

Search Outside of Small Desert Communities for Boondocking Campsites

By Bob Difley
January 2012



Most of the land in the southwestern deserts, if not occupied with cities and towns, is part of the 253 million acres--about one-eighth of the nation's entire land mass--managed by the Federal Government's Bureau of Land Management (BLM).

You can boondock free, or very cheap, on BLM land, and even though most boondockers seldom camp outside of designated camping areas, such as the Long Term Visitor Areas (LTVA) or defined dispersed camping areas, that leaves millions of acres where you can camp free.

The question is how to find these camping areas. You are likely not going to find a published list of campsites unless there is a BLM office nearby. Try this method, especially if you don't like being too far out in the lonesome desert. Search around the many smaller towns that dot the desert. Most of the land surrounding the town will be BLM land and many of the local folk use these surrounding acres for their own camping trips.

Drive on the local streets of these towns until you reach the end and you will often find a dirt road that continues on into BLM land. Follow these roads and you should find campsites scattered along the way. You can also check in with the police or local chamber of commerce or tourist bureau, if the town is large enough to have one, and ask about BLM dispersed camping areas, or stop a local driving an RV and ask.

You will find in most cases--if you look reasonably reputable--that the locals will be very helpful. After all, you are bringing money to spend in their town at grocery stores, restaurants, and other retail establishments. Make an effort to learn the local history and culture and be sure to complement those you meet on their town and you will discover a lot of new, helpful--and uniquely interesting (look at where they live)--friends.