



# RV PARK ETIQUETTE

THE TOP 10 INFRACTIONS | by DALE MYERS

I'm sure you've been there, or perhaps you're one of the guilty ones: It's late, you're trying to relax or sleep after a long drive to your favorite RV park and someone pulls into the site next to you and cranks up their television, shattering your tranquility.

Campground etiquette can at times be subjective and flexible, but there are hard and fast rules by which every RVer should abide. And while the general cost of living gets higher, more people than ever are turning to RVing and camping as leisure activities, crowding already crowded RV parks and campgrounds. For more insight on campground etiquette we talked to Jim Rogers, chairman and CEO of Campgrounds of America (KOA), which has nearly 500 campgrounds and is the largest network of franchised family campgrounds in the world. The following 10

do nots are a guideline to campground manners.

## 1. DON'T ADD TO NOISE POLLUTION

I'm sure different campers' No. 1 complaints vary, depending on whether you're boondocking or staying at an RV park, but everyone has to agree that noise pollution in a quiet setting affects everyone. Whether staying at RV parks or primitive campgrounds, contributors of noise pollution can include partying too late, watching a sporting event like a NASCAR race on your TV at an ear-shattering volume, allowing your diesel to idle too long, barking dogs, loud children or firing up a generator at a less-than-timely hour.

"There's a time to run your generator, but you need to be sensitive to your neighbor," says Rogers. "Noise after quiet hours is offensive."

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## **2. DON'T STEAL A SITE**

First come, first served. This cliché applies to RV park etiquette as well. If a site is marked, it is already occupied. It is never OK to set markers aside and move in. Just try to imagine if you drove long and hard to get to the park but then had to leave for a while to pick up supplies, only to come back and find someone else had moved in on your turf.

Every RVer likes his or her site to face the river or ocean and stay at a site with a great view or close proximity to the park's amenities, but if one is not available and you end up by the bathrooms or dump station, it's no excuse to steal an absentee visitor's enviable spot.

## **3. DON'T ENCROACH ON OTHER CAMPERS' SPACE**

Let's say you are relaxing outside with your family and are about to eat dinner while enjoying the peacefulness of the outdoors, or you are smuggling up to your significant other while enjoying a star-filled evening only to have a family of five come traipsing across your site with a surly dog in tow, destroying the serenity you were so thoroughly enjoying.

Unless invited, never take a shortcut across another RVer's site. A big part of RVing means getting away from it all, including you. Take the park's established pathway as there is no rush. Also, keep your vehicles out of the roadway.



## **4. DON'T ALLOW YOUR PETS TO ROAM WILD**

Unless they are in designated pet areas, your animals should always be on a leash when in an RV park or campground. For some, a howling animal, whether it's wild or domestic, is like firing nails on a chalkboard. Most people love dogs, but

there's always someone who does not — especially if you don't clean up after it.

Although KOA is pet-friendly, Rogers thinks the biggest infraction is not cleaning up after your pet. "It's absolutely rude," he says. However, "We take dogs, we love dogs," he added. "Fifty-four percent of our campers have pets."

## **5. DON'T ALLOW YOUR CHILDREN TO RUN WILD**

The same rules that apply to pets apply to children. And, once again, most people love children, but there are those who don't and don't want to hear them. But RV parks are a place for the family, and ensuring your children and grandchildren are well-behaved and supervised goes a long way.

"The more (kids) the better," says Rogers. "We are a family business." Rogers says that about one-third of KOA visitors travel with children during the peak camping season. "We've always been a family campground," added Rogers, an avid RVer who owns a 42-foot Beaver motorcoach and travels with his wife, Sandy, and their dog.

## **6. DON'T USE YOUR SITE AS A REPAIR SHOP**

Nobody will fault you for cleaning the bugs off your windshield or checking tire pressures in the morning, but your campsite is no place to break out the toolbox for some heavy wrenching. And if you must wash your RV, check with the park host to see if they have a space set aside for such excessive wetness. Nobody wants to camp in your mud.

## **7. DON'T TRASH YOUR SITE**

Do you leave trash on your front lawn at home? Of course not, and neither should you at your site. (If you do maybe you should stay away from parks and campgrounds altogether.) A neat and orderly site is a must for you, your fellow RVers and Mother Nature. The great outdoors is a gift for all to enjoy, and polluting it is a crime. The next person to occupy your site, after having to set up their rig, does not want to clean up your mess — especially after a long day of driving.

"You should always leave the campsite better than you find it," says Rogers.

## **8. DON'T THROW NONFLAMMABLE ITEMS INTO THE FIRE OR CUT DOWN TREES FOR PERSONAL USE**

You should never leave items in a campfire or grill that do not burn and just end up as garbage, including bottles, aluminum cans, aluminum foil and cigarettes. Plastic bottles release toxins while burning and glass bottles can explode in a fire. And



if you smoke, always pick up your butts and put them in the trash. Also, bring your own firewood or buy it from the campground, most of which sell their own. Trees are our friends, so please try and save as many as humanly possible.

#### 9. DON'T LEAVE YOUR LIGHT ON ALL NIGHT

Although you are a happy camper and sound asleep, the light from your motor-home's porch may be depriving your neighbors of sleep. Even if it's unintentional, sleep-deprivation is a form of torture. "People are sensitive to lights," says Rogers.

#### 10. DON'T DUMP WASTE WATER ON THE GROUND

It seems like a no-brainer, but some people believe dumping is good for the grass; however, your dump water can contain contaminants that can be transferred to anyone that treads on tainted ground. It's simple: Gray and black water belong only



in a dump station. I'm sure you wouldn't want to trod on someone else's waste, so don't make them trod on yours.

According to Rogers, one of the reasons KOA has been in business for 46 years is its reputation for consistency. "We're clean, friendly and fun," he says. So with consistent campground etiquette and a little effort, you can make yours and your fellow RVers' outdoor experiences more pleasant for generations to come. "Etiquette encompasses the spirit of camping," says Rogers. ♦