

RV TRIPGEN

The Complete Guide to
RV Travel in
Virginia

Skyline Drive's 32-foot length limit, Civil War battlefields by the dozen, Blue Ridge Parkway, Chincoteague's wild ponies, and George Washington-Jefferson NF.

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RV travel in Virginia

Virginia stacks American history and Appalachian scenery on top of each other for 400 miles. Shenandoah's Skyline Drive runs the Blue Ridge spine north of Roanoke; the Blue Ridge Parkway continues south to the North Carolina line; the Atlantic at Chincoteague is famous for its wild ponies; and Civil War battlefields -- Manassas, Fredericksburg, Chancellorsville, Wilderness, Spotsylvania, Petersburg, Appomattox -- are so dense in the central piedmont you can string a week of them together inside one tank of diesel. The two big RV gotchas are the 32-ft length limit and tunnel restriction on Skyline Drive (no rigs over 32 ft, no rigs above 12'8" through Mary's Rock Tunnel) and the Hampton Roads tunnels and bridges, where propane restrictions and length limits force inland reroutes. Plan around those and Virginia is one of the most rewarding fortnight states east of the Mississippi.

Virginia by the numbers

Boondocking + dispersed sites	500
Established campgrounds	134
Dump stations	26
Propane refills	37
Potable water fill-ups	73
Laundromats	18
RV showers	19
Verified-bad spots (overnight prohibited)	29

Source: iOverlander community database (64% of Virginia spots verified in the last 24 months).

Driving rules

Interstate (cars + RVs)	70 mph (most rural segments), 60-65 mph in urban areas
Interstate (trucks + towing)	70 mph (matches posted on most rural segments)
US/State highway	55-60 mph (posted)
Blue Ridge Parkway	45 mph maximum (NPS road)
Skyline Drive (Shenandoah NP)	35 mph maximum (NPS road)
Built-up areas	25-35 mph (posted)
Drive on	Right
Seatbelts	Required for front-seat occupants and all under-18

Cell phone use while driving	Hands-free only (banned hand-held statewide)
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Highways

RV-friendly corridors

Highway	Note
I-95	Northeast-corridor spine through Richmond. Heavy traffic 6-9am and 3-7pm; HOT lanes between Stafford and DC require EZ-Pass Flex set to 'HOV' or you pay full toll. Big rigs OK at off-peak.
I-81	Western Virginia spine, Winchester to Bristol via Staunton, Roanoke, and Wytheville. THE main north-south truck route on the East Coast -- expect heavy semi traffic and several 6% grades (Christiansburg Mountain south of Roanoke, Fancy Gap south of Hillsville). Lower gears descending.
I-64	Charlottesville to Norfolk via Richmond. Easy except the Hampton Roads Bridge-Tunnel approach -- see restricted list.
I-66	Front Royal to DC. Heavy commuter traffic east of Manassas; HOV/HOT restrictions during peak. Westbound on weekends to Shenandoah is the main RV route.
I-77	Brief Virginia segment crossing I-81 at Wytheville and entering NC at Fancy Gap (6% grade, runaway truck ramps). Easy at posted speed.
US-29	Charlottesville to Lynchburg, an excellent Blue Ridge piedmont alternate to I-81 for RVs avoiding truck traffic.
US-50	Winchester to Aldie via the Shenandoah Valley and the horse country. Quiet, scenic, easy.
US-58	Southside Virginia spine, Virginia Beach to Cumberland Gap. Long, mostly quiet, easy big-rig route.

RV-restricted segments

Segment	Restriction
Skyline Drive (Shenandoah NP)	Length limit 32 ft (combined). Height limit 12'8" through Mary's Rock Tunnel north of Thornton Gap -- the only way for a tall rig to reach the central / south district is by exiting at Thornton Gap and re-entering at Swift Run Gap. Plan accordingly; many GPS units do not warn of the tunnel.
Blue Ridge Parkway (Otter Creek and Peaks of Otter areas)	Length restriction 30 ft on tight sections; height 12'6" through several tunnels south of Roanoke. Big rigs should drop off at I-64 (Afton) or US-220 (Roanoke) and rejoin where the road widens.
Hampton Roads Bridge-Tunnel (I-64 east, Norfolk side)	Propane restricted -- valves must be closed and tanks under 26.5 gallons aggregate. RVs with permanently mounted larger tanks should use the Monitor-Merrimac Bridge-Tunnel (I-664) instead, where propane restrictions are looser. Both can close in high wind.

Chesapeake Bay Bridge-Tunnel (US-13 north out of Virginia Beach)	23 miles, \$26 toll for RVs (varies by class). Class A and tall rigs check the wind-status forecast before crossing; closures common in winter nor'easters. Propane valves closed; tanks under 26.5 gallons aggregate.
Big Walker Mountain Tunnel + East River Mountain Tunnel (I-77 south of Wytheville)	Hazmat and tall-load restrictions; check current postings. Standard RVs are fine.
VA-39 through Goshen Pass	Narrow, tight switchbacks; not for rigs over 30 ft. Use US-60 / US-250 alternates.
Civil War battlefield interior roads (Wilderness, Spotsylvania, Cold Harbor)	Narrow, unpaved sections. Park at the visitor center and walk; do not try to drive a Class A through the field tours.

Mountain passes

Pass	Elevation	Note
Rockfish Gap (I-64 / US-250)	1909 ft	Lowest gap between Shenandoah NP and Blue Ridge Parkway; easy at posted speed. The standard RV transit between the two parks.
Swift Run Gap (US-33)	2367 ft	Skyline Drive central-to-south district transit point. Easy.
Thornton Gap (US-211)	2304 ft	Skyline Drive north-to-central district transit. The Mary's Rock Tunnel (12'8" height limit) is just north of the gap.
Afton Mountain (I-64)	1909 ft	Rockfish Gap by a different name on the interstate; same elevation. Fog warnings common.
Fancy Gap (I-77)	2925 ft	Long 6% descent into NC. Engine-brake; runaway truck ramps present.
Christiansburg Mountain (I-81)	2400 ft	South of Roanoke. Sustained 6% grades both directions; truck runaway ramps.
Mount Rogers area (VA-603)	5729 ft	Highest point in Virginia. Access roads to the Grayson Highlands SP and Mount Rogers NRA are 5-6% but paved; standard RVs to 35 ft OK.

National parks + monuments

National Park / Monument	Entry fee	Reservation note
Shenandoah NP	\$30/vehicle (7 days), \$80 America the Beautiful annual	Four campgrounds: Mathews Arm (rigs to 35 ft on access roads, but Skyline Drive itself is 32-ft limit), Big Meadows (most popular, reservable Mar-Nov), Lewis Mountain (smaller, first-come), Loft Mountain (south district, rigs to 30 ft, reservable). Book Big Meadows 6 months ahead via recreation.gov. See Skyline Drive length and tunnel restrictions in the highway section.

Blue Ridge Parkway (NPS)	Free entry	Multiple campgrounds along the parkway. In Virginia: Otter Creek (rigs to 30 ft, first-come), Peaks of Otter (rigs to 30 ft, reservable), Roanoke Mountain (rigs to 30 ft), Rocky Knob (rigs to 30 ft). All open seasonally May-Oct.
Colonial NHP (Yorktown + Jamestown)	\$25/vehicle (7 days)	No NPS camping inside the park. Stay at Williamsburg KOA, American Heritage RV Park, or Newport News Park.
Petersburg National Battlefield	\$10/vehicle (3 days)	No camping inside the park. Stay at Pocahontas State Park (45 min north) or Petersburg commercial parks.
Manassas National Battlefield	Free entry	No camping inside the park. Closest RV camping at Bull Run Regional Park (excellent) or Prince William Forest Park (NPS).
Prince William Forest Park (NPS)	\$20/vehicle (7 days)	Oak Ridge Campground reservable Mar-Nov via recreation.gov; rigs to 32 ft. Closest NPS campground to the National Mall (35 miles).
Fredericksburg & Spotsylvania National Military Park	Free entry	No camping inside the park (multiple battlefields). Stay at Lake Anna State Park or Fredericksburg KOA.
Appomattox Court House NHP	\$10/vehicle (7 days)	No camping inside. Stay at Holiday Lake State Park (15 min south) or commercial parks in Appomattox/Farmville.
Booker T. Washington National Monument	Free entry	Day-use only. Closest camping at Smith Mountain Lake State Park.
Cumberland Gap NHP (VA side)	Free entry	Wilderness Road Campground in Kentucky takes RVs to 40 ft; reservable. Virginia side of the gap is day-use only.
Maggie L. Walker NHS (Richmond)	Free entry	Urban site; day-use only.
Assateague Island NS (Chincoteague side)	\$10/person (10 ft trail access)	No NPS campgrounds on the Virginia/Chincoteague side. The NPS beach is day-use only; overnight at Chincoteague Island commercial parks or Tom's Cove (Chincoteague NWR, day-use).

State parks

Virginia State Parks operates 41 parks, the majority RV-accessible. Standout RV parks: First Landing (Virginia Beach oceanfront, full hookups), Kiptopeke (Eastern Shore at the Bay Bridge-Tunnel approach), False Cape (walk-in only -- not for RVs but worth noting), Westmoreland (Northern Neck), Pocahontas (Richmond), Lake Anna (central VA), Bear Creek Lake (Cumberland), Smith Mountain Lake (Roanoke region), Douthat (Allegheny Highlands -- one of the prettiest in the system), Hungry Mother (Marion area), Grayson Highlands (high country near Mount Rogers, wild ponies, full hookup loops), Natural Tunnel

(southwest near Cumberland Gap). Reservations open 11 months ahead at virginiastateparks.gov. Day-use \$5-10. Camping \$25-50.

Boondocking + dispersed camping

BLM: Virginia has no significant BLM land. Federal-land dispersed camping is via National Forest -- see NF summary. Practical workarounds: Harvest Hosts at Virginia wineries (200+ wineries in the state; huge density of hosts on the Monticello and Shenandoah trails), Boondockers Welcome hosts statewide, Walmart and Cracker Barrel overnight where local policy allows (Northern Virginia inside the Beltway uniformly refuses; southwestern and Eastern Shore are friendlier).

National Forest: Two National Forests: George Washington (northern, runs the Blue Ridge from Winchester to the James River) and Jefferson (southern, runs to the Tennessee line). Combined as the GWJ NF administratively. Both permit free dispersed camping along forest roads with a 14-day stay limit; popular dispersed areas include Reddish Knob (north of Harrisonburg), Crabtree Falls area (Nelson County), Highland County's Bullpasture, Mount Rogers NRA (Jefferson NF, Virginia's highest peak, multiple developed campgrounds plus dispersed). Several developed campgrounds also exist: Sherando Lake, Cave Mountain Lake, Stony Fork, Hone Quarry, Todd Lake, North River, Trout Pond. Most take RVs to 25-35 ft.

Stay limit: 14 days at any one location (federal rule, applies to BLM and NF dispersed).

Tribal lands

Virginia has seven federally-recognized tribes (recognized since 2016-2018): Chickahominy, Eastern Chickahominy, Monacan, Nansemond, Pamunkey, Rappahannock, and Upper Mattaponi. Reservation footprints are small and primarily ceremonial; the Pamunkey and Mattaponi reservations (King William County) date to 1646 treaty obligations. Tribal museums (Pamunkey, Mattaponi, Monacan Ancestral Museum at Bear Mountain) are day-use only. No public reservation camping. Always respect posted boundaries.

Propane, dump stations, fuel

Propane: Plentiful statewide along all interstates. Tractor Supply in every county seat, U-Haul in most metropolitan areas. Most KOA, Sun, and Good Sam parks fill on-site. Thin in deep southwestern Virginia (the coalfields of Buchanan, Dickenson, Wise counties) -- top up in Wytheville or Abingdon before heading west of I-81.

Dump stations: Dense along I-81, I-64, and I-95. Most Virginia State Parks have free dump stations for registered guests. Flying J / Pilot stations along the interstates charge \$10-15 for non-guest dumps. National Forest developed campgrounds (Sherando Lake, Cave Mountain Lake, etc.) have free dumps for guests.

Fuel: Diesel and gas widely available statewide. Notable fuel gaps: US-58 west of Hillsville through the Mount Rogers area, US-460 between Pearisburg and Tazewell (coalfields), the Blue Ridge Parkway itself (no fuel sold on-parkway -- exit at gaps), and Skyline Drive (no fuel sold on-park -- exit at Front Royal, Thornton Gap, Swift Run Gap, or Rockfish Gap). Fuel prices typically lowest along I-81 near Roanoke, highest in Northern Virginia inside the Capital Beltway.

Weather windows

Best months: Mid-April through mid-June, and mid-September through October. Daytime highs 65-80 F across most of the state; the Blue Ridge stays 10 F cooler. Fall colour peaks mid-Oct in the Blue Ridge.

Avoid: July and August are 90+ F and humid in the piedmont and Tidewater; bugs and biting flies are bad in the Tidewater and Eastern Shore. January-February in the Blue Ridge sees snow and ice; Skyline Drive and the Parkway close intermittently. Hurricane risk is real for Tidewater and the Eastern Shore Aug-Oct.

Climate caution

Skyline Drive and Blue Ridge Parkway weather closures are frequent in winter and during severe summer thunderstorms. The roads close gate-to-gate; once you're on, you may have to exit at the next gap. Check the park condition lines (Shenandoah 540-999-3500, Parkway nps.gov/blri/planyourvisit/conditions.htm) before committing to a Skyline or Parkway leg.

Emergency + road conditions

State patrol

Dial 9-1-1 for emergencies; #77 from a cell phone for Virginia State Police non-emergency

Road conditions

<https://511virginia.org>

How RV TripGen helps

Skyline Drive tunnel-height check built in

RV Tripgen flags every Skyline Drive overnight against your rig's 32-ft length and 12'8" height clearance at Mary's Rock Tunnel, and auto-suggests the Thornton-Gap-to-Swift-Run-Gap detour for taller rigs so you don't find out at the tunnel mouth.

Civil War battlefield route packing

RV Tripgen can chain Manassas, Fredericksburg, Chancellorsville, Wilderness, Spotsylvania, Petersburg, and Appomattox into a one-week loop with overnight RV options flagged for each leg, since none of the battlefields themselves take RV camping.