



## RV BUSINESS GUESTVIEW

# The ‘Myth’ of Insufficient Campground Capacity

“Our industry doesn’t really need to worry about lack of capacity for camping sites. If we work together to inform our camper community about the wide variety of destinations available for their enjoyment, they won’t ever perceive that there’s no room for them.”

**R**V sales are booming, but that doesn’t stop RV manufacturers and retailers from worrying about their growth — because the accepted wisdom in our industry is that we are topping out due to a shortage of camping spaces. After all, why buy an RV if there isn’t anywhere to vacation with it?

*But this “accepted wisdom” is just not true.* We are nowhere near 100% occupancy of the existing capacity at campgrounds or RV parks. Campground owners tell me every day that they have room — there is no shortage of available campsites at RV parks, traditional campgrounds or boon-docking locations to accommodate every RV family on any day of the year. Yes, there is room even on the Big Three camping weekends of Memorial Day, Independence Day and Labor Day.

This misperception has come about because of imperfect information — and the inability to match prospective campers to the available campsites.

Mainstream media and travel publications focus every season on the best places to camp and give out dire warnings about the difficulty of getting the best camping spots at the best-known locations. The perennial favorites are always the same primary destinations: places like Yosemite, Yellowstone and the Grand Canyon. These travel- and general-interest websites skim the surface and send the visitors to the same limited set of key destinations and a handful of well-known campgrounds. No wonder this limited number of featured campsites go in a hurry!

Yes, Yellowstone’s famous Fishing Bridge RV Park will likely be booked for

peak season. However there are more than 73 different campground options within a 50-mile radius of Yellowstone. Yosemite Valley has 43 different campgrounds within 50 miles. You get the idea. But most campers don’t know there are so many options available to them.

How can we facilitate a better, more accurate flow of information and fill more campsites with happy vacationers?

First, let’s look at what is happening. The average RV enthusiast begins doing research online and follows the suggested links to a bunch of different websites and maybe a few social media sites, as well. They are overwhelmed and don’t have any understanding of the value or veracity of what they are seeing. That’s because Google sets the rules. Google rewards popularity, so content and large review sites for the aggregated content they collect in the form of submitted campground reviews tends to skew the results; the average camper is only made aware of a few of the “best” places to camp, so the reviews favor the crowds. Places like Fishing Bridge in Yellowstone will have hundreds more reviews because they receive hundreds more guests. This pernicious crowd-sourced cycle feeds on itself.

Our industry needs to provide accurate, curated content that provides solid information on all destinations — not just the popular ones. RVers should be able to find depth and breadth of accurate data including description, amenities, nearby attractions, photos, videos and virtual tours. Engaging a wide audience with data they can use will help change the way travelers search for, find and visit lesser-known places.

Successful RV industry marketing has always promoted adventure and

freedom, showing families enjoying iconic destinations with RVs parked adjacent to bucolic streams and meadows with famous landmarks in the background. How about showing less-well-known places that might be off the beaten path? Wouldn’t that also appeal to the wanderlust of the RVing community? Amazing vistas and memorable vacations don’t happen only at a campground on the Yosemite floor.

Let’s embrace the diversity of our country and the beauty of places like Lander Wyoming, Lassen National Park, the Gulf Coast of Alabama, Mississippi, the Florida Panhandle and thousands of other locations in between. Let’s highlight the wide variety of experiences available at more than just the most famous tourist destinations. If we can drive demand to a broader reach of locations, there would be more happy campers — and we might finally bust the myth of capacity constraints.

Our industry doesn’t really need to worry about lack of capacity for camping sites. If we work together to inform our camper community about the wide variety of destinations available for their enjoyment, they won’t ever perceive that there’s no room for them. They’ll be avid consumers of new RVs and sales will continue to grow.

Dealers should support their buyers by encouraging them to truly explore with their new vehicles by trying out the many amazing destinations available to them. By launching their RV experience with this vision of unfettered opportunity for exploration and connecting them to accurate and complete information on camping destinations and availability, they will always have a happy and returning customer base. No capacity problem here! **RVB**

*Mark Koep is the Founder and CEO of CampgroundViews.com that lets campers “Look Where You’re Going!” CampgroundViews.com has more than 3 million users who use the website’s proprietary database of nearly 16,000 campgrounds and RV parks enhanced with 3,000+ videos, 300+ 360 Virtual Tours and 27,000 still photos.*



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