



# The Complete RV Checklist

Pre-Trip · On-Site · Post-Trip

*Every RV is different. Not every item in this checklist applies to every rig, every trip, or every site. Use it as a starting point and adjust for your specific RV, your hookup situation, and the way you travel. The discipline of running through it matters more than perfect compliance with someone else's list.*



# Pre-Departure Checklist

*Everything to verify before you turn the key.*

## Tires (do first)

- Check air pressure on every tire including the spare. Cold pressure, against the data plate, not the sidewall.
- Inspect each tire visually: cracks, bulges, embedded objects, uneven wear.
- Check tire age via the DOT date code. Replace at 6 to 10 years regardless of tread.
- Check tread depth (quarter test, at minimum).
- Verify lug nuts are tight (torque wrench if available).
- If you have a TPMS, confirm it's reading all sensors with no warnings.
- Confirm wheel chocks and leveling blocks are in their storage location.

## Exterior walkaround

- Visual scan of the roof for damage, lifted seals, or debris.
- All exterior compartments closed and latched.
- Steps retracted.
- TV antenna is down. (Hit a tree once, never forget.)
- Awning fully retracted with the lock pin engaged.
- Slide-outs fully retracted.
- All roof vents closed, including the bathroom vent fan.
- Exterior lights work: marker, brake, turn signals, license plate.
- Hitch or tow bar verified: pin, safety chains, breakaway switch, sway/weight-distribution hardware seated.
- 7-pin trailer plug seated; lights and brakes responding through it.

## Mechanical readiness

- Engine oil, coolant, power steering, brake fluid (motorhomes).
- Transmission fluid (consult your manual for the right check procedure).
- DEF level (diesel motorhomes).
- Fuel level. Plan your fuel stops in advance.
- Battery connected, disconnect switch in the right position.
- House batteries charged. ~12.6V at rest for a fully-charged 12V system.
- Rearview and side mirrors adjusted before pulling out.



# Pre-Departure Checklist

*Continued.*

## Propane system

- Tanks or cylinders filled to the level you need.
- Regulator and visible lines visually inspected for damage or corrosion.
- If anything seems off, soapy water test on connections before travel.

## Interior systems

- Refrigerator pre-cooled at least 12 hours before loading food.
- Refrigerator operating in your travel mode (12V DC, propane, or as your rig uses).
- Refrigerator door travel latch engaged.
- Air conditioner runs (if you'll need it).
- Water pump runs; fresh water tank at the level you need.
- Toilet flushes; black tank flush water available.
- LP-and-CO detector and smoke alarm tested via test button.
- Fire extinguisher present, charged (gauge in green), accessible.
- Cabinet latches and refrigerator door catches engaged.

## Loading and securement

- Weight distribution: heavy items low and centered.
- Loose items in cabinets secured (shelf liners, foam blocks, latches).
- Zip ties on board (cabinets, hoses, temporary fixes).
- TV secured to its bracket; antenna cable disconnected for travel.
- Awning rod, sewer hose, water hose, exterior gear all stowed.
- Anything in sink or shower can't shift and activate the faucet.

## Final readiness

- Route, fuel stops, and destination contact info confirmed. RV-specific GPS data current.
- Reservation confirmed at destination if required.
- Propane tank valve closed for travel (safer default; required in many tunnels and when fueling).
- Pets secured in the tow vehicle or motorhome with appropriate restraints. (Towables should not be occupied during travel.)
- Final walk-around. One loop around the rig before you turn the key.



# Arrival at Campsite

*The setup sequence that makes the rest of the trip work.*

## Position and verify before committing

- Position the rig where you want it before doing anything else.
- Verify your power cord, water hose, and sewer hose will all reach.
- Verify room for steps to deploy (no bushes, rocks, uneven ground).
- Verify room for slides to extend on both sides (trees, picnic tables, fire pits).
- Test the pedestal: outlet tester or surge protector lights, water flowing at the spigot.

## Level

- Verify rig is level enough for the refrigerator (within  $\sim 3^\circ$  for absorption units).
- Deploy leveling blocks or use the integrated leveling system.
- Chock the wheels before disconnecting from the tow vehicle (trailers).

## Utilities

- Shore power: use an EMS (Energy Management System) at every pedestal, not just a basic surge protector.
- Water: connect with a pressure regulator (40–50 PSI) at the spigot.
- Sewer hose connected; verify it's sealed and going to the right outlet.
- Keep the black tank valve closed even on full hookups. Fill to  $\sim 2/3$ , then dump all at once to avoid the pyramid.

## Setup

- Extend slides slowly with a spotter watching for obstructions. The spotter bangs on the side if something is about to hit.
- Deploy awning if conditions allow (retract if wind  $> \sim 20$  mph or you're leaving the site).
- Deploy steps.
- Outdoor gear set up: mat, chairs, table, grill location.
- Tire covers deployed if staying multiple days (UV ages tires faster than miles).

## Final arrival checks

- Refrigerator cooling correctly now that the rig is level.
- AC or heat running if needed.
- Water heater set to propane, electric, or both as you prefer.
- Fresh water tank filling if you need it for offgrid use.



# During the Trip

*Daily checks and the habit that saves you.*

## Daily checks

- Walk around the rig once a day. Look for leaks, tire condition, slide status.
- Empty grey and black tanks before they hit ~2/3 full.
- Refill fresh water tank as needed.
- Check propane levels.
- Shut off water at the spigot whenever you leave the campsite. Flood prevention.

## Weather awareness

- Retract the awning if wind picks up.
- Move outdoor gear inside if storms are coming.
- Hail risk in your area? Consider covered parking when possible.

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## The Walk-Around Rule

*Every experienced RV owner does a walk-around before they drive the rig, every single time, no exceptions. The walk-around catches what every other step missed: stairs still down, chocks still under the wheel, awning not locked, compartment cracked open, antenna up, sewer hose still connected, mirrors knocked out of position. Look under the rig too. Check suspension, springs, axles, and the area around the tires for fluid drips or anything that wasn't there yesterday. If you have a travel partner, both of you walk it independently. What one misses, the other catches.*



# Departure from Campsite

*Breaking down without leaving things behind.*

## Internal

- All interior items secured: cabinet latches, fridge door, microwave latch, drawer latches, TV.
- Items in sink or shower can't shift and activate the faucet.
- Water pump OFF (critical; prevents flooding from a leak or vibrated-open faucet).
- Refrigerator switched to travel mode if needed.
- Water heater off if traveling without it.
- All roof vents closed (the most commonly forgotten item).

## External

- Black tank dumped first, then grey (grey water rinses the sewer hose).
- Sewer hose stowed cleanly. Don't use the fresh water tap to rinse. NEVER use a picnic table as a temporary hose holder. Cap all sewer connections.
- Water hose drained, then coiled and stowed.
- Power cord stowed.
- Slides retracted; verify visually.
- Awning retracted with lock pin engaged.
- Steps retracted.
- Exterior gear stowed: chairs, mat, grill, tire covers, leveling blocks.
- All exterior compartments closed and latched.

## Departure prep

- Quick tire and hitch re-check before turning the key.
- Pull test (trailers): slow forward pull with brakes engaged to verify the hitch is fully captured. Catches unhitched trailers and dropped fifth-wheel nose before highway speed.
- Mirrors re-checked; bumped or knocked out of position during the stay.
- Exterior lights work.
- Door closed and latched.
- Walk-around. Both partners, if you have one.



# Post-Trip & Long-Term

*What you do when you get home matters more than people think.*

## Within 24 hours of return

- Empty fresh water tank (or sanitize if using again within a week).
- Flush and drain water heater if parked more than a few weeks.
- Dump and rinse grey and black tanks thoroughly.
- Wash the exterior (bug residue, sap, road grime damage paint if left).
- Wipe down interior. Empty refrigerator. Remove perishables.

## Within a week of return

- Inspect tires: pressure, new damage, monitor against specs.
- Inspect roof. Small leaks often develop from travel vibration.
- Inspect all slide seals.
- Charge or check house batteries. Consider a maintainer for longer storage.

## Within a month of return

- Service any systems that flagged during the trip.
- Update your maintenance log.

## Long-term tracking (calendar-based, not per-trip)

- Roof inspection and resealing: at least annually.
- Tire age: track DOT date codes; replace at 6–10 years.
- Battery maintenance: electrolyte, terminals, voltage.
- Propane regulator: replace per manufacturer (typically 10–15 years).
- Smoke, LP, CO detectors: replace per date stamp (typically 5–10 years).
- Generator service: oil, plugs, air filter, monthly exercise.
- Wheel bearings: repack per axle manufacturer's schedule.
- Water heater anode rod (Suburban only): inspect annually, replace as needed.

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*RVKeeper tracks the long-interval items above for your specific rig. Setup walks you through the actual brand and model of your water heater, fridge, slide motor, and other components, then builds a maintenance schedule that matches what you actually own instead of what's typical for your model. The Essentials Plan is free forever. [rvkeeper.app](https://rvkeeper.app)*