Trailer and RV Travel

Tips for Traveling With a Trailer

When traveling with a trailer, take some extra time to plan and prepare to ensure yourself a smoother, safer trip.

The first thing to do is to check that your tow vehicle, trailer, and all related equipment comply with the towing and RV road laws of each U.S. state/Canada province you will be traveling through. A chart included in this insert provides a summary of each state's/province's towing regulations, including height, width, and weight restrictions. For a more comprehensive overview, refer to the motor vehicle laws posted online for states/provinces.

Preparation

Your tow vehicle should be prepared to handle the weight of a trailer:

- ❏ Check the rear springs. They should be strong enough to maintain the vehicle at a nearly level position.
- ❏ Check the shock absorbers.
- ❏ Check the wheel alignment.
- ❏ Check the tires. Adding some air to the rear tires can be helpful (usually no more than 4 or 5 pounds and NOT exceeding the manufacturer's specifications).

Packing and Loading

Load your tow vehicle and trailer for optimum road stability:

- ❏ To help the tow vehicle absorb the weight of the trailer, do not put heavy items in the trunk or back seat.
- ❏ When packing the trailer, load about 60 percent of the weight toward the front and 40 percent toward the rear.
- ❏ Place heaviest items nearest to the floor to create a low center of gravity.

Trailer designs typically allow for proper, balanced packing with cabinet doors and drawers that stay closed during transit. For added safety and stability:

- ❏ Pack cabinets, drawers, stowage compartments so contents cannot slide.
- ❏ Pack items so that they brace each other in place.
- ❏ Lash large articles, such as bicycles, tightly to outside carriers. Laying them inside unsecured can cause havoc during sharp swerves or sudden halts.

Warning! Never carry extra gasoline in any type of container. Fume build-up or accident impact can cause lethal combustion.

Tow Vehicle and Trailer Inspection

Before you set out on the road, give your tow vehicle and your trailer a thorough inspection. Pay particular attention to:

- ❏ The hitch
- ❏ The tires on both vehicles
- ❏ Safety chains
- ❏ The load
- ❏ The ability of both vehicles to remain level

If applicable to your trailer:

- ❏ Check the independent braking system
- ❏ Check the water, electrical, and LP gas systems

Repeat this visual inspection at each stop along your route. If you hear unusual noises while driving, pull well off the highway and investigate immediately.

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Driving With a Trailer

Do not drive an unstable tow vehicle/trailer combination.

A swaying trailer is both tiring and hazardous.

High speed and downhill travel are the two main causes of instability on the road. To minimize instability:

- ❏ Always obey the speed limit for towed vehicles.
- ❏ Anticipate downhill grades. Slow up before starting the descent and use a lower gear to keep from overworking the brakes.
- ❏ Use a lower gear on uphill pulls as well to get more power at less cost to your tow vehicle.
- ❏ On long grades, use the climbing lane if the road has one or pull over when the opportunity permits to let faster traffic pass.

Stopping

A tow vehicle/trailer combination is heavier and longer than a vehicle alone and thus requires a greater stopping distance in the city and on the open road.

Passing

Passing with a tow vehicle/trailer combination also requires more time and distance. Note that air suction, sometimes created when a vehicle overtakes another, can cause both to lurch unexpectedly.

Turning

When turning corners or rounding curves, the trailer wheels do not follow the same track as the tow vehicle's wheels. They travel considerably closer to the inside of the curve. To compensate, and to avoid running over curbs or off pavement, (a) start the turn farther to the outside of the curve or intersection and (b) farther along into the curve or intersection. Proceed deliberately and patiently.

Backing Up

Before your trip, practice backing up with the trailer as it is very different from backing up a car. Place your hand at the bottom of the steering wheel, then move your hand in the same direction you want the trailer to go. Move your hand left to move the trailer left. Move your hand right to move the trailer right. If you jackknife the trailer, pull forward, straighten up, and try again.

Restrictions

Restrictions and prohibitions exist on the transportation of liquefied petroleum in tunnels and some bridges in several states including: Maryland, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York, Texas and Virginia.

Lastly, before you begin your trip, contact your AAA/CAA club for a routing that offers the most favorable terrain and road conditions for trailer travel.

Towing and RV Road Laws

Refer to "Notes" section for footnote information

State/Province	LENGTH (ft.)				HEIGHT (ft.)	WIDTH (ft.)		UNLADEN WEIGHT OF TRAILERS REQUIRING BRAKES	OVERNIGHT PARKING PERMITTED	RIDING PERMITTED	
	Motor Homes	Towables	Combi-nation	# in RV Combo	All	Motor Home	Towables	In State (lbs.)	In Rest Areas	In Towed Trailer	Pickup Camper
UNITED STATES:											
ALABAMA	45[1]	40[1]	65	N/S	13.5	8/8.5[16]	8/8.5[16]	3,000	P	N	Y
ALASKA	45	40[1]	75[1]	2	14	8.5	8.5	5,000	Y	N	Y
ARIZONA	45[1]	40[1]	65[1]	2	13.5	8/8.5[16]	8/8.5[16]	3,000[29]	Y[40]	Y	Y
ARKANSAS	45	53.5	28;65[TOTAL]	3	13.5	8.5	8.5	3,000[29]	Y	N	N
CALIFORNIA	45[1]	40[1]	65[1]	N/S	14	8.5[18]	8.5[17]	1,500[29]	P	N	Y[37]
COLORADO	45	N/S	70	4	13/14.5	8.5[18]	8.5[18]	3,000[29]	P	N	Y
CONNECTICUT	60	N/S	60	2	13.5	8.5[19]	8.5[19]	3,000[29]	P	N	Y
DELAWARE	45	40	65	N/S	13.5	8/8.5[20]	8/8.5[20]	4,000	P	N	Y
D.C.	40	60	85	3	13.5	8	–	3,000[29]	N	N	Y
FLORIDA	45[2]	40[2]	65[2]	2	13.5	8.5[21]	8.5[21]	3,000[29]	P	N	Y
GEORGIA	N/S	N/S	60[3]	2	13.5	8/8.5[16]	8.5[16]	3,000	N	N	Y[38]
HAWAII	45	40	65	N/S	14	9	9	3,000[29]	N	N	Y[39]
IDAHO	45[4]	48[4]	75[4]	3	14	8.5[19]	8.5[19]	1,500	P	N	Y
ILLINOIS	45[1]	60[1]	65[3]	3	13.5	8.5[16]	8.5[16]	3,000[29]	N	N	Y
INDIANA	45[3]	N/S	60/65	2/3	13.5	8.5	8.5	3,000[29]	Y	Y	Y
IOWA	45[5]	N/S	65/70[1]	2/3	14	8.5[21]	8/8.5[16,21]	3,000	N	Y	Y
KANSAS	45[1]	N/S	65[1]	3/5th Wheel	14	8.5[18]	8.5[18]	Y[30]	Y	Y[39]	Y[39]
KENTUCKY	45	N/S	63[10]	3	13.5	8/8.5[23]	8[21]	3,000[31]	N	N	Y
LOUISIANA	45	40	70	2[41]	13.5	8/8.5	8/8.5[16]	3,000	P	N	Y
MAINE	45	48	65	2	13.5	8.5[14]	8.5[14]	3,000	P	N	N
MARYLAND	45[4]	40[4]	55[4]	2	13.5	8.5[27]	8.5[27]	3,000[29]	P	Y	Y
MASSACHUSETTS	45	40	65	2	13.5	8.5[18]	8.5[18,28]	10,000	Y[40]	N	Y
MICHIGAN	45	45	65	2/3	13.5/12.5	8.5[18]	8.5[18]	3,000	P	Y	Y
MINNESOTA	45[1]	45[9]	60[9]	3	13.5	8.5[21]	8.5[21]	3,000[29]	P	Y	Y
MISSISSIPPI	45[6]	40[1]	53/75	3	13.5	8.5	8.5	2,000[29]	N	N	N
MISSOURI	45[7]	N/S	65[7]	N/S	14[15]	8/8.5[16]	8/8.5[16]	N/S	Y	Y	Y
MONTANA	55	N/S	65	2/3	14	8.5[18]	8.5[18]	3,000	P	N	Y
NEBRASKA	45[4]	40[4]	65	N/S	14.5	8.5[18]	8.5[18]	3,000	N	Y	Y
NEVADA	45	N/S	70[3]	N/S	14	8.5[21]	8.5[21]	1,500	Y[22]	N	Y
NEW HAMPSHIRE	45[1]	48[1]	N/S	N/S	13.5	8.5	8.5	3,000	N	N	N
NEW JERSEY	45[8]	40[8]	65[8]	2	13.5	8.5[19]	8.5[19]	3,000	P	N	Y
NEW MEXICO	45[6]	40[6]	75	2/3	14	8.5[18]	8.5[18]	3,000[29]	P	N	Y
NEW YORK	45[1]	48[1]	65[1]	2	13.5	8/8.5[16]	8/8.5[16]	1,000[32]	P	N	Y
NORTH CAROLINA	45[6]	35	60	2	13.5	8/8.5[16,21]	8[21]	1,000	P	Y	Y
NORTH DAKOTA	50[1]	53[1]	75[1]	3	14	8.5	8.5	3,000	Y	N	Y
OHIO	45	40	65	N/S	13.5	8.5	8.5	2,000[29]	N	N	Y
OKLAHOMA	45	40	65	3	13.5	8.5	8.5	3,000	Y	N	Y
OREGON	45[1]	45[1]	65[11]	2	14	8.5	8.5	N/S	Y[34]	N	Y
PENNSYLVANIA	45[1]	N/S	65[1]	N/S	13.5	8.5[24]	8.5[24]	Y[31,33]	N	N	N
RHODE ISLAND	40	N/S	60	2	13.5	8.5	8.5	4,000	Y	N	Y
SOUTH CAROLINA	45[4]	48	N/S	2	13.5	8.5[18]	8.5[18]	3,000[29]	P	N	Y
SOUTH DAKOTA	45	53	75[12]	3	14	8.5[1]	N/S	3,000	P	N	Y
TENNESSEE	45	40	65[3]	3	13.5	8.5[25]	8.5[25]	1,500	Y	N	N
TEXAS	45[4]	N/S	65[4]	3	13.5	8.5[21]	8.5[21]	4,500	P[36]	Y	Y
UTAH	45	40[4]	65[4]	3	14	8.5[18]	8.5[18]	2,000[30]	P[24]	N	Y
VERMONT	46	46	68	2	13.5	8.5[18]	8.5[18]	3,000	N	N	Y
VIRGINIA	45[6]	45	65[13]	2	13.5	8.5[18]	8.5[18]	3,000	P	N	Y
WASHINGTON	46[2]	N/S[3]	75[3]	2	14	8.5[26]	8.5[26]	3,000	Y[35]	N	Y
WEST VIRGINIA	45[1]	40	65[1]	2	13.5	8/8.5[16,21]	8/8.5[16,21]	3,000[29,31]	N	N	Y
WISCONSIN	40	48	60	3	13.5	8.5[21]	8.5[21]	3,000[29]	N	N	Y
WYOMING	60	45	85	3	14	8.5[2]	8.5[2]	Y[29]	Y	N	Y
CANADA:											
ALBERTA	12.5m	12.5m	20m	N/S	3.85m	2.6m	2.6m	907kg[1]	N	N	Y
BRITISH COLUMBIA	12.5m	12.5m	20m	N/S	4.2m	2.6m	2.6m	1,400kg[1]	N	N	N
MANITOBA	12.5m	12.5m	21.5m	N/S	4.2m	2.6m	2.6m	910kg[2]	Y	N	Y
NEW BRUNSWICK	12.5m	12.5m	23m	N/S	4.2m	2.6m	2.6m	Y[3]	P	N	Y
NEWFOUNDLAND/ LABRADOR	12.5m	12.5m	23m	N/S	4.2m	2.6m	2.6m	Y[4]	Y	Y	Y
NWT/ NUNAVUT	12.5m	N/S[5]	21m	N/S	4.2m	2.6m	2.6m	1,360kg	Y	N	Y
NOVA SCOTIA	12.5m	12.5m	23m	N/S	4.2m	2.6m	2.6m	1,800kg	N	N	N
ONTARIO	12.5m	12.5m	23m	N/S	4.2m	2.6m	2.6m	1,360kg[2]	N	N	Y
PRINCE EDWARD IS.	12.5m	12.5m	25m	N/S	4.2m	2.6m	2.6m	1,500kg	P	Y	Y
QUÉBEC	12.5m	12.5m	21m	N/S	4.2m	2.6m	2.6m	1,300kg[1]	P	N	Y[6]
SASKATCHEWAN	12.5m	12.5m	23m	N/S	4.2m	2.6m	2.6m	1,360kg[2,7]	N	N	Y
YUKON TERRITORIES	16.5m	16.5m	25m	N/S	4.9m	2.6m	2.6m	910kg[1]	P	N	Y

Notes to United States Towing and RV Road Laws

1 – Includes bumpers. In California, required safety devices may not extend more than 10".

2 – Excludes safety devices approved by the state.

3 – Excludes safety and energy conservation devices.

4 – Includes bumpers. Excludes devices determined to be necessary for safe and efficient operation.

5 – Excludes bumpers and safety devices.

6 – Excludes bumpers.

7 – Includes bumpers. 65' vehicle combinations are limited to designated roads and 5 miles therefrom. 55' on all other roads.

8 – Includes bumpers.

9 – In a recreation vehicle combination consisting of a pickup truck, a camper-trailer and a boat, flat bed, horse trailer, etc., the camper-trailer cannot exceed 28' in length, and the entire combination cannot exceed 60' in length. The combination cannot be operated in the seven county Metro area from 6:00 a.m. to 9:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. Monday through Friday.

10 – Includes all structured parts.

11 – A combination that includes an RV that is not more than 45' long, when operating on principal highways, may exceed the maximum length for vehicles in a combination if the combination is not more than 65' long.

12 – Includes bumpers. Excludes safety and energy conservation devices, including mirrors, turn signals, lamps, and handholds. Overall length cannot exceed 75' with second trailer not exceeding 24'. If second trailer exceeds 3,000 lbs. gross weight, must have breakaway brakes.

13 – Includes coupling in the combination measurement.

14 – Mirrors are permitted to extend beyond the total outside width of the vehicle.

15 – 13' 6" limit on some roads.

16 – 8.5' allowed on designated roads.

17 – Required lights, mirrors, or devices may not extend more than 10" on each side of the vehicle. Door handles and hinges may extend 3" on each side of the vehicle.

18 – Allows outside width to exceed 8.5' if excess is attributed to appurtenance.

19 – Excludes devices or appurtenances related to safe and efficient operation of vehicle. Clearance lights, door handles, window fasteners, handholds, door and window trim, molding and load securement devices, may extend up to 3" on each side of vehicle.

20 – Excludes safety equipment. Permits safety equipment to extend not more than 3" on each side of vehicle.

21 – Excludes mirrors and safety devices.

22 – Not to exceed 18 hours in any two week period.

23 – Mirrors, turn signals and appurtences are permitted to extend up to 6" on each side of vehicle.

24 – Mirrors and sunshades may extend up to 6" on each side of vehicle.

25 – Excludes required clearance lights, rearview mirrors, or other accessories. Allows 8.5' RVs to leave designated roads. Excludes safety devices.

26 – Permits rearview mirror to extend 5". Permits safety appliances and appurtenances such as clearance lights, door latches, door hinges, and turn signal brackets to extend 4". Sunshades may not exceed 6".

27 – Permits safety devices such as mirrors, turn signals, market lamps, steps, and handholds for entry/egress to extend 3" on each side of vehicle. Excludes mirrors. Sunshades may not exceed 6".

28 – Excludes rearview mirrors, turn signal lamps, and handholds provided they do not constitute a hazard. State can also exclude other safety devices.

29 – Gross weight requiring brakes.

30 – Must be able to stop in 40' at 20 mph.

31 – Required if weight of trailer-vehicle exceeds 40% of tow vehicle weight.

32 – Required on trailers over 1,000 lbs. unladen or 3,000 lbs. laden.

33 – Required on trailers over 3,000 lbs., or if gross weight of trailer exceeds empty weight of tow vehicle.

34 – 12-hour limit.

35 – 8-hour limit.

36 – 24-hour limit.

37 – If passenger can communicate with driver and exit can be opened from both the interior and exterior. In California, seatbelts are required.

38 – Must have free access to drive compartment.

39 – 14 years of age or older; 13 or older in HI.

40 – Prohibited where posted.

41 – Applies to all sportsman coaches and vehicles used for recreational purposes.

N/S = Not stated or no law **Y** = Yes **N** = No **P** = As posted

Notes to Canadian Towing and RV Road Laws

1 – Required if trailer exceeds 50% of tow vehicle weight. BC, YT: laden.

2 – Gross weight requiring brakes.

3 – Required on trailers over 3,000 lbs. or if gross weight of trailer exceeds empty weight of tow vehicle.

4 – See provincial regulations.

5 – Total maximum combined length of 23m. Ball hitch permitted on fifth wheel only.

6 – Seats must be equipped with safety belts.

7 – Must have access to drive compartment.

8 – Not recommended

N/S = Not stated or no law, Y = Yes, N = No, P = As posted, 2.6m = 8.5', 3.85m = 12.6', 4.2m = 13.7', 4.9m = 16', 12.5m = 41', 16.5m = 54.1', 20m = 65.6', 21m = 68.9', 21.5m = 70.5', 23m = 75.5', 25m = 82', 907 kg = 1999.6 lbs., 910 kg = 2006.2 lbs., 1300 kg = 2866 lbs., 1360 kg = 2998.2 lbs., 1400 kg = 3086.5 lbs., 1500 kg = 3306.9 lbs., 1800 kg = 3968.3 lbs.