function within the group to find places in an area you are interested in.

## TRAVELING – Planning Trips

What makes this group better than most of the other places where you find reviews, is that you can easily ask questions and communicate directly with people that have stayed at each place.

### Club: Passport America

<https://www.passportamerica.com>

The screenshot shows the Passport America website. At the top, there's a logo featuring a stylized American flag and the text "Passport America". To the right is a "Verified Merchant" badge from Authorize.net and the text "The ORIGINAL 50% Discount Camping Club Call (800) 681-6810 & Sign Up Now!". Below the header is a navigation bar with links for Home, About Us, Campgrounds, Rallies/Caravans, FAQ, Testimonials, Join Now, and Renew. On the left, there's a sidebar with links for New Campground Signup, What's Happening, Refer-A-Buddy \$, Free Mobile Apps, FREE Trip Routing, Discount Campground Search, Discounted Tent Sites, Rental Accommodations, RV Resources, Passport America Campgrounds, RV America Magazine, Lowest Gas Prices, Banner Ad Program, and a link to check email. The main content area features a large banner advertising a 50% discount on campsites for \$44. Below it is a section titled "South Dakota Discount Campgrounds" with a map showing several red pins indicating campsite locations. A table below the map lists campgrounds in South Dakota, categorized by state, city, and campground name.

State	City	Campground
SD	Hot Springs	Allen Ranch
SD	Herred	Camp 83
SD	Big Stone City	Camping 109 RV Park
SD	Custer	Country Charm Cabins And Corrals
SD	Summit	County Line Campground

When planning trips, I start my search for a particular area by checking Passport America (PA) first. PA is a discount camping club you can join. It gets you a 50% discount on overnight rates at about 2,000 campgrounds across the U.S., Canada, and Mexico. Many of the places have full hookups for only \$15 to \$20. For us they have been great for inexpensive overnight stops while traveling to our main destinations.

## TRAVELING – Planning Trips

The discounts are often limited to times when the campgrounds are not that busy. For most places that excludes the weekends, but in places with a lot of tourism, it may also exclude their busy seasons.

You do need to check out these campgrounds thoroughly. Some of them are old and rundown, and some of them have mostly full-time residents. But beyond that, there are some really great places (including upscale RV parks with full amenities). Many of the ones we've stayed at have been in seasonal locations and it's been during their offseason. Others were new campgrounds that were not yet well known. We've also found a few that focus on their local market and are busy mostly on weekends and holidays.

I can't always find a good PA campground near where we want to stay. However, when I can, we've been able to save some money and/or stay somewhere much nicer than we normally do. The best part is that it is pretty inexpensive. It only takes a few nights in a year to pay back the annual membership fee.

### Tip

See my article **How We've Stayed at 17 Decent Campgrounds with Hookups for \$20 or Less** on the tinyTowable website:

<https://tinytowable.com/campground-discounts/>

## TRAVELING – Planning Trips

### Website: Campground Reviews

<https://www.campgroundreviews.com/>

The screenshot shows the County Line Campground page on the Campground Reviews website. At the top, there's a search bar and a 'Search' button. Below the header, a banner says 'GET IT DELIVERED.' with a 'SHOP NOW' button. The main content area features the campground's name, 'County Line Campground', and its location, 'Summit, SD'. It has a rating of 8.5 stars and 48 reviews. Below this, there are tabs for 'Overview', 'Amenities', '11 Tips', 'Q&A', and '48 Reviews'. A COVID-19 status box indicates it's currently open. The page also includes sections for 'Additional Details' and 'Facilities, Activities'. There are several photos of people at the campsite, including one of a man playing a harmonica and another of a group of people. At the bottom, there are buttons for 'Add Photos', 'View Phone', 'View Website', and 'See 2 Photos'.

This is my favorite site for user reviews. Even if I find a recommendation on Facebook, or to research a Passport America site, this is where I always go to see if I can find more information from other travelers. My guess is that they probably have tens of thousands of reviews on thousands of campgrounds and RV Parks. Almost every place I've ever tried to research was in their database. You can easily search by state or Canadian province and zero in on the area you are interested in

Do realize however, that there is no assurance that the reviews here or anywhere else are accurate or unbiased. We've had a few surprises when we arrived at our destination. This is mostly a concern when there are very few reviews posted for the particular place. Overall, this site has been a great help.

## TRAVELING – Planning Trips

### The Campground or RV Park's own Website



The screenshot shows the homepage of County-Line Campground. At the top, there is a navigation bar with links: Features & Rates, Location, Photo Gallery, Activities, Useful Information, and Weather. Below the navigation bar, the logo "County-Line Campground" is displayed next to an illustration of two trees and a tent. To the right of the logo are two photographs: one showing the exterior of a wooden building with a flag and a sign, and another showing several RVs parked on a dirt road. A "Good Sam Park" logo with a cartoon character is also present. The main content area has a green header "Welcome to County-Line Campground". Below it, a message invites visitors to stay at the campground. A large photograph in the center shows a circular directional sign for "COUNTY LINE CAMPGROUND" with the phone number "605 - 398 - 6359" and a "TIE FUN NEVER ENDS" logo. To the right of the sign is a wooden picnic table and a wooden building with a "WOODALES" sign. On the far right, there is a "Park Status: Open" indicator with a Facebook "Like" button and a contact form.

Welcome to County-Line Campground

We would like to invite you and your family to join us for a relaxing stay at our campground.

**Park Status:** Open

**Contact Us**

Name:

Email:

Phone:

Comments:

Type the words:  
44BBCD

**Send Form**

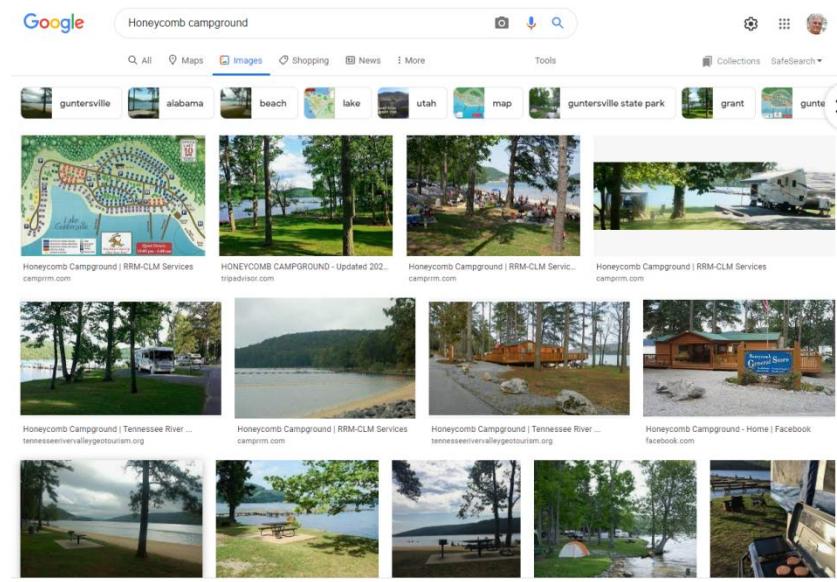
When I've identified a place that looks good so far, I go to the campground's own website to learn more. The places in our own reviews on the tinyTowable website, and also those on Campground Reviews always have a direct link to the campground's official website, if it's known. In other cases, you may have to use Google and do some searching.

Often the campground's website will have a gallery of photos, but be careful. We've had times when we arrived that the photos were not really representative of the actual place.

## TRAVELING – Planning Trips

### Google Images

<https://images.google.com>



My final step in researching is to go to Google Images and search for photos. You can usually always find some for State Parks, National Parks and larger RV Parks. Sometimes it's difficult to find photos of the smaller campgrounds.

If all the photos you find include only large RVs, be sure to check and make sure they are a good fit for you. Some RV parks (mostly the resorts) don't allow small trailers. We've also ran into a few of them that restrict the age (although I suspect this is mostly just used to exclude trailers that look old and not well maintained).

## **Free Places to Stay–Walmart & Cracker Barrel**

As I mentioned earlier, we always stay at places with water and electric hookups, so this is not for us and we don't have any experience here. However, these are two places I hear about quite often.

The majority of the Walmarts and Cracker Barrels will allow you to park free overnight in their parking lots. This can be a good solution if you don't need facilities and hookups. Always check first with the manager of the particular location to make sure it's okay at that location.

We have never spent the night in a parking lot. To be honest, it does seem a bit creepy to us. We've talked with many people who have though, and most of them have felt good about it and would do it again. We may be more comfortable with the idea if we'd ever try it. The biggest warning has been to make sure it felt like a secure location...some do and some don't.

## Getting Ready to Head Out

Final steps before you hit the road

### Guess What We Forgot!

There are lots of things to do when getting ready to leave for a trip with your small travel trailer. If you're loading up for a weekend trip close to home, it may be pretty simple. But if it's a big trip, you will probably start getting ready weeks in advance. To make it easier, I keep all our equipment and supplies in bins in one section of the garage. But all the preparation usually comes down to one thing. Did you forget anything?

Yep...the most dreaded words I've had to say to my wife when we were too far down the road with our small travel trailer to turn back... "Guess what we forgot?". Yep, I got all the maintenance items taken care of on both our small travel trailer and the truck. The propane tanks are full. I loaded everything we thought we needed for the activities we are planning. But we still forgot something.

There are usually plenty of Walmarts along our route, but I just hate getting back home and having spent money for another one of something we already had. Or even worst, getting all set up at a remote campground and then finding we need to run into town.



So, what's the answer? **YOU MUST HAVE A GOOD CHECKLIST!**  
Here's how we use one.

## TRAVELING – Getting Ready to Head Out

1. **Print out a new checklist when we first start packing for the trip** We set this on the kitchen island and check things off when they are loaded or complete.
2. **Add items we noted on the checklist from our last trip (see step 4)** During our last trip, we most likely came up with things to do for this trip. We now transfer them to the new list.
3. **Jot down specific items for this trip** The checklist stays on our kitchen island until we are ready to leave. If we have special things to take along or things we need to do for this specific trip, we add them to the checklist as we think of them.
4. **Move the checklist to the trailer when everything is complete and we are about to leave** The checklist stays on a clipboard hanging in the trailer the entire trip. It's the place where we write all our notes of things we want to remember for the next trip (things to take with us), and also things we need to do in advance (repairs, maintenance, etc.).

Be sure to look over my checklists in the [appendix](#) to see everything we consider. You'll want to develop your own checklists, but mine will give you a good start and get you thinking. Most likely, you'll end up tweaking them on every trip until you're satisfied. The appendix has a few different checklists we use, along with some photos and info on how we store our camping supplies and pack our truck.

## A few other *really important* things before you hit the road...

My biggest fear when I first got started towing a small travel trailer was having problems while we were on the road. An accident, a theft, or even a problem with your trailer could become a major disruption to your trip. You are going to want vehicle insurance on your small travel trailer similar to what you have on your cars and trucks. Be sure to seriously

## TRAVELING – Getting Ready to Head Out

consider roadside assistance and make sure the insurance you get provides it.

The insurance agent you use for your cars and/or trucks may be able to help. They may be more affordable than a company dedicated to RVs, but the actual coverage they provide could be limited. Before making your decision, you should also check with a company that focuses on providing service for travel trailers and RVs, and compare their coverage with what's offered by your current agent.

## Loading Your Trailer and Tow Vehicle

It's essential that you properly load your trailer and tow vehicle. Fail to do so and your driving will be stressful and possibly very dangerous. It's all about weight...how much and where you put it.

- Be sure you do not exceed the capacity of your equipment. With a small travel trailer, this frequently means not exceeding the weight rating of your trailer's axle and tires. With your tow vehicle, be sure you don't exceed the manufacturer's tow ratings as specified in the owner's manual.
- When loaded, the trailer tongue weight should be 10% to 15% of the overall trailer weight. (Be sure to watch the video on properly loading your trailer that I have listed on the video page in the [appendix](#).)

We try to limit things in our trailer to *only the things we NEED inside our trailer*. We put everything we can into our truck to assure we don't come close to exceeding the capacity of our trailer's axle or tires. Of the things we do put in the trailer, we try to keep the heavier things as close to the center (above the axle(s)) as possible. This works well for us and generally gets us in the 10%-15% tongue weight range. You will have to figure out what works best for your setup.

## TRAVELING – Getting Ready to Head Out

### Hitching up your trailer

When first learning to tow a trailer, how to line up your tow vehicle with your trailer when you are getting hooked up can be challenging. There are a lot of solutions, but some simple hitching rods are what I used. They really work pretty well and are cheaper than most other solutions. The rods are pretty fragile however and will easily break if you don't store them carefully. (In other words, don't just throw them in your truck bed unprotected.) In my case, I quit using them before mine broke, once I got used to hooking up, but they were a big help in the beginning. (see the video on [Hitching Up](#) in the appendix.)

### Toilet Paper

If you have a toilet in your trailer, it's important that you use toilet paper that will easily break down with water. Using the wrong kind can clog up your drain and leave you with a terrible mess to deal with.

You can purchase the special RV toilet paper that is designed for this purpose. But a lot of the standard home toilet paper brands can be used and will save you money. The key is to make sure that whatever you choose will work well.

I have a link to a great video in the [appendix](#) that shows you an easy way to test any paper you consider. By the way, it had a surprise ending for me!

### Owner Manuals, Warranties, Receipts, etc.

You never know when you might run into a problem. Having these items with you on a trip just might make things easier. We keep our trailer owner's manual, another guide, and a folder containing other important papers in the trailer so we always have them with us.

## On the Road

Making sure you have a great day on the road

### This is Really Important!

Did you skip over the video I mentioned in the last section on how important it is to have the trailer loaded properly? If so, *please* take a minute and watch it. It's called **The Extreme Risk of Sway**, listed on the video page in the [appendix](#).

## All the Dreaded Driving

So you've done it. You've planned your trip. You've left home. You're on the road, towing a small travel trailer. Congratulations!

But after all the prep work, what's going through your head

- So what is this day going to be like?
- Will you run into problems?
- Are you going to get bored?
- If you are not traveling alone, is this going to be too much togetherness?
- Will you manage to get everything setup right when you get to the campground?
- Was this idea of towing a small travel trailer really a good one?

These were our questions in the beginning. And, we had most of the same questions when we took a cross-country trip after several years of towing our small travel trailer. For us, we seem to be a little anxious the first few hours of a longer trip but quickly settle down. The key is to make sure you have prepared well.

## Things to Keep in Mind Throughout the Day

A few things to think about when you're on the road:

- **Walk around your entire rig and look everything over before you begin the day and after each stop.**  
Just make sure everything looks normal (nothing loose, tire getting low, etc.)
- **Each time you stop, check to make sure the trailer wheel hubs are not getting really hot.**  
I have an inexpensive infrared thermometer (info on the one I have: <https://tinytowable.com/accessories-tow/>) that I just point at each hub to take the temperature. If you don't mind getting your hand dirty, it works just as well to just place your hand on each hub. As long as it's not uncomfortably hot, you're fine. If you burn your hand, however, it may well be a sign that you have a wheel bearing going bad. *By the way, if one side of the trailer has had the sun beating on it for a while, that hub will normally be hotter than the other side.*
- **Keep your overall speed down.**  
You may feel fine driving faster, as long as nothing goes wrong. But if you have any surprises, you will have much less control than usual. Don't take a chance...slow down!
- **Make sure your tires are kept close to maximum pressure.**  
Tires fail when they overheat. This is caused by low tire pressure and higher speeds.
- **Choose gas stations and parking lots carefully.**  
It takes a lot of room to make wide turns. Be sure you think it out carefully before you leave the main road.
- **Be prepared for areas without cell phone coverage**  
This is important not only for phone calls but also if you want to use the Internet to look up information along your way, and if you are using your phone for GPS.

## TRAVELING – On the Road

- **Confirm campground availability early.**  
If you don't have reservations, be sure to call to check on campgrounds early enough to find alternatives if they are full.

### Tip

To save money eating when you are on the road, skip the restaurants and fast food. Pull into a big parking lot, put on your brakes, go into your trailer, fix your own lunch and relax a bit!



## Hey it's a Road Trip...Enjoy it!

So here is a list of suggestions to consider when you're on the road towing a small travel trailer.

- **Plan your drive times so that you pull into your destination well before dark.**  
It's a lot nicer parking and setting up in the daylight. Be sure to allow for delays that seem to occur during the day
- **At least every hour or two, stop and stretch a bit whether you really think you need to or not.**  
As we've gotten older, we find that if we don't stop at least this often, we'll be very stiff and know it when we get in bed at night.
- **If you have the time, avoid the Interstates when you can.**  
The small towns you'll go through taking the old highways will add a lot of variety to your day and make the time go faster. There's also very little traffic on most of the old highways making the drive much less intense and stressful.

## At the Campground

How to pull into a campground, pick your spot, and get set up

### You've Arrived...Now What???

If this is one of your first trips, you will have a lot of things on your mind. Setting up a small travel trailer at your destination is not difficult, but be sure to take your time until you get used to what's involved. This is another place where a good [checklist](#) will help.

### Picking the spot to park your rig

Before you pick the exact place to park within your site, get out and look it over. Pay particular attention to the following.

- **Slope of the ground**

You want to park somewhere that is as level as possible. Look at the ground for bumps, holes, and slope. Picking the best place you can will reduce your need to level the trailer once it's parked.

- **Location of water, electric and sewer hookups**

Make sure you park close enough to the water, electric and sewer hookups. If you are using sewer, parking close enough to keep your hose short will usually help it drain better. All of the hookup connections on your trailer are on the driver's side. Most of the campgrounds you stay at will have the hookups on that side too. Once in a while, however, you'll stay somewhere that has hookups on the wrong side. This usually occurs if they are trying to share the hookups between two sites.

- **Location of the fire ring and picnic table**

If you are going to have a fire, keep your distance from the fire ring so that you minimize any smoke getting into the trailer. Position the trailer so that it will be convenient to the picnic table if possible, for bringing food in and out.

## TRAVELING – At the Campground

- **Space to park your tow vehicle**

If you are going to disconnect from the trailer, be sure you leave enough space so that your tow vehicle is not sticking out into the road.

Once you've figured out where you want to park, you can proceed to carefully put your rig into place.

## Pulling into your campsite

This is one of the times when you'll really appreciate having a small travel trailer rather than a large RV or fifth wheel. You will often see big rigs struggling to get parked, but you will find that a small trailer is pretty easy once you get a little experience. In the beginning, you just need someone on the outside to guide you a bit.

There are two basic types of campsites...



- **Pull-through**

These sites have an entrance and an exit allowing you to simply pull your rig into the site when you arrive, and pull straight out when you leave. You never have to back up. Some of these sites are roadside, but other times you will pull in from one road going through the campground and pull out onto another one.



## TRAVELING – At the Campground

- **Back-in**

Back-in sites are common in most state and county park campgrounds. You have to pull forward in the road and then back into the campsite. Sometimes it's easy, but sometimes you need to carefully back in between trees.



Campground map with both pull-through & back-in sites

## Backing up your trailer

When we were getting started, I went to a big parking lot and practiced backing up with our trailer. In the beginning it feels awkward. When you turn the steering wheel, the trailer will go in the opposite direction. You can overcome this easily by holding the steering wheel at the bottom. It seems a little more natural because your hands will go in the same direction as the trailer. Eventually I got the hang of it and it became pretty easy. Once you have the backing up down pretty well, work on parking it in marked off parking spots. A school, mall or shopping center is a good place to work on this after hours. The key is to just practice enough.

When you are at a campground, try to have someone standing behind the trailer to the driver's side to guide you when possible. Make sure you can hear them and see them in your mirror. The first time we went

## TRAVELING – At the Campground

camping with our Casita, I was backing straight into a large tree. Thankfully, people at the campsite across from us saw me and yelled!

I've written an article on the tinyTowable website called **4 Tips to Simplify Backing Up a Trailer** (<https://tinytowable.com/backup-trailer/>). In addition to some good suggestions, it also includes a couple of videos that were a lot of help to me.

## Getting Everything Setup Outside

Get out your checklist! You should have a checklist that you've tailored to your needs, and you should refine it until the process becomes routine. (By now, I'm sure you've found my checklists in the [appendix](#). They should make a good starting point for creating your own.)



Typical Campground Hookups

Would you use this?

## The Basic Checklist Steps

Here are some basic steps to get you started. Be sure to develop your own steps based upon your rig.

1. Check that everything is ok with the electric power at the site (see the following tip: **IMPORTANT – Two things**)
2. Level trailer side-to-side.
3. Chock wheels.

## TRAVELING – At the Campground

4. Disconnect trailer from tow vehicle.
5. Move tow vehicle out of the way.
6. Level trailer front to rear.
7. Put down stabilizer jacks.
8. Hookup water, sewer, electric and gas (as appropriate).
9. Spray bug spray around everything that touches the ground.

NOTE: If we're just setting up for an overnight stop, we usually cheat a bit and may actually skip some (or even most) of the above steps!

## A Couple of Misc Tips

- We have two propane tanks on our trailer. We always try to have just one turned on at a time and use it until empty. This makes it easier to refill at home when needed and start a trip with at least one full tank.

### **IMPORTANT - Two things to protect your trailer**

- Check the electric power before you connect your trailer. We've found several campsites that weren't wired correctly and could possibly damage our trailer electronics. When we've found a problem, the people in the campground office were always happy to move us to another site. (For more info and how to test, please read the article I wrote **Avoiding Dangerous Campground Electrical Problems** on the tinyTowable website.  
<https://tinytowable.com/electrical-hookup-when-camping/>)
- Water pressure varies substantially from campground to campground. If it's too high, it can cause plumbing leaks in your trailer. Be sure to use a Water Pressure Regulator on your fresh water hose. (info on the one we have: <https://tinytowable.com/accessories/>)

## Getting Ready to Leave the Campground

Preparing to hit the road again

Leaving the campground is easier and faster than arriving...well, at least it seems like it should be! For us, it depends upon how long we were there. If it was a quick overnight stay, we are out of there before you know it. If we've been there a while though, it sometimes takes longer to pack up then it did to set up.

The longer we are there, the more stuff we've pulled out to use that needs to get cleaned and put away. If we've cooked meals, it may take even longer. When we can, we'd rather take time to clean up and put things away when we are leaving the campground rather than have to deal with them later.

So all the tasks break down into two basic steps: Getting Packed Up and Getting Back on the Road.

### Getting Packed Up

Not all of these steps will apply in every case, but here are the basics.

- Put away everything you have outdoors.
- Be a good camper - cleanup your campsite  
Leave things as good as or better than you found them when you arrived.
- Put things away and secure them inside the trailer  
If you've cooked and dirtied dishes, you'll be happy later if you wash them and put them away now!
- Turn off everything that uses electricity inside
- Drain your gray and black water tanks if you have sewer connection at your site
- Disconnect your electric and water hookups

## TRAVELING – Getting Ready to Leave the Campground

### Draining your holding tanks

Yep, the most dreaded task...dealing with your holding tanks! It really isn't that bad once you learn what you are doing. The basic steps are as follows:

1. Make sure the toilet is close to full. Add water if needed. This will help drain all the solid waste.
2. Connect your sewer drain hose, trying to give it a downward slope towards the drain.
3. Open the valve to drain the black water tank.
4. If you have two tanks, open the valve to drain the gray water after the black water stops draining.
5. Use a tank wand in the toilet to flush out the black tank.  
If you do not have a tank wand, you can refill and drain the toilet with fresh water several times until clean. A tank wand just makes it a lot easier to do a good job. Just know that you may still have some sediment stuck on the bottom. Adding a clear elbow between your trailer hookup and the hose makes it easy to monitor your progress and see when the water is clearing up.

#### Note

I cover both the tank wand and the clear elbow in my article entitled **Two Things to Simplify Cleaning Your Sewer Tank**. It's on my website here: <https://tinytowable.com/sewer-items/>

### Getting Back on the Road

Now that you have everything packed up, before leaving the campground you need to get things ready for towing again. The steps are pretty much the same as when you are getting ready to begin your trip. Again, refer to your [checklist](#).

## After You Get Back Home

Things to address when your trip is complete

### It's over and you're back home again...already!

We spend a lot of time looking forward to and getting ready for each trip. Unfortunately, it always seems like it's over too soon. While it usually feels good to be back home, we want to make sure everything will be ready for our next trip. You don't have to do everything right away, but here are the basic items that should be addressed:

- **Empty and Cleanup Inside.**

We empty out of the trailer, then vacuum and clean it inside.

- **Clean items used outside that weren't cleaned at the campground.**

This includes a good cleaning of our gas grill and portable stove, as well as chairs, tables, etc.

- **Wash the Outside of the trailer**

Our small travel trailer is fiberglass, and it's stored outside. We try our best to keep it clean and try to wax it twice a year. After 15 years it still looks great!

- **Put your trailer on jackstands.**

If it is going to be a while before we take another trip, we put the trailer on jack stands to get the weight off the tires. Allowing it to sit on the tires for too long can develop flat spots. We've never had any problems storing it for a few months.

- **Work on your *to-do list***

Start soon to address the things you decided needed attention in preparation of your next trip

#### The ***to-do*** list

We always come up with little things to fix or improve while we are traveling and add them to a *to-do list*. As mentioned previously, we keep

## TRAVELING – After You Get Back Home

a copy of our setup checklist on a clipboard in the trailer during our trip and add these items to the bottom. We also use this copy to mark up any tweaks we come up with for the checklist itself. Once we're back home, we look it over and make a shopping list if there are things we need to acquire. We then pick up the needed items and work on the *to-do list* as we have time. Our master checklist also gets updated with the tweaks and reprinted before our next trip.

## Happy Trails!

So I hope I have given you some good ideas on how to get started with your new adventure. I'm sure you will tweak your approach as you get experience, but this is everything that has worked well for us. It should at least be helpful to get you going.

Be sure to check out **Campground Reviews**, **Products We Like**, and of course my numerous **blog articles** on the **tinyTowable website**. Should you have questions you think I could help with, simply use the Contact form on the website to send me a note.

I hope you enjoy your small travel trailer as much as we enjoy ours. Maybe we'll have the chance to meet up on the road sometime!



Back home after a trip with our small travel trailer

## APPENDIX

# APPENDIX

## Accessories

### Items You Will Probably Need to Get Started

Over time you will accumulate a lot of things that help make things better and easier as you travel with your small travel trailer. Here's a list of a few things though that you should have with you on your first trip:

- **Drinking Water Hose**

When connecting your trailer to a water source, be sure to use only a hose specifically made for drinking water. Using a standard garden hose will give you a bad taste that could possibly even stay with your trailer's plumbing for a while.

- **Water Filter**

At times you will find crummy water at the campground. Even if you purchase drinking water to consume, you really don't want bad campground water getting into your trailer's plumbing system.

- **Water Pressure Regulator**

At times you will find very high water pressure at some campgrounds. So high in fact, that it can cause leaks in your trailer's plumbing system.

- **Electrical Surge Suppressor / Analyzer**

Occasionally you will run into various problems with the electrical power at your campsite. Certain problems can actually destroy the electronics in your trailer. Please read my complete article **Avoiding Dangerous Campground Electrical Problems** on the tinyTowable website. <https://tinytowable.com/electrical-hookup-when-camping/>

- **Trailer Wheel Chocks**

You want your trailer to stay where you park it. Wheel chocks prevent it from rolling on a slope, or if you push it when hitching up.

## APPENDIX – Accessories You Will Probably Need

- **Leveling Blocks / Small Level**

A lot of campsites are not level. We carry a small level that I can set on the trailer to check how level we are when we park and setup. You will frequently need leveling blocks to put under your wheels to level your trailer side-to-side.

- **Tire Pressure Gauge**

One of the biggest causes of tire failure is not having them inflated properly.

## Products We Like and Use

Check out the **Products We Like** (<https://tinytowable.com/accessories/>) on the tinyTowable website for more description and photos of the items above, as well as a list of a lot more items we really like and have found to be worthwhile. The pages also have direct links to the products on Amazon should you be interested in ordering any of the items that have worked out well for us. Should you have questions about any of them, drop me a note on the **Contact Page** (<https://tinytowable.com/contact/>) of the website,

## Checklists

## CHECKLIST 1: Packing for a Trip

This is the checklist we use in the days leading up to a trip. We leave it sitting on our kitchen counter and mark things off as they get loaded into either our travel trailer or truck. NOTE: We certainly don't take all the items on every trip. We generally put a checkmark in those we pack, and an X in those we aren't taking. It helps us make sure we don't just overlook something.

### Notes about some of the items

Here are some notes about items on the checklist that may not be so obvious,

**(Denny) Truck Cab** - I'm responsible for getting things loaded into the truck. We have an extended cab, so we put some things inside the truck since we have the extra room, but mostly it's the things we want easy access to while we are on the road.

- **GPS** - We normally use Waze or Google Maps on one of our phones for GPS navigation while driving.
- **Printed Maps/Atlas** - While GPS is our main method of finding our way, printed maps are often handy to get a bigger picture when we are on the road and need route alternatives.
- **TT Cards** - These are my tinyTowable website business cards which I give away whenever I meet new people during our travels that are interested in Travel Trailers and/or RVs

**(Denny) Truck Bed** - We carry several tubs that are organized in a way that we can generally find what we are looking for pretty easily.

Refer to the images that follow the checklist to see roughly how I arrange things in the truck. Items at the top of the page go up against the truck cab. They are the least frequently used, and with the bed cover I have,

## APPENDIX – Checklists – 1: Packing for a Trip

that's the hardest location to get to. Things I generally need before unloading at the campground are positioned so they are easy to get to.

- **Tub: Rope & Bungees** - If you don't have bungees, go purchase a bag. It's amazing how many uses you'll come up with for them while traveling.
- **Tub: Spare Trailer Hub** - I'm probably overly paranoid, but I carry a spare trailer wheel hub with a new bearing, along with wheel bearing grease...just in case one were to fail and leave me stranded along the roadside.
- **Tub: Emergency** - Contains a few things I don't generally need. (12 volt tire compressor, sledge hammer, hatchet, WD40)
- **Box: Liquids** - This is an odd shaped wooden box I made that fits behind the wheel well. It contains liquids, some in bottles that need to stand upright. (glass cleaner, household cleaner, household cleanser, bug spray, wasp spray, hand cleaner)
- **Tub: Electrical** - (outdoor lights, extension cords, TV cables, TV Antenna)
- **Parts Box** - I have an old fishing tackle box that is loaded with all kinds of spare parts, bulbs, fuses, screws, nuts, bolts, rivets, glue, grease, small tools, etc.
- **Tub: Fire** - (propane, campfire starters)
- **Tub: Parking** – (wheel chocks, wood blocks for leveling)
- **Tub: Handy Stuff** - Things I like to keep handy and easily accessible from the back of the truck (gloves, pliers, sockets, hammer, tape, electrical adapters, etc.)
- **Tub: Flip-flops/Gloves** - (for walking when it's wet and for the bathhouse / work gloves when needed)

## APPENDIX – Checklists – 1: Packing for a Trip

- **Antenna Poles** - I use expandable painter poles to support a TV antenna and sometimes a cell phone antenna at the campground
- **Portable Light** - We have a very bright portable that runs on 4 D-cell batteries. It's very handy when you need to do something outside at night. It can sit on a table or the ground, and also has a handle that can be used to hang it. It's often more convenient than using a flashlight.

*By the way...* I've tried using both large tubs and small tubs in the back of the truck, and I've ended up with a mix, but mostly small. The key is to be able to reach them easily without having to unload more than necessary, but also for them not to be too heavy should you have to stretch to reach them.

## APPENDIX – Checklists – 1: Packing for a Trip

### (Denny) Trailer

Enough Propane       Battery charged

### (Denny) Truck Cab

Phone Charger       Tool Set       Camera/Tripod       Flashlight       TT Cards  
 GPS/Maps/Atlas       Umbrellas       Tire Gauge       Jumper Cables

### (Denny) Truck Bed

<input type="checkbox"/> Tub:Rope & Bungs	<input type="checkbox"/> Tub:Spare Trlr Hub	<input type="checkbox"/> Tub:Emergency	<input type="checkbox"/> Box:Liquids
<input type="checkbox"/> Tub:Electrical	<input type="checkbox"/> Parts Box	<input type="checkbox"/> Tub:Fire	<input type="checkbox"/> Tub: Parking
<input type="checkbox"/> Camp Stove	<input type="checkbox"/> Tub: Handy Stuff	<input type="checkbox"/> Tub: FlipFlops/Glves	<input type="checkbox"/> Gas Grill
<input type="checkbox"/> Big Folding Table	<input type="checkbox"/> Small Folding Tables	<input type="checkbox"/> Slat Table	<input type="checkbox"/> Shade Umbrella
<input type="checkbox"/> Camp Chairs	<input type="checkbox"/> Recliners	<input type="checkbox"/> Hoses (White/Green)	<input type="checkbox"/> Ladder
<input type="checkbox"/> Cellphone Antenna	<input type="checkbox"/> Antenna Poles	<input type="checkbox"/> Big Ext Cord	<input type="checkbox"/> Shovel
<input type="checkbox"/> Portable Light	<input type="checkbox"/> Kneeling Pad	<input type="checkbox"/> Wash Brush on Pole	<input type="checkbox"/> Torque Wrench
<input type="checkbox"/> Door Mat	<input type="checkbox"/> Grill Thermometer	<input type="checkbox"/> Fire Tongs	<input type="checkbox"/> Hand Towel

### (Denny) Inside Trailer-Personal stuff, etc.

CPAP Mach/Water       Razor       Phone Chrgrs/Cabls       Batteries  
 Notepad-5x7/Clipbrd       Camp Review Shts       Movies (USB)  
 Computers/chrgers       Backups/Images       Ext & USB drives

### (Fay) Truck Cab

Coffee Mugs       Small Ice Chest       Ice       Snacks

### (Fay) Inside Trailer-Personal stuff, etc.

<input type="checkbox"/> Clothes	<input type="checkbox"/> Shower Gown	<input type="checkbox"/> Medicines	<input type="checkbox"/> Cash
<input type="checkbox"/> Toothbrushes/paste	<input type="checkbox"/> Bath Soap/Shampoo	<input type="checkbox"/> Handsoap	<input type="checkbox"/> Toilet Paper
<input type="checkbox"/> Laundry Deter/Soft	<input type="checkbox"/> Dish Soap	<input type="checkbox"/> Paper Towels	<input type="checkbox"/> Foil
<input type="checkbox"/> First Aid Kit	<input type="checkbox"/> Outside Towel	<input type="checkbox"/> Baggies	<input type="checkbox"/> Rags
<input type="checkbox"/> Spare Glasses	<input type="checkbox"/> Heating Pad	<input type="checkbox"/> Passports	

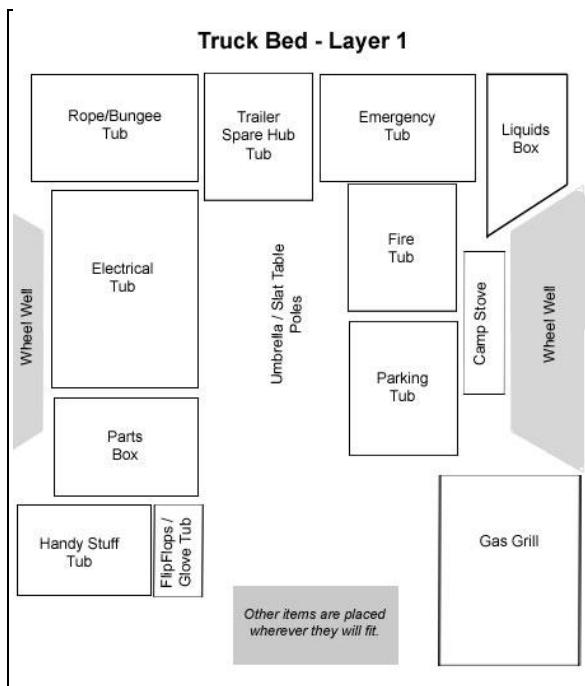
### (Fay) Inside Trailer-Food Related

<input type="checkbox"/> Drinking Water	<input type="checkbox"/> Coffee	<input type="checkbox"/> Sugar	<input type="checkbox"/> Cream
<input type="checkbox"/> Milk	<input type="checkbox"/> OJ	<input type="checkbox"/> Breakfast Stuff	<input type="checkbox"/> Lemon
<input type="checkbox"/> BBQ Sauce	<input type="checkbox"/> Hot Sauce	<input type="checkbox"/> Salad Dressing	<input type="checkbox"/> Oil
<input type="checkbox"/> Coffee Makers	<input type="checkbox"/> Coffee Bean Grinder	<input type="checkbox"/> Skillet	

### (Fay) Other

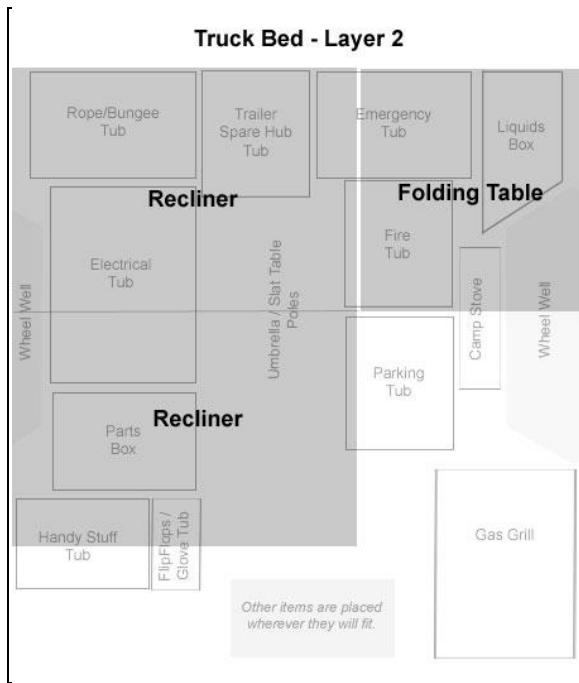
### (Denny) Other

## Loading the Truck Bed



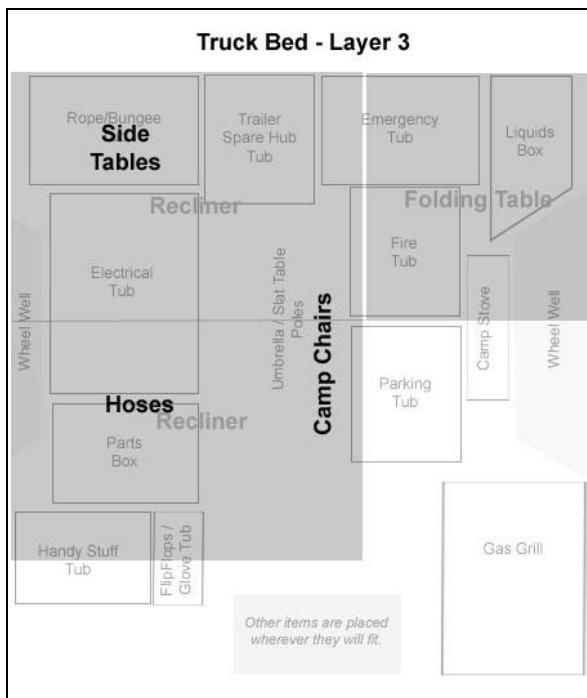
**Truck Bed: Layer 1**

## Loading the Truck Bed



**Truck Bed: Layer 2**

## Loading the Truck Bed



**Truck Bed: Layer 3**

## Loading the Truck Bed



**Tub: Handy Stuff**



**Box: Liquids**

## **CHECKLIST 2: Before and After Travel Checklist**

This checklist lists the things we check each day before we start travel and after we stop. It includes setting up when we arrive at the campground and packing up when we leave.

NOTE: Not all items are needed each time. We generally put a checkmark in those we complete, and an X in those we are skipping. It helps us make sure we don't just overlook something.

## APPENDIX – Checklists – 2: Before and After Travel Checklist

### Before Travel

- Tires-Air-truck:35 lbs Trlr:65 lbs (ch spare)
- Water Heater turned off
- Water in fresh water tank?
- Water Hose/Power cord stowed
- TV & Phone antenna & cables stowed
- Window/blinds closed, lock drawers/doors
- Roof vents closed
- Open/Close propane tanks as appropriate
- Fridge on LP (verify) or off
- Stabilizer jacks up

### Getting ready to tow

- Front wheel chocks move 1" forward
- Trailer coupler hitched
- Adj jack for very little weight on hitch
- WDH Triangle Plate installed
- WDH Chains tensioned (L-10/R-9 turns)
- Front jack raised all the way
- Pack jack stand/wood block
- Safety Chains, Breakaway sw, Trlr elec plug
- Verify brake light and turn signals
- Wheel chocks removed
- Final look inside and out, step up, lock door
- Test trailer brakes / adjust controller

### Setup-Full

- Level trailer side to side
- Chock wheels
- Adj jack for very little weight on the hitch
- Remove WDH
- Remove elec plug, breakaway/chains
- Unlock trailer coupler & move truck forward
- Level trailer front to rear
- Stabilizer jacks down

### Check A/C with tester

- Connect surge suppressor and power cord
- Fridge on A/C (verify)
- Turn off gas at tank (if not needed)
- Hookup water (Y > pres reg > hose > filter)
- Make sure all gas appliances are off
- Light hot water heater (full of water)
- Spray for bugs
- Install TV (or cable) and phone antennas

### Setup-OVERNIGHT

- Park as level as possible
- Adj jack to take some weight off hitch
- Stabilizer jacks down
- Check A/C with tester
- Connect surge suppressor and power cord
- Fridge on A/C (verify)
- Hookup water (Y > pres reg > hose > filter)  
[- OR -] Gallon jug of water for flushing toilet
- Open/Close propane tanks as appropriate
- Spray for bugs
- Install TV (or cable) and Phone Antenna

### Before Travel after Overnight

- Water heater turned off
- Water in fresh water tank (1½" per shower)
- Water hose/Power cord stowed
- TV antenna/cable stowed
- Windows/blinds closed, lock drawers/doors
- Roof vents closed
- Fridge on LP or off
- Stabilizer jacks up
- Front jack raised all the way
- Verify brake light and turn signals
- Final look inside and out, step up, lock door

### Before Trip

- Charge trailer battery
- Install Water heater anode
- LugNuts (13/16) Trailer:100/Truck:113)
- Clean/Lub Hitch ball/coupler

### Before Trip - Things at home

- Turn off water to house
- Turn off water heater
- Put A/C & Heat on vacation mode
- Setup lights on timers
- Stop mail delivery
- Let neighbors know we'll be gone

### After Trip

- Drain greywater if any remains
- Remove water heater anode
- Clean grill

## **CHECKLIST 3: To-Do List**

I keep this as an ongoing document of things to do related to traveling with our Casita. I print it off before we start on a trip and hang it on a clipboard inside the trailer. I then add things I come up with all along the trip. When I get back home, it goes on my workbench in the garage until I get needed tasks completed. Before a new trip, I update the master copy on the computer with any new items I've come up with, then print off a new one to take along with us in the trailer.

## APPENDIX – Checklists – 3: To Do List

### ToDo

	NOTES

### Buy/Put in Trailer

	NOTES

## The tinyTowable.com Website

Tons of additional helpful information from Denny



[www.tinytowable.com](http://www.tinytowable.com)



Articles by Denny related to Small Travel Trailers



A great list of products that work well for us.



Photos & our notes about campgrounds we have visited



Drop Denny a note if you have questions

Click any of the images above to discover all the helpful information on the tinyTowable website

## The tinyTowable Facebook Groups

The way to connect up with others with similar interests



**Small Travel Trailers  
Nothing but Trailers**

By...  
**tinyTOWABLE**

### Small Travel Trailers- Nothing but Trailers

A large group with tons of posts all about small travel trailers. The perfect place to ask questions about trailers and learn from others.



**Small Travel Trailers  
The Club**

By...  
**tinyTOWABLE**

### Small Travel Trailers Club

This newer group is a place to socialize about small travel trailers and traveling with them. It's growing rapidly with members sharing stories, experiences and questions about camping.



**Campgrounds - Trailers  
and RVs**

Reviews and Information  
about places to stay

Sponsored by:  
**tinyTOWABLE**

### Campgrounds - Trailers and RVs

Loaded with nothing but posts about places to stay. The best place on Facebook to discover new campgrounds and tell others about good ones you've found

## APPENDIX -Videos

### Videos

A few things to check out on YouTube that may be helpful.

Here are a few videos that were helpful clarifying things for us when we were first getting started.

[Simplify Hitching Up Your Trailer](#)

[Simplify Backing Up Your Trailer](#)

[The Extreme Risk of Sway](#)

[The Importance of Properly Loading Your Trailer to Avoid Sway](#)

[Selecting Toilet Paper for an RV](#)

[Cleaning the Sewer Storage Tanks](#)

[Water Heater Anode Rods](#)

[Adjusting Your Trailer Hitch Coupler](#)

## About Denny Johnson - the Author



### We love traveling with small travel trailers!

My wife Fay and I spent most of our adult life in Orlando, FL, but moved to Knoxville, TN in 2020. We really enjoy road trips and staying in campgrounds, while trying to



keep it as simple as we can, thus our passion for small travel trailers. We also love meeting people along the way and always enjoy sharing experiences with them.

### Easing into retirement

I have owned a small software development and computer services company for over 30 years (<https://softrite.com>). My clients have always depended upon me to be available when they ran into problems. I knew that retiring wouldn't happen overnight. So in 2014, I decided to start winding things down and began moving away from work that required me to be available all the time to solve customer problems as they arise.

Having spent my life with software and computers, I decided that building some websites of my own and learning how to market them would be a great new direction for my company during retirement. Combining that with a love for small travel trailers, led me to creating tinyTowable with the Beginner's Guide, Campground Reviews, and lots of blog articles.

### More about me

To learn more about me and my background, please checkout one of my other websites: <https://dennyware.com>