

Off-the-Grid Living: Truck Camping as a Survivalist Retreat for Retirees

Living the survivalist lifestyle means that you are fully prepared for any eventuality. This means you've spent countless hours creating shelters, storing food, and rigging up backup generators in case the [grid goes down](#).

However, all this preparation can take a toll on your mental health and deplete your energy reserves. Being on high alert 24/7 is innately stressful and it's easy to become obsessed over breaking news stories.

If it's been a while since you last took a vacation, consider an off-the-grid truck camping trip. Going off-grid for a few weeks can recharge your batteries and hone your survivalist skills in the great outdoors. This is particularly powerful if you've recently retired and need some time to rediscover yourself after leaving your career.

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Preparing Your Truck

If you want to go car camping, you'll need to ensure that your truck is up to spec before hitting the road. Vehicle maintenance is a core skill for survivalists, too, as a well-maintained vehicle will serve you well in the event of a disaster. Get started by covering the [basics of vehicle maintenance](#), including:

- Fluids: Let your engine cool, then use the dipstick to check your oil level. You can also check your power steering, coolant level, and windshield washer fluid. This will keep your car running smoother for longer.
- Air Filter: Many owners overlook the importance of changing the air filter. Switch yours out every 12 months or 12,000 miles to keep your engine healthier for longer.
- Tires: Tires need at least 1.6mm of tread. However, truck tires will need a little more tread as you'll be pulling significant weight through muddy roads.
- Spark Plugs: You don't want to get out into the wilderness only to find your car won't fire up. Changing spark plugs should be a quick job that should be completed once every 30,000 miles.

You know your truck better than anyone else. Don't leave maintenance till the last minute. Instead, get ahead of the game and change your brake pads and timing belt long before it actually needs replacement. This will give you time to focus on rigging up your truck with some camping modifications that will make the trip that much more comfortable.

When shopping for a tent, consider opting for [comfortable truck camping modification](#) like:

- Rooftop Tents: These pop up once you reach your destination and allow you to fill the bed with important supplies.
- Bed Tents: If you're going light on supplies, this is the perfect option. Just be aware that you'll give up a lot of storage space if you want to keep your tent in the bed of your truck.
- Awnings: These are simple to set up and will keep the rain off. They offer little in terms of protection, though, and you'll likely have to pack another tent if

you want to sleep safe from the elements.

Choose a truck camping modification that suits your needs and gives you enough room for storage. This is particularly important if you're headed into the backcountry for a few weeks and can't predict the weather accurately. A robust truck tent will raise you off the wet ground, keep you safe from most pests, and protect you from the elements should a storm roll in.

Finding a Destination

If you're looking for a retirement truck camping retreat, there are a few "must-see" destinations to consider. However, it's important to bear in mind your own limitations when setting an itinerary for the trip. Driving 300+ miles a day may sound like fun at first, but that much time behind the wheel can become fatiguing quickly.

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If you happen to live near a national park or forest, it's worth trial-running your truck camping trip closer to home. However, when you're ready to leave the world behind, consider [camping destinations](#) like:

- E.C. Manning Provincial Park
- Herald Provincial Park
- Echo Lake Resort
- Chain Lakes Loop
- Grand Tetons
- Joshua Tree
- Yosemite

Be aware that these parks will have varying rules regarding car camping. Abiding by these laws is important as they're usually in place to protect wildlife and ensure that over-eager drivers don't get stuck in the wilderness alone.

When picking out locations, give yourself plenty of time to rest and relax between destinations. Instead of bustling from point to point, try to follow the 3/3/3 rule. The 3/3/3 rule has been a staple of the RV community for years and suggests that you:

- Drive no more than 300 miles in a day
- Always arrive before 3 p.m.
- Stay in one spot for a minimum of 3 days

This will protect you from driving fatigue and will help you get away from main roads and tourist destinations. The 3/3/3 rule reduces the strain on your vehicle and helps you gain a genuine appreciation for each location on your itinerary.

Once you've honed in on a few destinations, start learning more about the amenities available and the nearby options for food, shelter, and gas. Remember, being a survivalist doesn't mean you turn your back on modern life altogether. Instead, you make strategic decisions to replicate a disaster scenario while making use of the infrastructure and resources that are available to you.

Food and Water

The idea of scavenging food and preparing your own clean water is appealing to some. If you're already an experienced hunter with a valid license, you may genuinely be able to support yourself legally while living off the grid in your truck for a few weeks. However, you should still have a healthy supply of food and water to see you through the entire retreat.

When planning your meals for the trip, focus on [foods that can be prepared in the wilderness](#). Some types of cooking, like steaming and sauteing, are difficult to achieve when in the outback. Instead, build your menu around dishes that can be boiled, fried, or rock-broiled. This will push your culinary skills to the limit and can help you experiment with some off-the-grid cooking methods before a disaster scenario occurs.

You probably won't be able to pack enough water to see you through the entire retreat. However, you should bring a few backup gallons that you can use in an emergency scenario. Holding back a few gallons of water is particularly important if you're truck camping in a remote area without any cell service. When you are in the wilderness, consider leaning on some tried and tested water purification techniques like:

- Boiling your water
- Filtering water using filters that meet NSF Standards 53 or 58 standards
- Only use survival straws in a pinch

You can also use disinfecting tablets and UV light to treat relatively clean water. However, this can involve an element of risk. Failing to treat your water can spell disaster—particularly if you're an older adult. You can't afford to become dehydrated but should never risk contracting illnesses like giardia.

Common Challenges

Getting away from home life is important in retirement. A lengthy retreat gives you time to reflect on your career and set new goals that will serve you well as you age. However, going off the grid and living in your truck does present some unique challenges if you're entering your golden years.

Head off common challenges by speaking to your doctor before

you leave. Consulting with your doctor can help you [embrace travel in later life](#). Prepare beforehand by keeping a card nearby that details health information like allergies, medications, chronic conditions, and any other important medical details. This can be a lifesaver in an emergency scenario.

It's crucial that you take care of your home before leaving for a retreat, too. Many survivalist-inspired homes are hardy and require minimal upkeep. However, if you've rigged up your own generator and water supply, you should probably have a trusted friend or family member check on the property while you're away. This will give you peace of mind and ensure you don't come home to find your shelter in disarray.



When car camping, take measures to [hide your truck from onlookers](#). Staying undetected will offer you an extra element of privacy and will protect you from any opportunistic criminals. Consider painting your truck's exterior a shade of green and covering the lights and windows when you park. This will reduce the risk of reflective surfaces catching anyone's eye.

Remember to set time aside for your own well-being. Survivalism isn't always about staying busy and toughing out difficult conditions. Setting aside an hour or two every evening to slow down and enjoy your surroundings can be a powerful tonic if you've just retired after a busy career. You can even consider packing art supplies, a journal, or a much-loved book to help you pass the hours while on your survivalist retreat.

Conclusion

Truck camping is the perfect way to get away from the world while practicing survival skills. Your truck will provide a safe base camp and will ensure you can always get out of a bad situation if a storm rolls in. Just be sure to maintain your vehicle correctly before leaving and choose a truck-camping setup that suits you. Remember to pack plenty of food and aim to gain experience with survivalist cooking techniques like rock broiling. This will build your confidence and help you hit the “reset” button in retirement.