

# Establishing a Budget for Full-time RVing



*One of the most frequently asked questions from potential full-time RVers is “How much does it cost?”*

Roaming RV explores Budgets for RVers

Thank you for showing interest in – “Establishing a Budget for full-time RVing”.



I am an author, freelance writer and columnist who have been RVing or camping for most of my life.

After a yearlong trip throughout Canada, the USA and Mexico in the 1990's I was hooked on travel and am determined not to stop.

**Carol Ann Quibell**

If you are at least thinking of becoming full-time RVers then the information here may help you make your decision easier. Our website/blog [RoamingRV](http://roamingrv.com) was established for us to share information and [RVing for Canadians](http://roamingrv.com/rving-for-canadians) is where we discuss the challenges Canadians face when choosing the Full-time RV Lifestyle.

### **Websites**

Roaming RV – <http://roamingrv.com>

RVing for Canadians – <http://rvingforcanadians.com>

Write for Travel: <http://writefortravel.com>

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# Establishing your budget

One of the most frequently asked questions from potential full-time RVers is, “how much will it cost?” It’s a very difficult question to answer, since each RVer has their individual needs and income for budgeting. However, there are a few basics that everyone must take into consideration when planning to RV full-time. Budgeting for the RV Lifestyle is very much the same as budgeting for living in a regular “stick” home. You need to cover the home, utilities, insurance, maintenance, living expenses, medical, clothing, entertainment, and other regular expenses each of us has.

## Cost of the RV

The first question that must be answered is the cost of the RV itself. Whether you spend \$2,000 or a million, your costs will be determined by the type of RV you choose. Will you buy new or used, and what do you want or need in an RV? I think that is also another question that should be answered. Have a wish list of what you want as if money were no object, and then whittle it down to what you actually need. You might surprise yourself.

## Financing

If you are financing the RV, the cost of the down payment must be considered, as well as the interest rates and monthly payments. Remember, RVs do not go up in value—they depreciate, so that too may reflect on what you spend on your new home. Don’t forget it is your home and not a holiday vehicle. That in itself affects what you will buy. Shop around and negotiate—there is always room for discussion on interest rates and prices. Now that we have decided upon the RV you can afford, there are daily, weekly and monthly costs that will need to be assessed.

## **Storage**

When your unit is not being used it will need to be stored in a safe place, especially if you don't have room for it on your own property. This will entail paying a monthly storage fee to ensure it is kept in a safe location. However, if you are full-time this shouldn't be a concern.

## **RV parking ~ Resorts / Campgrounds**

This will depend upon many factors such as how much travelling you will be doing. Will you park in resorts full time, boondock, a combination of both, or do you have a camping membership that will determine where you stay? How many days in each month will you be travelling or sitting? Travelling more often increases the cost of fuel and also the rates of the RV parks, although it is sometimes possible to get a reduced rate for staying longer.

## **Fuel**

Once again this will fluctuate depending on how much travelling you do and how often. Each area has fluctuating gas and diesel prices so there is no guarantee as to what those prices will be. When planning your trip and route calculate the mileage using the average price of gas to determine what your fuel expenses will be. Don't forget to include possible mileage for touring an area when your RV is parked.

## **Propane**

Propane appliances are your furnace, fridge, stove and water heater and cost will be determined by your usage. The propane costs will increase if you are using the furnace in cooler climates, cooking a lot and have a propane refrigerator running. Fuel for a generator also must be considered.

## **Insurance/licence**

This is a must. Protect your investment and the personal belongings in your unit. If you are living in it full time make sure your insurance agent is aware of that—regardless of the extra cost. It would be a terrible thing to have a fire or accident and find out that you were under-insured and cannot replace your RV or contents. Do you have an up-to-date vehicle licence? What will be your yearly or monthly cost?

## **Repairs / Maintenance**

If your unit is new there's probably a warranty to handle any problems, but regardless, there are always things to do to maintain your RV at its best. What will happen if your refrigerator quits working? Are you prepared for emergencies? Regular maintenance will definitely cost you money but it will be cheaper than neglecting your RV and having to face a major repair bill because of that negligence. How is the tread on your tires? Are your house batteries maintaining their charge?

## **Tow vehicle**

A tow vehicle (toad) has some of the same expense costs as your motorhome including insurance, repairs, licensing, fuel and maintenance.

## **Entertainment**

Do you like to eat out? If you like to eat out regularly or always cook at home your costs will differ. I know one full-time couple who virtually never cook. Don't I wish? They go out every night for dinner and it's important to them so they budget for it.

## **Groceries**

I love grocery shopping! I enjoy it especially when we are in different areas because there are always local products available to experiment with. We all need to eat and this cost has to be on our list. Remember space is limited so it's not easy to stock up on canned goods or produce, making it worthwhile to read the flyers and watch for sales in the local stores.

## **Laundry**

Most RV Parks have a coin-operated Laundromat – and they can be quite reasonable to expensive. Some of the more luxurious RVs have washer and dryer combinations.

## **Medical**

Let's stay healthy. That way we can continue to RV as long as we wish so make sure you have medical coverage of some sort. If possible obtain dental and eye glass coverage but many find it too expensive so opt out.

## **Communication**

Internet, mail forwarding, telephones and satellite TV will vary from person to person but we all like to stay in touch with friends or family, so put it on your list.

## **Emergency fund**

This is important and even if it's \$25 / per month put something away for an emergency. If it is included in your budget it will become a habit you will appreciate in the event that you need those funds when something important comes up – like needing a new battery!

## Memberships

Having RV memberships can actually save you money with their discounts at some RV Resorts, rallies, and tours, travel insurance and other benefits. Shop around and find what works for you – a suggestion is to wait until you are on the road before signing up for anything. My [blog](#) contains a couple of articles relating to this topic.

## Conclusion

Obviously the above costs are not the only expenses you will incur, but they are the major ones that will impact your chosen lifestyle. An RVers budget is just as important as a budget for people staying in their brick and mortar home ~ it's just a different way of spending your money. By careful planning and knowing your limitations there is no reason why you too can't start full-timing if you choose.

## DESCRIPTION OF RV'S

Determining the type of RV you choose will depend upon what your requirements and budget are. There are pros and cons for each option which must be considered.

**Class A** – these bus style motorhomes can be very luxurious and come equipped with most modern conveniences and almost everything you will need for daily living. The size of these beautiful motorhomes can range anywhere between 32' to 45' and come with a gasoline engine or a diesel pusher whereby the engine is in the rear. It will depend upon whether you plan on towing a vehicle behind you which engine you prefer.

Talk to the **RV** Dealer and they can advise you as to what will suit your needs depending upon how many people there are and how much space you will need. A consideration must be made as to what type of driver's license is required whether the driver will need an air brake endorsement.

Many of the Class A's have slide-outs that expand the sides of the motorhome to give you more living space. A motorhome is wonderful when traveling but if you aren't pulling a car it may be difficult to get around once your unit is parked.

**Class B** – these are usually vans that sleep 2 people and are extremely compact. They do not require a special driver's licence and are much easier to drive. Although they are very small they usually have all the amenities needed to be very comfortable while traveling. One of the benefits of the small size is the ease of parking and a large camping stall is not required. The cost of fuel will be less but there won't be as much room or services supplied.

**Class C** – These motorhomes are somewhat smaller than the class A but larger than the B and have a cab-over sleeping compartment above the driver's seat. These motorhomes usually have sleeping accommodation for between 4 – 6 people; have a separate bathroom, fully equipped kitchen and seating room for lounging. They can come with slide-outs and are in many sizes. No special licence is usually required to drive them but you should know what you are doing before taking one of these units out onto the road.



**5th wheel** – these come in many sizes and are to be pulled by a truck when traveling.

However, no one must be in the 5th wheel when it is being pulled so the truck must have enough seats for everyone to sit with a proper seat belt. They can range in size up to 40' and have most of the luxuries found in a home with slide-outs and awnings for outdoor living.

**Towables** – these are usually travel trailers, tent trailers or toy haulers and must be towed by another vehicle because they do not have an engine or driving mechanisms. They range in size and depending upon how many will need sleeping space will determine what type of RV you purchase.

The **travel trailer** is quite often used for long term living and often set up in one location. They come in many sizes and must be pulled by a truck. Sleeping for six people is common and they can be somewhat basic to luxurious.



**Carol Ann Quibell** is an RVer, freelance writer, columnist and regular traveler who loves to share her love for RVing and travel with her readers. Contact her at [carolann@roamingrv.com](mailto:carolann@roamingrv.com)

## Further reading:

An RVers Budget: <http://roamingrv.com/rv-budget/>

Family amping on a Shoestring Budget: <http://roamingrv.com/family-camping-on-a-shoestring-budget/>

How to buy a used travel trailer or other RV: <http://roamingrv.com/how-to-buy-a-used-travel-trailer-or-other-rv/>

Longing for a New RV but can't afford it? <http://roamingrv.com/longing-for-a-new-rv-but-can%E2%80%99t-afford-it/>

*Please take the time to browse through my website <http://roamingrv.com> and <http://rvingforcanadians.com>*

Recent articles of mine can be found at RVwest, FMCA, and Escapees, as well as my regular monthly column on the RV Lifestyle at [http://www.rvwest.com/rv\\_living](http://www.rvwest.com/rv_living). I specialize in travel articles for RVers, seniors and budget travel.

I was a contributing author to the award-winning book [RV Traveling Tales – Women's Journey of the Open Road](#). Read more about these travel tales by [RVing Women](#).

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