

## Camping at Wal-Mart: No roasting marshmallows by the campfire

*Every night across America, thousands of recreational vehicle enthusiasts spend the night in their RVs in Wal-Mart parking lots. A new survey reveals the practice is widespread.*

([PRWEB](#)) December 10, 2003 --Bambi and Thumper are nowhere in sight, nor are pine trees, picnic tables or campfire rings. Yet, with none of the trappings of a traditional campground, on any given night at Wal-Mart parking lots across America thousands of recreational vehicle enthusiasts snooze the night away in the comfort of their self-contained RVs.

"Perhaps nine of ten Wal-Marts allow RVers to stay the night," said Chuck Woodbury, editor of RVtravel.com (<http://www.RVtravel.com>). A recent survey of his website's readers, in fact, revealed that nearly half (47%) of the 1800 respondents had spent the night at least once in a Wal-Mart parking lot. "With millions of RVers on the road each year, this is a huge number of stays," said Woodbury, who noted that some RVers stay night after night. "To some of these folks it's like a sport. They cart along their Wal-Mart road atlas and plot their day's journey according to where there's a store for that night's rest."

The private campground industry has been vocal in opposing the practice and in some communities has promoted legislation to ban the freebie visits. "They claim it hurts their business, which I'm sure it does," said Woodbury. "But the situation is that many RVers believe it's a waste of money to spend \$25 or \$30 a night for a spot in an RV park when all they need is to grab a few hours of sleep before moving on. They don't need a swimming pool or showers or anything beyond a flat out-of-the-way place. For these folks, a Wal-Mart parking lot fits the bill."

Woodbury noted that the readership of his RVtravel.com website and its weekly 60,000-circulation email newsletter is skewed heavily toward avid RVers, with three-quarters spending more than a month a year on the road. Staying at a Wal-Mart for most of these people is about convenience, he said, not about a meaningful experience with nature.

Although Woodbury believes that Wal-Mart provides a valuable service to RVers in allowing the free overnight stays, he opposes RVers using the parking lots to replace campgrounds. "Staying a night when you're too tired to drive on or there isn't a campground nearby is one thing," he says. "But mooching night after night is simply abusing a good deal and will likely force Wal-Mart to ultimately say 'enough is enough.'"

Already hundreds of stores have banned stays in RVs. "Sometimes it's because of local laws," said Woodbury. "But most times it's the store's decision after RVers trashed the lots, leaked sewage, cracked the pavement with their levelers, disturbed neighbors with their stereos, or simply arrived in such huge numbers that shoppers couldn't find a place to park."

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