

These Tips for Desert Boondocking will Keep You out of Trouble

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Most boondockers know about the BLM's Long Term Visitor Areas (LTVA) near popular snowbird locations in Southern California and Arizona.

But boondocking is also permitted on most BLM land, even if it is not a designated camping or dispersed camping area.

The rule as it now exists--and that may be changing--allows you to

camp/boondock anywhere on BLM land unless expressly prohibited by signs or fences.

But that doesn't mean you can just go tearing off across the desert mowing down cacti and smashing wildlife burrows--not that too many RVers would do that in their expensive rigs.

To keep the rangers off your back, and to set a good example for RVers and RVing in general, follow these common sense tips--not only to avoid trouble with authorities but also to keep yourself out of trouble.

- Drive only on established roads
- If a road looks like it is not maintained or well used, best to avoid it rather than to get stuck a mile or so in.
- If in doubt, walk or bicycle or drive your tow or toad in to check the condition of the road and see if there are any suitable campsites.
- Camp only in campsites that have been used before.
- Before turning in to a campsite, walk it and check for a solid surface, like like desert pavement or hard packed dirt.
- Be very wary of driving through dry washes where the sand could be very soft and deep. You don't want to get stuck.
- Try to find campsites as far off the access road as possible to avoid dust from others driving by. Close your windows on the road side of the campsite to avoid dust blowing in.
- Don't crowd other boondockers even if the campsite is large enough for both of you. Most boondockers don't want to be that close to others--unless you're invited. There are plenty of other campsites.

- Walk the campsite and pick up any trash, cigarette butts, etc. when you arrive and before you leave--even if you aren't responsible for the trash. Always leave the campsite cleaner than you found it.
- Do not dump your waste tanks on the ground.
- If you throw out your dishwashing water, carry it away from the campsite and dump it on a thirsty plant. And make sure you wipe food off your plates first before washing so you don't have food bits in your wash water, which when dumped will attract rodents and other unwanted visitors.
- Don't burn unburnable items in your campfire, like soda cans, plastic, etc. Anything unburned should be carried out with the rest of your trash and disposed of properly.
- Camping on BLM open desert land is free, but you may only stay a maximum of 14 days, then you have to move at least 25 miles away and you cannot return to that same area for another 14 days. If a ranger finds you have overstayed your time limit, you could get a ticket.