



TRUCK CAMPING ESSENTIALS

Get Outfitted, Get Going

[Truck Camping Store – Get Outfitted, Get Going](#)

Getting ready to go truck camping? Below you will find my essential products for getting ready, getting outfitted, and getting on the road for your truck camping adventures. Truck camping is an incredibly freeing lifestyle, but is important to be both well prepared while avoiding overpacking.

If you're new here, don't miss my guide to [getting started truck camping](#) or [how to build a truck camping setup](#).

The name of the game is minimalism and multi-use when it comes to truck camping. I believe in buying the highest quality gear I can afford, while also purchasing gear that serves my other interests, like backpacking or climbing.

Note: Links below are affiliate links, this means that I get a small commission if you purchase something through [Amazon](#) or [REI](#), at absolutely no additional cost to you.

General Truck Camping Gear

[Teton Sports Camp Pad](#) – I like this solid foam mattress because it is designed to be rolled up and stored. [Read more about choosing a sleeping mattress or pad for truck camping](#).



[Marmot Plasma 15 Sleeping Bag](#) – Get a high quality down sleeping bag. 15 degrees will give you great coverage and temperature range. I've slept in the Canadian Rockies in the winter with a 15 degree bag.

[Light Cotton Sheet](#) – When temps get too hot, I switch to a simple cotton sheet. Dark colors are best.

[Pillow](#) – Regular pillow, memory foam freezes. Travel size isn't necessary since you are truck camping.

[REI Camp Xtra Chair](#) – A nice foldable chair will make life at camp a little better.



[Petzl Tikka Headlamp](#) – Having a hands free light source is crucial.

[Pee Bottle](#) – Having a place to go in the middle of the night if you are camped in a parking lot is crucial. If you're a woman, add a [GoGirl](#).



Plastic Boxes to Organize – I use two [Sterilite 106 quart boxes](#) to keep my gear neat and organized.

Curtains and/or [Magic Shades](#) – Simple black cloth curtains or the incredible Magic Shades for privacy while sleeping inside.

[Can Safe](#) – Great for peace of mind – toss one behind your seat and store some extra money, a credit card, even a spare truck key in case of emergencies.

[Plastic Paint Drop Cloth](#) – I toss one down near the entry of my truck to avoid mud, dust, etc.

Awning – I use a combination of an [8×10 plastic tarp](#), [my trekking poles](#), and bungee cords, but the wish list item would be an [ARB awning](#).



Personal Fan – If you have an inverter and dual battery (see below), this is a must for hot weather camping.

Hand / Foot Warmers – It's nice to have a few emergency hand warmers around when you have the opposite problem while camping in the winter.

[Wet Wipes](#) – This is the quick and easy way to shower while on the road, but some choose to use a solar shower.

[Bug Netting](#) – String up a large mesh netting if you plan to camp in bad mosquito areas — like we ran into on the coast of Mexico.

[ENO DoubleNest Hammock](#) – Not strictly truck camping, but it's great to have while camping in general.



[REI Half Dome 2 Tent](#) – I always carried a tent, even though I sleep in my truck. If I settled into place for a few nights, I would often set up the tent to leave behind some of my bulky gear.

Small Binoculars

Large Umbrella – Important for when you have to setup camp in the rain. I keep it behind my seat.

Snowboard Cable Lock – Very versatile to lock things up at camp (your chair, a solar panel, etc) but I also use it to lock my canopy door from the inside while sleeping.



Small Brush and Dust Pan – Clean up the dust and dirt.

Roll of Velcro – Great for sticking things (clock, lights) to your carpeted headliner.

Duct Tape – Good for pretty much anything.

Weatherstripping – For sealing around the tailgate and other open areas, prevents or minimizes dust and dirt.

[Temperature and Humidity Monitor](#) – I stick this inside my headliner so I know just how hot or cold it is while sleeping inside. I've spanned over 100 degrees!



Kitchen Gear

[Coleman Dual Burner Propane Stove](#) – Two burners will allow you to cook pretty much whatever you like, unless you want to bake.



[Propane Tank Hose Adapter](#) – This adapter will let you use a larger fuel tank and keep you going longer.



7-Gallon Reliance Water Tank – This big blue tank keeps me going for up to a week without refilling.

Titanium Pot – Something to cook up your spaghetti with. I have one titanium pot with a 1-liter capacity.

8" Non-Stick Pan – To fry up your eggs and bacon. I keep two 8" fry pans on hand.

SteriPen – Water purification is important, I have been using the SteriPen for years and haven't gotten sick.



[Chef's Knife](#) – One big chef's knife for all your vegetable cutting and cooking needs.

[Spatula Set](#)

[Plastic Spoon, Fork](#), Rigid Plastic Plate

[Nalgene Bottles](#) – I'd recommend at least two liters carrying capacity.

[Vegetable Peeler](#) – For potatoes and such — eggs with potatoes, onions, and tomatoes is excellent!

[Insulated Bowl](#) – Food cools down a lot quicker outside. Read [how to make your own DIY insulated bowl](#).

[Wooden Spoon](#)

[Flexible Cutting Board](#) – Flexible is better for packing than the rigid ones.

[Aeropress Coffee Maker](#) – Don't settle for bad coffee, make great coffee instead. Read my full guide on [how to make the best coffee while camping](#).



[Hario Coffee Grinder](#) – Grinding your coffee fresh is one of the most important steps in making great coffee.

[Insulated Coffee Mug](#)

[Spices for Cooking](#) – Salt, pepper, garlic powder, oregano, and Tapatio hot sauce are some of my must haves.

[Kitchen Bag](#) – A soft-sided bag is better to organize your awkwardly shaped kitchen stuff rather than a box.

Cooler – Something to keep your beer and fresh food closed. A [YETI cooler](#) would be the ideal, or the upgrade would be an [ARB fridge](#).

[Long Lighter for Stove](#)

[Food Box or Boxes](#) – I keep two large plastic boxes on hand to organize my food.

[Thermos 24oz Food Jar](#) – Use this to reduce your fuel usage, you can boil up pasta and dump it into the food jar to finish cooking. Lots of other uses for a food jar while truck camping.



[HydroFlask Bottle](#) – These are great for keeping your water cool in hot climates or keeping your water from freezing in cold climates.

[Hand Sanitizer](#) – I keep different sized bottles stored around the truck, with the kitchen bag, in the cab, etc.

Truck Electronics

[400w Power Inverter](#) – Makes it so you can plug in regular electronics like your computer to the car battery. One of the best things you can add to your truck camping setup.



[Deep Cycle Marine Battery](#) – Getting a second battery installed will allow you to run your electronics worry free if you combine it with...

[Battery Isolator](#) – This is what keeps the two batteries separated so you only draw from the secondary battery and not your truck's starter battery. VERY important. Read more details about my dual battery and isolator setup.

[Rechargeable LED Lanterns](#) – I prefer non-mounted lights, that way I can place them where I want them, whether that's on a picnic table, on the tailgate, or somewhere inside.

[Garmin GPS](#) – How I've been able to [drive all the way to South America](#) without getting (too) lost. I've got the [Garmin 2598LMTD](#).



Auto Emergency Gear

[Jumper Cables](#) – Your dual battery setup should help prevent the need, but you never know. They've come in handy to give jumps to other people at least.

[Snow Chains](#) – If you're heading to the mountains...

[Mixed Auto Repair Tool Set](#) – It's great to have a wide selection of tools on hand for small repairs.



[Universal Lug Wrench, 4-Way Cross Wrench](#) – Get a burly cross style lug wrench.



[Fire Extinguisher](#) – Hopefully never needed.

[Road Safety Triangle Kit](#)



Clothing and Personal Gear

[Quick Dry Travel Towel](#) – When you find a place to shower every couple weeks, you'll need a quick dry towel.

[Merino Wool Shirts](#) – being on the road isn't conducive to doing laundry. Merino wool shirts don't stink like cotton or polyester.

[MontBell Alpine Light Down Jacket](#) – A nice mid-weight down jacket will keep you warm in all but the most severe climates.

[Patagonia Thermal Underwear](#) – Great for shoulder season or winter camping.

[Feathered Friends Jackorack Wind Jacket](#) – This doubles as a rain jacket in light drizzles, but I mostly rely on the aforementioned umbrella when it's raining. [Read about the importance of a wind jacket](#), one of my most used pieces of gear.



[Mountain Hardwear Power Stretch Fleece Gloves](#)

[Feathered Friends Down Booties](#) – These are amazing for cold nights at camp, seriously!

Sleeping Socks – These [SmartWool Mountaineering Socks](#) make a good substitution to keep your feet toasty warm.

[OR Seattle Sombrero Sun Hat](#)

Sun Glasses

All Purpose Shoes – Minimize the number of shoes you have. Try to find something that serves for your hobbies (say climbing or hiking) and around camp and in town.

Slide-On Sandals – Something you can wear with socks works best for when you need to quickly hop out of the truck in the evenings or mornings.

Buff – These things serve so many purposes, and it has become indispensable while camping.

Duffel Bag – I organize my regular clothes and camping specific clothes in a medium sized duffel bag rather than a box.

Electronics

Unlocked Cellphone – It can double as a mobile hotspot with your data plan so you can access the internet on your laptop.

Kindle Paperwhite – The best way to read while traveling. Pick up one of these amazing road trip books or these top travel inspiration reads.

BioLite SolarPanel 5+ – With a dual battery setup you don't need solar power, but I like a small portable device to charge little things if I'm camped out for a while. The sun is shining, seems like a waste not to take advantage of it. Read more about my thoughts on the BioLite SolarPanel 5+.



[Sony NEX-6](#) – You need something to capture all those amazing truck camping adventures. The Sony NEX-6 is a mirrorless camera (smaller and more portable than a DSLR) that packs a big punch.



[Ravelli Camera Tripod](#) – A sturdy camera tripod to capture amazing nature or night shots.



[DOSS Bluetooth Speaker](#) – If you're not camped near anyone else, it's great for putting on a podcast, music, or watching a movie at night on your laptop.

[Classic iPod](#) – You could use your phone, but I love having a dedicated music player to load up with tons of gigabytes worth of music, books on tape, etc.

[SPOT GPS Messenger](#) – How I let my friends and loved ones know that everything is alright when I'm camped way off the grid with no cell service.

[GoPro](#) – The GoPro is amazing for taking action shots, underwater shots, or even mounting it to the roof of your truck and getting shots as you drive.

[External Hard Drive](#) – Backup your photos regularly and hide the external hard drive away from your computer in case of theft.

[Samsung Laptop Ultrabook](#) – Load it up with movies, start a blog about your truck camping adventures, or catch up on emails offline.

[AAA Batteries](#), [AA Batteries](#) – Spare batteries for headlamps, lights, etc.

Desk to Dirtbag Products



My book [Big Travel, Small Budget](#) has a chapter on overlanding aka truck camping, along with other tips to help you travel further for cheaper.



This is just for fun, if you want to support this site. Grab a [Desk to Dirtbag "Go Outside" tee](#) for use while you are out there truck camping and on the road.

Get Going

So there you have it! This is the truck camping gear and equipment that I carry with me, use, and recommend.

Much of this gear has been with me since the beginning (years ago and many 10's of thousands of miles) and taken me truck camping from Seattle to the Canadian Rockies to the beaches of Central America to sleeping at 14,000 feet in the Peruvian Andes... And everywhere in between.

Purchasing gear through the Desk to Dirtbag Truck Camping Store goes directly toward bringing you more amazing FREE content from my travels and adventures. You can also [donate a tank of gas or cup of coffee](#) if you've found this content helpful, or purchase other gear directly through the [Desk to Dirtbag Shop](#).

Further Reading

[Join the private Facebook group Pickup Truck Camping](#) to ask questions and share your insights. We are now over 6,000 members!

- [How to Build the Ultimate Truck Camper Setup – Step by Step Directions](#)
- [Truck Camping Questions – Four Considerations When Buying a New Canopy](#)
- [What You Need to Get Started Truck Camping](#)
- [How to Make the World's Best Cup of Coffee While Camping](#)
- [Truck Camping – Dual Battery Setup in a Toyota 22RE](#)
- [Truck Camping 101 – Elevated Sleeping Platform versus the Back Shelf Approach](#)
- [Truck Camping – A Guide to Outfitting and Living in the Back of Your Pickup](#)
- [Casino Camping – Free Drinks, Cheap Food, Cheap Entertainment, and Free Money](#)
- [Truck Camping Tips – Choosing a Sleeping Pad and Mattress](#)
- [7 Awesome Products for Life on the Road](#)

- [How to Turn Your Truck into an RV – Popular Mechanics](#)
- [How to Overland through Central America – Zero to Travel Podcast](#)