



Solo RV Living

Some soul-searching along with these four tips will help you transform your life as you embrace nomadic independence.

ARTICLE AND PHOTOGRAPHS BY JENELL JONES



PIXABAY / PEXELS

The author about to hike the spectacular sandstone formations known as The Wave, which is part of Coyote Buttes North. You must be chosen via a lottery to gain access to the area.



Embarking on what I hoped would be the journey of a lifetime, I steered my brand-new Tiffin Allegro Open Road 34 PA out of the dealership lot. I looked over and saw that exhilaration and trepidation were riding shotgun. Having just shed the weight of possessions, I downsized my life to the bare essentials.

I stood at the edge of realizing my long-held dream of traversing the country full-time. Prior travels in a modest 21-foot Class C had whetted my appetite for exploration, but the allure of this Class A was irresistible. However, as dusk fell, an unexpected wave of panic swept over me, casting shadows of doubt on my bold decision.

UNENCUMBERED LIFE

Retiring a year earlier marked a profound shift in my life. Suddenly, I was unencumbered — no children to care for, no husband to consider and no demanding job to tie me down. The sweet taste of freedom enveloped me. With a desire to explore the world, I sold my house and stowed my belongings in storage. Armed with two large suitcases — one

with clothes suitable for warm climates, the other for colder destinations — I embarked on a nomadic journey that saw me living out of airports for the better part of the next six months.

During this period, I hiked the Amalfi Coast, canoed the historic Lewis and Clark Trail, immersed myself in the culture of Paris and indulged in the beauty of the Champagne region of France. A two-week sojourn in London added another layer to my new-found freedom, yet the thrill began to wane as fatigue set in and my savings rapidly dwindled.

FINANCIAL FREEDOM

Amidst the whirlwind of experiences, I had ample time for reflection. It became clear that while the attraction of constant travel was undeniably appealing, what I truly yearned for was a sense of home on the road. The realization sparked a new dream — to travel with the comfort of having my own house accompany me, a sanctuary amid the ever-changing landscapes of my adventures.

This would also provide the financial freedom I sought. Financial people tell you to



build wealth by increasing your income. I did that for many years. At my stage in life, however, the option to make more money was no longer a reality. However, I knew that the simple act of decreasing my living expenses had the same effect as an increase in my income. I could control my expenses by getting rid of my sticks-and-bricks house, the pool and yard maintenance, HOAs and taxes.

I made a strategic decision to invest in a superior RV and high-quality solar equipment; a choice that has proven immensely rewarding because I minimized my reliance on RV resorts and conventional power sources. This investment not only translated into significant cost savings but also afforded me the freedom to explore off-the-grid, natural havens of beauty.

EMBRACE THE UNKNOWN

Amidst the busy-ness of getting ready for this new chapter, there lingered a daunting element — the uncertainty of the unknown. It was this ambiguous future that whispered doubts and fears in my ear, reminding me that even with my sense of adventure, the



journey ahead remained an enigma waiting to unfold. The endless “what-if” scenarios that plagued my mind were the source of stress and worry.

After all, the majority of us have experienced a daily regimen since infancy, initiated by our parents to synchronize our sleep and feeding schedules with their own. This routine may be monotonous, but at least it’s familiar. Throw an RV into the mix and everything is new and unfamiliar. There is so much new terminology and skills to learn. Remember when someone had to explain the difference between black and grey water? Or my favorite: GVW, GVWR and GCCC.

To be sure, this newness was fascinating, and I wanted and was ready for a big change. But like most people, I didn’t realize how pervasive this uncertainty could be. Life on the move means dealing with daily surprises. In the ever-changing rhythm of the road, flexibility must be your constant companion.

ENJOY A SLOWER PACE

Do you need your patience tested repeatedly? The RV lifestyle has been an unexpected

The author's adventures have included climbing down a slot canyon (left) and hiking the Wire Pass Trail (right), both in Utah.

teacher of patience in my life. Before, even a microwave felt too sluggish, and I'd hurriedly interrupt when I felt that stories were meandering. Now, I've reshaped my perspective thanks to this RV life. Embracing a slower pace on the road has unveiled a new-found appreciation for patience — an invaluable lesson that took an entire life to learn.

Navigating the sheer magnitude of my new RV, its length spanning nearly 60 feet when combined with my car, also physically scared me. Remember when the salesperson suggested camping near your house for a couple of days to figure out how to operate all the motorhome's bells and whistles? I didn't do that. Departure loomed in just three days, the maiden journey would be from Fort Worth, Texas, to rendezvous with fellow solo RVers in California.

WHEN IN DOUBT, RESEARCH!

Research can be a beacon in moments of uncertainty, a torch to dispel the shadows of the unknown. I sought solace in facts, delving into information that could calm the grip of fear tightening around me. What I discovered echoed a familiar truth: Much like the irrational fear of flying despite its safety compared to driving, RVing emerged as a remarkably safe mode of travel.

Empowered by internet knowledge, I found reassurance in statistics, calming my RV

driving worries. Several factors play a role in RV accidents. Elements such as lack of experience, driving at high speeds, fatigue, overloading the RV, misjudging turns, and struggling to come to a stop were within my sphere of control.

SOLO WOMEN TRAVELERS

Embracing these internet finds felt like clutching a lifeline, reassuring me that I wasn't embarking on something entirely insane. I expanded my search to include safety specifically geared for women traveling solo. Amidst the logistical worries of breakdowns and wrecks and the labyrinth of unknown roads, a more profound fear gripped me: the vulnerability of traveling alone.

What if I got lost? What if someone followed me?

The weight of these uncertainties bore down on me. Safety concerns, particularly among single female campers, often loom as the paramount reservation when embracing the RV lifestyle. Once more consulting the all-knowing web, I stumbled upon a trove of useful tips, and among them, I found these particularly relevant for the solo traveler.

TIP 1: KNOW YOUR RV

Mastering the art of driving an RV demands respect more than fear. It's a skill to cultivate, not a daunting task to avoid. Maneuvering an



RV may be reminiscent of the tentative moments behind a car's wheel when you were a teen. Yet, as familiarity blooms with time, so does confidence — it's a matter of practice.

Learning basic RV maintenance can be a cost-effective game-changer and confidence builder. I've honed skills like changing engine and generator oil, swapping filters and even carrying spare parts like a water pump — an unexpected savior during a Pennsylvania parking lot pit stop. Swiftly swapping it out was a breeze.

Essential tools like a portable battery jumper pack and a portable tire air compressor have proven to be invaluable. Additionally, channel-lock pliers and rubber gloves with extra grip make tackling tight caps a whole lot easier.

TIP 2: FIND YOUR TRIBE

The moment you opt for the RV life, you're seamlessly embraced into the camping community. Countless forums exist where questions find eager responses, and an abundance of websites house a trove of insightful information.

For solo campers, groups such as the Tiffin Chapters and the Wandering Individuals Network offer camaraderie, support and group travel opportunities. I follow the Facebook pages of Tiffin RV Solo Travelers, Tiffin Allegro



Open Road, Full-time RV'ers and Dreamers, and Solo Women RV. There are also some great podcasts — I listen to "RV Life," "Permission to Pivot" and "The RV Entrepreneur."

TIP 3: GET SOME EXTRA SECURITY

I've never felt more secure than when I'm in my Tiffin. It's been my haven at rest stops, truck stops and parking lots. Those high-set windows act like a natural barrier — bad guys would have to carry a step ladder to breach them. As for the front door, it's a fortress; it would take a crowbar and a lot of effort to open it. I'd likely catch any unusual sounds before anyone could get close. The market is also brimming with an array of affordable security products tailored for RV safety.

However, creating a secure perimeter around the RV isn't just about physical measures. Being alone on the road demands a heightened sense of self-sufficiency, where you must anticipate and be equipped to address a range of potential issues, from minor inconveniences to more significant hurdles.

Every RV should have the standard list of first aid kits, flares, warning lights and battery chargers. I also encourage you to create and keep a backpack of essentials in the trunk of your tow; keep it separate from the RV. Mine is always stocked with food and water that will last for three days.

The author invested in an Allegro Open Road (left) equipped with solar to give her the freedom she wanted. She also learned some basic RV maintenance, including changing the oil (right)!

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

The notion of adaptability often carries a positive connotation, suggesting a willingness to embrace change and diversity. However, in reality, our capacity for flexibility is often tested when faced with the unknown or the unfamiliar.

Examine the following questions and respond to them based on your current state, rather than projecting how you anticipate being once you embark on your full-time RV life.

- Do you find contentment in solitude and can you go for days without engaging in meaningful conversations with others?
- Do you have the desire to truly live independently?
- Do you have an adventurous spirit? What is the last thing you did that was adventurous?
- Are you ready to learn new things? New terminology?
- Can you adapt and overcome?
- Can you eat by yourself in a restaurant? And I mean a real one with napkins and low lighting, not fast food.
- Do you look forward to what is next, or do you dread it?



Living and traveling solo requires flexibility and patience, but the rewards are definitely worth it.

I also have a pair of comfortable walking shoes, pants, shorts, medical supplies and copies of important paperwork. I want to be ready if I ever have to leave my RV in minutes or on the side of the road. Of course, I hope to be uber close to a fabulous hotel that has a vacancy and offers a senior discount.

TIP 4: USE COMMON SENSE

This should really be the No. 1 tip for safety. That gut feeling, that subtle alarm bell signaling discomfort, should never be ignored. Women are generally pretty attuned to their inner voice. Acknowledge any sense of unease and don't dismiss it. I removed myself from a camping spot once, and to this day I cannot tell you why. I looked and walked around, and although I didn't see anything unusual, I just knew to move.

Mastering the mechanics and safety is two-thirds of the preparedness for solo RVing. The mental game is just as vital. Uncertainty can be stressful, and many new RV adventurers underestimate how they will be affected by being so disconnected. We are, after all, social beings.

When you start a full-time adventure, you trade the familiar for the unfamiliar, and many full-time RVers express frustration with the superficial interactions between RVers that are common in this lifestyle.

EMBARK ON YOUR PATH

Living full-time in an RV means making a serious adjustment to your mindset and lifestyle. It helped me zero in on what was important. If the prospect of this lifestyle is a dream, take the initiative and begin to make it a reality. Resist the influence of naysayers or well-intentioned friends and family who may seek to dissuade you.

To echo the sentiments of Barbara Bush, consider that, in the final chapters of your life, regrets are more likely to stem from unfulfilled experiences rather than unrealized achievements. Embrace your desires and embark on the path that resonates with your true aspirations.

Get a Tiffin and start traveling! 🚐

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