



# Why Buy a Camping Membership?

## What are the alternatives to Membership Camping?

### A. State, County and Federal Parks

The basic problems inherent to this alternative are many. State, County and Federal Parks rely on the support of tax dollars. In today's tax conscience society parks are not receiving the dollars in tax allocation for government recreation areas. Further, many of the popular campgrounds require advanced reservations and in many parts of the country must be made as much as one year in advance. Another big problem is that there is no control over who can visit a government campground. What this basically means is that anyone who can come up with \$20 could very well have the campsite next to yours. As an example: Some peoples idea of going camping is to bring a keg of beer, pull out the speakers from their van and play loud rock and roll music until all hours of the night. The crime rate in many government parks can often read like a small city's police blotter. Rapes, assaults, robberies, thefts are increasingly on the rise in many government campgrounds where massive budget cuts have eliminated necessary park rangers and security personnel. There have been many articles describing the perils and dangers in many of our government campgrounds. Several years ago Time magazine featured these problems in their periodical. Their findings discussed first hand accounts from park rangers who encountered such incidents such as cult type gatherings, paramilitary maneuvers, vandalism and the discovering of booby traps to protect marijuana fields located on government land. Not to speak of the ever increasing cost for just one night on the average nationally \$20.00. Many of us remember when you could enjoy most parks for \$4-6 per night by just driving up and feeling safe during your visit. I suppose the same people can remember when Motel 6 cost \$6 per night.

### B. Public Campgrounds

Public campgrounds share many of the same problems associated with the government campgrounds including advanced reservations, the lack of control over the clientele, crime, and expensive nightly costs to name just a few. One of the biggest problems is there is no consistency from one campground to the other. For example, if you have ever visited more than one KOA campground, one of the largest campground chains, you can probably attest to the inconsistency at each campground. Maybe the first one you visited was the most beautiful camp you could have ever hoped for while the next one has an owner that has interest in one thing; how much money he can collect while putting the least amount back into the campground. You end up in a campground that has graffiti written all over the walls in the comfort station as you stand in water waiting to use the one stall that is in order. Or for some odd reason the refuse in the garbage receptacles haven't seemed to have been emptied in an extended period of time as you stand there and wonder what to do with yours. As in government parks, the money you spend in overnight fees add up and goes out in the form of rent vs. owning something.

### C. Purchasing a Campsite or Recreational Lot

The biggest drawback in buying a campsite or recreational lot is the expense. Next is that there is not the variety of more than one place to travel to. After all, they put wheels on recreational vehicles for a reason. Although the concept of a campsite or recreational lot provides ownership and in many cases proves to be a good financial investment, two major factors must be considered. First, in our area the average cost to purchase a campsite or recreational lot will average \$5000.00. This is generally just the beginning. After you purchase a lot usually you have to develop it. By that I mean that you have to bring power to the property, put in a sewer system and put in a well for water. The average expense to bring power to the property with a power pole and meter will average \$500.00. The septic system will cost approximately

\$1500.00. And for a cased well, plan to spend about \$2000.00. Here we have an additional \$4000.00 in extra expenses above and beyond the original price of the lot. Now you have \$9000.00 invested in your lot. You may think it is over but really it is just the beginning because you have now become a property owner. This gives you the privilege of paying ongoing taxes, utilities, maintenance, insurance and in most cases association fees or dues and from time to time assessments. In considering a recreational lot expect to spend on average \$200.00 each year on taxes, \$100.00 or so on utilities, maintenance can vary but let's say it's \$50.00 and your insurance should be around \$75.00, while your association fees or dues run around \$100.00. Here all told we have an additional \$525.00 that you pay whether you use your lot or not. In addition you could end up in the unfortunate situation that you did in the government parks, in that, you still have no control over who your neighbor is going to be. As an example, lets say you fix your lot up real nice, nicely trimmed and mowed but your neighbor lets his grass grow up, or parks an old bus on the property or maybe builds some kind of weird looking structure on the property. Surveys have found that a majority of families who purchase a recreational lot eventually get tired of going to the same place all the time. After all, why did you buy a RV? To travel and enjoy the variety of different locations and settings.

**What are the differences between public and private resorts?**

The difference between going public versus private are many. First keep in mind that the resorts that are in the network are totally private. This in and of itself eliminates a lot of riffraff we see in the government and public parks. Most of the people in membership campgrounds have paid a membership fee to have the right to use the resorts. Also, in order for a resort to be licensed to be in the system, each resort must pay substantial fees and meet stringent requirements to participate. The resort, by mandate of the license agreement, must provide amenity packages such as swimming pool(s), clubhouse (s), bathhouse (s), etc. Additionally, such resorts must include a wide arrange of activities. You will find many things to do for all ages. Activities such as bingo, potlucks, outdoor barbecues, nature bikes, mixers, theme weekends, card games, social events and much more.

| Private Membership Camping   |               | Public Camping  |
|--|---------------|---|
| SAVE MONEY: Camp for just \$8 a night at over 500 private resort campgrounds. Exclusive to members and guests, with access to hundreds of resorts nationwide.                                      | Cost          | The national average is \$20 to \$35 a night (many charge up to \$50 a night.)  |
| Park Rangers patrol private resorts on a continual basis (peace of mind, no riffraff.)   | Access        | There is no control over who or what groups can camp in a public facility. Crime is increasingly on the rise in many government parks.  |
| Safer Environment. Generally campers in a private resort are people like you, they look out for one another, similar to a neighborhood watch. You often run into the same people at other resorts. | Park Security | Some parks have security, but most do not. There have been several nationwide articles telling the dangers of public campgrounds, including a feature in Time magazine describing the violence encountered by park rangers. |
| Private resorts offer quality facilities (85% of the resorts are 4 or 5 stars). Resorts that do not meet the specified standards of quality are removed from the system.                           | Facilities    | Public campgrounds have inconsistent facilities. Most public campgrounds are not held accountable for inferior facilities or service.   |

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| Private Membership Camping   |                    | Public Camping  |
| Each private resort offers numerous amenities, such as: a member lodge/club house, convenience store, indoor/outdoor swimming pool and spa complex, beach and marina, boats, fishing, playground, horse-shoes, basketball, miniature golf, ice skating, horse back riding, recreation rooms, member's kitchen, restaurants, laundry facility, and much more! There really is too much to list! | Amenities          | Most public campgrounds just don't have the budgets for the amenities you will find in a private membership resort. Also, those that do have amenities, such as a pool, often charge extra for their usage. |
| Activities Directors will plan event weekends, barbecues, games (bingo, card tournaments, etc.), arts & crafts, boat races, and more!  | Planned Activities | Generally there aren't any. There are a handful of campgrounds that do, but they generally charge additional fees.  |
| Consistently clean facilities. Both employees and members take pride in the resort, and work hard to make sure it meets the highest standards.   | Conditions         | Inconsistent Conditions. Some parks are very nice, but this varies from campground to campground, and you usually don't find out until you arrive.  |
| Security and privacy create a wholesome family atmosphere. There is fun for the whole family, from tiny tots to adults.  | Family Environment | This depends on the park. You have to research to find out.   |
| Private resorts offer many discounts for roadside assistance, hotel accommodations, amusement park admission, and more!  | Discounts          | There are some discounts available through public campgrounds, but there are fewer than with private memberships.   |

### Should I wait until I retire to buy a membership and if not, why?

No. Let us take a look at the numbers if you buy a membership now and just what the dollar commitment really means. First of all remember to get a membership you pay a one time initiation fee of \$495 and ongoing annual dues of \$99. Also remember that your membership is transferable. This means that when you finish using your membership you can will, sell, or transfer the membership. If you were to take the average national price to rent a public campsite (\$20.00), this means that when you stay only 25 nights in the private network you are even (\$495 divided by \$20 equals 24.75). Then lets consider your annual dues of \$99. This means that you would have to camp a total of 5 nights (4.9) to be even (\$99 divided by \$20 equals 4.9). Again remember that the \$495 is always your money, meaning that when you decide to change your lifestyle or sell your RV you can sell the membership and retrieve your original investment (\$495). After all, you have a substantial investment right now in a recreational vehicle, why waste money in the meantime?

### Cost Comparison of Public, KOA, State Parks and Good Sam Campgrounds VS. Membership Ownership

| Camping for: | Public, State, KOA & Good Sam Parks | Private Membership RV Parks | Membership Annual Savings |
|--------------|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------|
| 20 Nights    | x \$20 = \$400                      | x \$8 = \$160               | \$240                     |
| 30 Nights    | x \$20 = \$600                      | x \$8 = \$240               | \$360                     |
| 40 Nights    | x \$20 = \$800                      | x \$8 = \$320               | \$480                     |
| 60 Nights    | x \$20 = \$1200                     | x \$8 = \$480               | \$720                     |
| 90 Nights    | x \$20 = \$1800                     | x \$8 = \$729               | \$1080                    |

### **I am either now a fulltimer or plan to go fulltime, is a camping membership for me?**

Absolutely. How can you be without a camping membership? Considering the average non membership overnight fee, somewhere around \$20 per night, a full timer on the road for ten years using public campgrounds will spend about \$73,000.00 (\$20 per night X 365 days a year X 10 years). Owning a membership over the same 10 years will cost somewhere cost somewhere around \$18,000. This is a savings to you of about \$55,000.00! These figures do not take in account annual inflation which given consideration will boost the number significantly higher.

### **How do I know that I will always be able to get a campsite?**

Each resort developer that obtains a license to participate in the network is required to set aside a percentage of their total campsites for visiting members. These are sites that the developer cannot sell memberships to. Over the years a complicated formula has been established so the availability opportunity at each resort is optimum for visiting members.