

California Restricted Routes

Headed to California? If so, you should know that the state has identified “restricted” routes for large motorhomes—yes, motorhomes—40–45’ in length). The good news is that you can trust their information. I now know this from experience. We had no idea that restricted routes existed and actually stumbled onto one of them a few years ago while driving our 42’ Monaco Dynasty and towing our Saturn Vue (Total length: 63’).

You will definitely want to read my article entitled, *“The Absolute Toughest Drive I Ever Drove.”* You won’t want to make the mistake we did and that’s the purpose of this article. Trust this information...

California Definitions

California defines the restricted routes based on their definition of “Over-Length Motorhome” as shown below. This information was taken directly from their website...

Over-Length Motorhome: An over-length motorhome is a single-unit motorhome that is longer than 40 feet but not more than 45 feet. (Note: A vehicle combination, e.g. a motorhome towing a vehicle or trailer, may be up to 65 feet length. If the single-unit motorhome is 40 feet or less in length, the combination is not subject to the over-length motorhome restrictions.)

<http://www.dot.ca.gov/hq/traffops/trucks/bus-mh/45-motorhomes.htm>

Finding Restricted Routes

The California website identifies the restricted routes in two ways. First, there are maps you can download. These are not detailed highway maps but designed to illustrate where the routes are located and the restrictions. You can find their map page here...

<http://www.dot.ca.gov/hq/traffops/trucks/bus-mh/45-bus-map.htm>

Second, they have posted a list of restricted routes but the bad news is that it is organized by county thus making the routes harder to find for those of us that travel. The good news is they describe in detail the restricted route. If you can locate the respective county, you get good information. This list is posted here...

<http://www.dot.ca.gov/hq/traffops/trucks/bus-mh/45-bus-restrict.htm>

Take My Advice...

While I only have experience with one of these restricted routes, I truly believe that the rest should be avoided—I know I have avoided them since my original experience. California was right on the money with their advice.

I also believe that California was very liberal in starting the motorhome length at 40 feet. I absolutely recommend that no motorhome over 36' be taken on these routes. My reasons? Other drivers, big log trucks, fog, and switchbacks—you have no control whatsoever over any of them and your gazillion miles of driving experience on the Interstate highways is no help at all. Sorry!

Towables... have not been mentioned here because California does not mention them specifically in the information I found. However, my guess is that a towable (travel trailer or fifth-wheel **plus** tow vehicle) with a maximum total length of 35 feet might be able to negotiate these routes safely. Please note that this is not blatant permission but my guess only. If you have a towable, do your research, carefully.

You don't want to scratch your coach so take my advice... if you are in a true "big rig" stay off these routes and don't forget to read "*The Absolute Toughest Drive I Ever Drove.*"