FREE SAMPLE · CHAPTER 1

Workcamping Without Regrets

How Workcampers and Campground Owners Can Find the Right Fit, Build Strong Teams, and Make Every Season Count

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RV Life Series

MEGABYTES PUBLISHING

Shared with members of the Megabytes Readers Club

CHAPTER 1

THE FIRST SEASON: WHY WE WENT

We didn't go looking for a new way to live. We went looking for a place to park near our son.

He'd been hurt that spring. It was a sports injury, the kind that heals if you let it and takes its own time doing it. He was a grown man and would have told you he didn't need his parents hovering. Val and I agreed with him completely and went anyway.

By then we'd been traveling in the motorhome for years. We knew which campgrounds had level sites, which had good water pressure, and which had a pool that was always opening next week. What we'd never done was sit in one for a whole season, forty feet of us, with nothing on the calendar except waiting for a young man to mend. That gets expensive, and I'm not a man who waits well.

We had heard the word workcamping. A friend had told us about a website where campgrounds look for people like us, people who live in an RV and will work for part of what it costs to stay. We were curious and had no idea where to start, so we asked the manager of the campground where we were parked. He said he got all of his staff off that website.

That was all Val needed. She found an ad from a campground a short drive from our son, and our first season began.

Looking back, the work was the easy part. The hard part was not knowing what we were looking at. Most people don't, on either side of the office counter. A family that has always had an address doesn't know how to judge a job that comes with a campsite. An owner who has never lived in an RV doesn't know what an applicant is weighing when they decide whether to drive their house across the country for him. This book is meant to close that gap. Once you've done one season, the next one is easier. This chapter starts with what workcamping is.

What workcamping is

Workcamping is work arranged around living in an RV. The worker usually gets some mix of wages, a campsite, utilities and a place they want to be for a period of time. The campground or agency gets time, skill and someone on the property.

The campsite changes the relationship. The person you hired is also your neighbor, the face guests see, and the one closest when something breaks after dark. That doesn't make them responsible for everything. It does mean both of you have to decide where the job ends and home begins.

The title tells you less than you'd think. "Maintenance" can mean mowing grass or rewiring a pedestal. "Host" can mean a volunteer, an employee or a contractor. Before you judge any opportunity, find out what an ordinary day looks like.

The kinds of arrangements

These are the arrangements you're most likely to see. Val and I have worked in most of them.

Paid work with a site. You earn wages and get a place to park, often with utilities. Our first campground was this kind.

Site exchange. You work a stated number of hours in return for the campsite. Any other hours may or may not be paid. Get the numbers in writing.

Volunteer hosting. Parks and nonprofits provide a site in return for service and pay no wages. You still have to cover food, fuel, insurance and repairs yourself.

A government contract. Some public campgrounds hire hosts by bid. You run as a small business and the agency pays the contract. We've spent four summers this way, and Chapter 9 explains how it works.

Management. A property may need someone to supervise staff, run the books and handle what the staff can't. More responsibility should come with more authority and more pay. We spent a season as management.

Short, hard work. Harvests, events, holiday warehouses and oilfield gate guarding can pay well for a few weeks or months. They aren't campground jobs, and many are physically demanding. Val worked a sugar beet harvest, and the last chapter tells about it.

One job can mix these. Whatever the arrangement, the agreement decides what it really is. The words in the advertisement don't always tell the whole story.

Why people do it

Most people come for more than one reason. Ours were family, money and curiosity.

To make the trip possible. A free site and a paycheck can stretch a retirement or a travel fund a long way. Count what the job costs too. Chapter 2 does the arithmetic.

To follow the weather. RVers talk about following 70 degrees: north for summer, south for winter. We did that for years, and a seasonal job can anchor each end of the trip.

To stay long enough to know a place. Moving every few days, you see the famous spots. Staying a season, you find a church, a favorite diner and the back roads. Val calls it exploring like a local.

To be useful. A lot of retirees aren't ready to stop working. They just don't want a full-time career anymore. A campground lets you use what you know without carrying what you used to carry.

To learn. Val learned electrical work from an owner who liked to teach. I learned how a campground makes and loses money, and it got me wondering whether we'd like to own one.

Two people in one RV can have different reasons, and that's fine. Say them out loud before you take a job. Chapter 4 comes back to it.

If you're thinking about workcamping

Before you look at a single listing, write down four things you want from the season.

1. **Work.** What would you each like to do, and what won't you do?

2. **Money.** Do you need income, or is a free site enough?
3. **Place.** Where do you want to be, and what has to be nearby: family, doctors, a church?
4. **Time.** How many hours a week can each of you give, and for how many months?

Then judge every offer against that list, not against the photographs in the ad.

If you own a campground

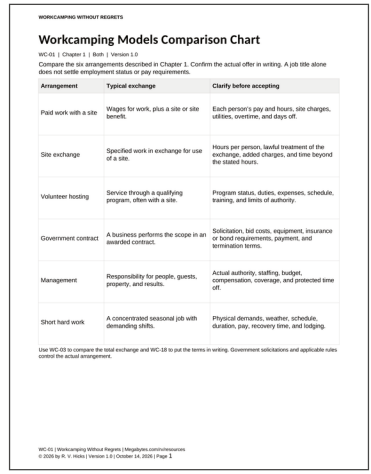
Your applicants are deciding something most job seekers never face. They're choosing where their house will sit for three to six months, who their neighbors will be, and how far they'll be from a doctor and their grandchildren. Many owners have never lived that way, so they leave out the facts a workcamper needs most.

Know why people apply. A retired couple who want three days off together, a family that needs a stable base for school, and a single worker looking for full-time pay may all be good hires. They aren't applying for the same life. Tell them plainly what the job, the pay, the site and the time off really are, and the right ones will recognize themselves in your ad.

The forms for this chapter

The **Workcamping Models Comparison Chart** lays the arrangements side by side. The **Motivation and Priorities Worksheet** asks each of you the four questions above: work, money, place and time. Fill it out before you fall in love with a destination.

Chapter 1 Forms



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Workcamping Models Comparison Chart

WC-01 | Chapter 1 | Both | Version 1.0

Compare the six arrangements described in Chapter 1. Confirm the actual offer in writing. A job title alone does not settle employment status or pay requirements.

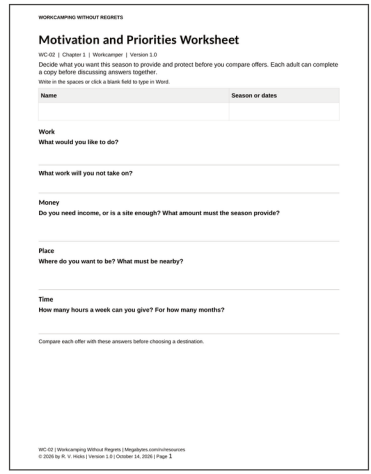
Arrangement	Typical exchange	Clarify before accepting
Paid work with a site	Wages for work, plus a site or site benefit.	Each person's pay and hours, site charges, utilities, overtime, and days off.
Site exchange	Specified work in exchange for use of a site.	Hours per person, lawful treatment of the exchange, added charges, and time beyond the stated hours.
Volunteer hosting	Service through a qualifying program, often with a site.	Program status, duties, expenses, schedule, training, and limits of authority.
Government contract	A business performs the scope in an awarded contract.	Solicitation, bid costs, equipment, insurance or bond requirements, payment, and termination terms.
Management	Responsibility for people, guests, property, and results.	Actual authority, staffing, budget, compensation, coverage, and protected time off.
Short hard work	A concentrated seasonal job with demanding shifts.	Physical demands, weather, schedule, duration, pay, recovery time, and lodging.

Use WC-03 to compare the total exchange and WC-18 to put the terms in writing. Government solicitations and applicable rules control the actual arrangement.

WC-01 | Workcamping Without Regrets | Megabytes.com/rv/resources
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WC-01 Workcamping Models Comparison Chart

Both | 1 page



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Motivation and Priorities Worksheet

WC-02 | Chapter 1 | Workcamper | Version 1.0

Decide what you want this season to provide and protect before you compare offers. Each adult can complete a copy before discussing answers together.

Write in the spaces or click a blank field to type in Word.

Name	Season or dates

Work

What would you like to do?

What work will you not take on?

Money

Do you need income, or is a site enough? What amount must the season provide?

Place

Where do you want to be? What must be nearby?

Time

How many hours a week can you give? For how many months?

Compare each offer with these answers before choosing a destination.

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WC-02 Motivation and Priorities Worksheet

Workcamper | 2 pages

Full size editable forms and printable PDFs at Megabytes.com/rv/resources

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