

Living in Your RV

When you get an RV, you will live in it for some period of time. It could be on weekends—out on Friday evening and back on Sunday—doing this, you will sleep two nights in the RV. It could be for the annual two-week vacation. Or maybe you will stay in it for a few months like the classic “snowbird” that leaves the north during cold weather and returns when it warms up. The ultimate option is that you could



“fulltime” and use your RV as a full-time residence year-round. Lots of fulltimers have sold their traditional house to live and travel full time in their RV.

However you use (or plan to use) your RV, you always live in it for some period of time—from a couple of nights to several years. So, if you are staying somewhere temporarily (such as your RV), your daily actions are a bit different. That is, your actions (those things you do daily—showers, eating, watching TV, sleeping, etc.) at your “home” are always different than if you were in a hotel, for example.

Behavior

Probably the most important characteristic for RVing with another person is that you get along—really well. Living in an RV, it is difficult to not be physically close to the other person virtually all the time. The joke is that if you burp, someone is always close enough to hear it. The longer you plan to stay in the RV with the other person will have an effect on both of your behaviors.

Moving from a house into an RV—even a large RV for a short period of time—requires some change in daily behavior for everyone involved. For example, you just cannot create piles of stuff in the RV—there isn’t that much floor space. Dirty laundry has to be put away someplace or you will trip over it—there simply isn’t room to drop

it on the floor and walk around it. Your surface area and work-space on the various counters is extremely limited.

Doing this, i.e., living in this fashion, is not hard and you don't have to deprive yourself of anything. However, you will have less of everything with you—clothing, food, tools, etc. That's good.

We live very well while fulltiming— we both believe our quality of life is better than when we lived in our house. We live like this with a lesser volume of stuff than we had before—in our house. Please note that we did not start our fulltiming lifestyle to deprive ourselves of anything. We started it to live (what we consider to be) normally but with the option to travel easily and constantly.

Comfort Zone

Your family and friends will always be thinking that you are living out of some vehicle while you will be thinking that you are living in your home. After all, you sit in your favorite chair, know what is in every drawer, have your TV programmed, sleep in your own bed, know how and when those bed linens were laundered, and know what is in the fridge. Is that different from your housebound friends—of course not. What is different is that you have the rare but wonderful opportunity to wake up to whatever scenery you want—mountains, the beach, a desert, your child's back yard, and whatever temperature or climate you want (within reason). For example, we don't do snow, period, and have also managed to also avoid those Texas summers. So, consider this... *You are at home in your RV but your RV is not at home.*

Food and Eating in the RV

While the average RVer does not spend as much time in the RV galley as they do in a normal kitchen in their house, without question, an RV galley is important. At minimum, eating in more often will cut costs to help you compensate for other expenses. It is the kitchen where you can easily "remind" yourself of living in a house. You can prepare nearly all your favorite recipes. You will find, however, that guests in your RV will typically not gather in the kitchen/ galley area like they seem to naturally do in a house. There just isn't room.

Planning and packing an RV kitchen/galley consists of dealing with a minimum amount of a variety of food. We are not suggesting you skimp on what you take with you and want you to feel comfortable in your food selection. Simply stated, you will have to reduce the quantity of uncooked and packaged food you buy, you may need to reduce the variety you typically stored at home, and the volume you occasionally prepared. Also, just like the food you use for preparing a meal, you likely will not have room for lots of leftovers in an RV.

In our house, we had lots of canned and packaged goods in our pantry. We purchased in bulk, used one of those vacuum-sealing machines to repack some of those bulk purchases, and shopped what we thought was normally.

To fit this into our RV, we first sorted out those canned and packaged foods used for our favorite recipes. From that, we packed a minimum number of items in the RV. For example, we have a favorite recipe that calls for one can of cream of chicken soup and we have this meal maybe once per month. So, we took just one can of that soup with us in the RV.

On the road, when we cook that recipe, we put cream of chicken soup on our shopping list to replace the one we just used. This works great.

Note that we replace the can **on the next shopping trip after we use it**. We do not wait until we are ready to prepare that recipe again and then have to go get the can of soup. Replacing foods immediately gives us more flexibility in the variety of meals we can prepare with food stored on board. Doing this also provides us with the ability to stop more places since we are not dependent on having to be someplace where we can purchase groceries locally.

Another unusual advantage to food-shopping in this manner is that we keep a full supply of canned goods with us and, therefore, can prepare a variety of (our favorite) meals at any given time. One little known advantage to carrying a full supply of canned goods is that since they are packed more closely, it helps prevent them bouncing and rattling around while we are driving over bumpy roads.

Sales and Overbuying

Don't fall into the "sale" trap at the grocery. After all, (staying with our recipe example), we need one can of cream of chicken soup each month. So, when shopping for groceries, I may see cream of chicken soup on sale for 6 cans for \$1.00. What a deal! But I do not buy it. First, they will usually sell me the one can and prorate the price—so I get the sale price on one can. Second, I just can't easily store six cans of soup.

One trick to prevent overbuying is to make your grocery list and put amounts on it. For example, rather than just listing "chicken soup" on the grocery list, put "1 can chicken soup" on it. Doing so will help prevent you from overbuying—regardless of that great sale price! Additionally, overbuying when living in an RV causes unusual problems—where do you put it when you get back to the coach? We have seen RVers with food (canned and packaged goods) stored under the couch, over the bed, in the bathroom cabinets, in the shower, and even in their tow car! So the rule is: Don't buy it if it's not on the list.

Suppose you run across a wonderful-sounding recipe (maybe in a magazine) that you insist on trying. Okay, now purchase the required ingredients just before trying it. You won't need to purchase way ahead and then try to store them in your RV for weeks or months prior to trying the recipe.

Ultimately, to disperse the large quantity of leftover canned and packaged goods from our house in preparation for fulltiming, we told our (grown) family to help themselves. When we returned for a visit a few months later, they had gone through everything (in our storage area) and from what was left, we took some more with us, tossed it (too old), or gave away the rest to a food bank.

Corralling Canned Goods

A great way to "corral" those canned goods in your RV is to use lids from copy-paper boxes to organize and store your canned goods in cabinets. The free lids are available at nearly every printer or copy shop. Slide the box lid into a pantry and it acts like a drawer. If your pantry shelf happens to be above your washer/dryer (as found in many motorhomes), two lids will fit side-by-side, i.e., two drawers.

Storing your canned goods in this manner will buffer them while driving. They won't bounce around and beat up your shelf. One major advantage to doing this is that with the poor lighting way back, inside most RV cabinets, you can simply grasp the box lid and pull it toward you like a drawer. You will be able to see and check your inventory in the rear.



If you are a weekender or part-timer, use the lids to carry canned goods to and from the house when packing/unpacking.

If you don't like the looks of the lids, put some decorative contact paper on them.

Easy Living

Living in your RV is not difficult but it is a bit different from living in a house. The joke is that in the RV, you no longer have to take 20 steps to get to the bathroom! Yes, you will have to change your lifestyle a bit but I really believe you will find it easy to do and lots more fun.