

Trailer and RV Travel

Traveling with a trailer need not be a wearisome experience. A little planning and some additional experience behind the wheel, however, are helpful.

First, you should ensure that your trailer and related equipment comply with the laws of your state and all other states through which you intend to travel. These regulations, which vary widely, are summarized in the chart below. Then, if you still have questions, consult your AAA/CAA club.

Make certain that your towing vehicle is ready to handle the weight of the trailer. The rear springs should be strong enough to maintain the car at a nearly level position. Check the shock absorbers and wheel alignment. Adding a little air to the rear tires-usually no more than 4 or 5 pounds and never exceeding the manufacture's specification-can be helpful.

Load your car and trailer for optimum stability on the road. Keep heavy items out of the trunk and rear seat to help the car absorb the weight of the trailer. Load the trailer with about 60 percent of the weight toward the front and 40 percent toward the rear. To provide a low center of gravity, place the heaviest items near the floor.

Cabinet doors and drawers are usually made so they will remain closed in transit. Most importantly, pack the cabinets, drawers and stowage compartments securely in order to limit movement of contents. Secure large articles such as bicycles tightly to outside carriers rather than laying them inside where, unsecured, they can become dangerous during sudden stops.

If your trailer has an independent braking system, check the brakes before starting out. Inspect the car and trailer, paying particular attention to the hitch, the tires on both vehicles, safety chains, the load and how well both vehicles seem to remain level. On trailers so equipped, check the water, electrical and LP gas systems. It is a good practice to repeat the visual inspection at each stop along your route. Unusual noises should be investigated immediately, after pulling well off the highway. ***Do not drive an unstable car-trailer combination***; a swaying trailer is both tiring and hazardous.

The two main causes of instability on the road are high speeds and traveling downhill. To minimize their ill effects, always obey the speed limit for towed vehicles. Anticipate downhill grades: Slow up before, not after, starting the descent and use a lower gear to keep from overworking the brakes. Use a lower gear on uphill pulls as well. You will get more power at less cost to your car. On long grades use the climbing lane if there is one, or pull over when the opportunity permits to let faster traffic pass.

Since a car-trailer combination is heavier and longer than a car alone, you will need to allow a greater distance for stopping, both in the city and on the open road. More time and distance also are required for passing. Remember that air suction, sometimes created when you overtake another vehicle, can cause both to lurch unexpectedly.

Keep in mind, too, that when turning corners or rounding curves, the trailer wheels will not follow the same track as your car's rear wheels. They will travel considerably closer to the inside of the curve. To compensate, and to avoid running over the curb or off the pavement, you will have to start your turn not only from farther to the outside but also from farther into the curve or intersection. Proceed with deliberation-and practice.

Practice also is the key word for mastering the art of backing a trailer. Although it is very different from backing a car, it can be relatively simple. First place your hand at the bottom of the steering wheel, then move your hand in the same direction you want the trailer to go. For example, move your hand left to move the trailer left. Should the trailer jackknife, pull forward, straighten up, then try again.

Before starting out, be sure to contact your AAA/CAA club for a routing that affords the most favorable terrain and road conditions for trailer travel.

WARNING!

NEVER CARRY EXTRA GASOLINE, IN ANY KIND OF CONTAINER.

Combustion from fumes or accident is lethal possibility.

TRAILER REGULATIONS

Parentheses indicate referral to Special Notes section

State/Province	TRAILER SIZE LIMITS				TRAILER BRAKES	RIDING PERMITTED		CAMPING PERMITTED
	Length	Combined Trailer/Towing Vehicle	Width	Height	Independent Brake System (A)	In Towed Trailer	In Pickup Camper	In State Rest Areas
United States:								
Alabama	40'	60'	8'	13 1/2'	3,000 lbs.	No	Yes	No
Alaska	40'	75'	8 1/2'	14'	5,000 lbs.	No	Yes	As posted
Arizona	Varies	65'	8'	13 1/2'	3,000 lbs.	Yes (C)	Yes	No tents
Arkansas	-	-	8 1/2'	13 1/2'	3,000 lbs.	No	-	No
California	40'	65'	8 1/2'	14'	1,500 lbs.	No (F)	Yes (F)	No
Colorado	45'	70'	8' 1/2"	13'	3,000 lbs.	No	Yes	No
Connecticut	45'	60'	8 1/2'	13 1/2'	3,000 lbs.	No	Yes	No
Delaware	40'	70'	8' 1/2"	13' 1/2"	4,000 lbs.	No	NR (B)	No
D.C.	40'	55'	8'	13'	3,000 lbs.	No	Yes	-
Florida	48'	65'	8 1/2'	13 1/2'	3,000 lbs.	No	Yes	As posted
Georgia	-	55'	8'	13 1/2'	3,000 lbs.	No	NR (B)	No
Hawaii	40'	65'	9'	13 1/2'	3,000 lbs.	No	Yes	-
Idaho	48'	75'	8 1/2'	14'	1,500 lbs.	No	Yes	No
Illinois	42'	60'	8'	13 1/2'	3,000 lbs.	No	NR (B)	No
Indiana	-	60'	8' 1/2"	13' 1/2"	3,000 lbs.	Yes	Yes	No
Iowa	-	65'	8 1/2'	13 1/2'	3,000 lbs.	Yes	Yes	No
Kansas	45'	Varies	8' 1/2"	14'	Yes	No	Yes (J)	Yes
Kentucky	-	65'	8'	13' 1/2"	Not required	Yes	Yes	No
Louisiana	30'	70'	8'	13' 1/2"	3,000 lbs.	No	Yes	No
Maine	45'	65'	8' 1/2"	13' 1/2"	3,000 lbs.	No	Yes	As posted
Maryland	-	55'	8' 1/2"	13' 1/2"	3,000 lbs.	No	Yes	No
Massachusetts	33'	-	8' 1/2"	13' 1/2"	10,000 lbs.	No	Yes	No
				13'				

Michigan	-	60' (M)	8'	1/2"	3,000 lbs.	Yes	Yes	As posted
Minnesota	40'	60'	8' 1/2"	13' 1/2"	3,000 lbs.	NR (B)	NR (B)	As posted
Mississippi	-	50'	8' 1/2"	13' 1/2"	2,000 lbs.	No	No	-
Missouri	-	60'	8'	13' 1/2"	Not required	Yes	Yes	As posted
Montana	-	65'	8' 1/2"	13' 1/2"	3,000 lbs.	No (N)	Yes	As posted
Nebraska	40'	65'	8' 1/2"	14' 1/2"	3,000 lbs.	Yes	Yes	No
Nevada	-	70'	8' 1/2"	14'	3,000 lbs. (G)	No	Yes	As posted
New Hampshire	-	48'	8'	13' 1/2"	1,500 lbs.	No	Yes	No
New Jersey	40'	48'	8'	13' 1/2"	3,000 lbs.	NR (B)	NR (B)	Yes
New Mexico	40'	65'	8'	14'	3,000 lbs.	No	Yes	Yes
New York	-	60' (E)	8'	13' 1/2"	3,000 lbs.	No	Yes	As posted
North Carolina	48'	60'	8' 1/2"	13' 1/2"	1,000 lbs.	Yes	Yes	No
North Dakota	60'	75'	8' 1/2"	14'	Required	No (M)	Yes	NR (B)
Ohio	-	65'	8' 1/2"	13' 1/2"	2,000 lbs.	No	Yes	No
Oklahoma	-	65'	8'	13'	3,000 lbs.	No	Yes	Yes
Oregon	35'	(F)	8' 1/2"	14'	None (F)	No (M)	Yes	No
Pennsylvania	40'	60'	8 1/2'	13' 1/2"	3,000 lbs.	No (F)	Yes	No
Rhode Island	48 1/2'	60'	8 1/2'	13 1/2'	4,000 lbs.	No	Yes	As posted
South Carolina	53'	-	8 1/2'	13 1/2'	3,000 lbs.	No	Yes (J)	No
South Dakota	-	70' (J)	8 1/2'	14'	3,000 lbs.	No (M)	Yes	No
Tennessee	48'	65'	8'	13 1/2'	3,000 lbs.	Yes (J)	Yes (J)	No
Texas	-	65'	8 1/2'	14'	4,500 lbs.	No	Yes	Yes
Utah	48'	65'	8 1/2'	14'	2,000 lbs.	No	-	As posted
Vermont	48'	65'	8 1/2'	13 1/2'	3,000 lbs.	No	Yes	No
Virginia	-	65'	8 1/2'	13 1/2'	3,000 lbs.	No	Yes	No
Washington	48'	75'	8 1/2'	14'	3,000 lbs. (F)	No	Yes	No
West Virginia	40	65'	8'	13 1/2'	3,000 lbs.	NR (B)	NR (B)	No
Wisconsin	40'	65'	8 1/2'	13 1/2'	3,000 lbs.	No (L)	Yes	No
Wyoming	60'	85'	8 1/2'	14'	3,000 lbs.	No	Yes	No
Canada								
Alberta	-	20 m	2.6 m	3.85 m	909 kg	No	Yes (I)	No
British Columbia	12.5 m	20 m	2.6 m	4.15 m	1,400 kg	No	NR	No

Manitoba	12.5 m	21.5 m	2.6 m	4.15 m	910 kg	No	Yes	As posted
New Brunswick	16.2 m	23 m	2.6 m	4.15 m	1.5 tons	No	No	As posted
New Foundland	-	23 m	2.6 m	4.1 m	Not required (F)	NR (B)	NR (B)	As posted
NWT Nunavit	-	25 m	-	-	1,360 kg	No	Yes (I)	-
Nova Scotia	14.65 m	23 m	2.6 m	4.15 m	1,800 kg	No	Yes (J)	Yes
Ontario	12.5 m	23 m	2.6 m	4.15 m	1,360 kg	No	-	NR (B)
Prince Edward Is.	16.2 m	23 m	2.6 m	4.5 m	1,500 kg	Yes	Yes	As posted
Quebec	12.5 m	23 m	2.6 m	4.15 m	1,300 tons	No	Yes	No
Saskatchewan	16.2 m	23 m	2.6 m	4.15 m	1,360	No	Yes	No
Yukon Territory	-	22 m	2.5 m	4.2 m	910 kg	No	Yes	No

SPECIAL NOTES

- (A) Required if gross weight exceeds amount shown
- (B) No regulations
- (C) Permitted but not recommended (D) Maximum width 8 ft. on Interstate
- (E) Total 55 ft. if trailer exceeds 45 ft.
- (F) Check with state/province for exceptions and restrictions
- (G) If trailer was manufactured after July 1, 1975, independent braking system is required when gross weight is 1,500 lbs. or more
- (H) Person must be seated in a regular passenger seat or in a seat permanently mounted to camper
- (I) Owner's family only
- (J) Special provisions apply
- (K) Required on second towed vehicle
- (L) Permitted in fifth-wheelers only
- (M) Special provisions apply to fifth-wheelers

RV RESTRICTIONS

- ALABAMA**-House trailers more than 40 ft. long or 8 ft. wide excluded without state permit.
- CALIFORNIA**-Maximum of one boat or general utility trailer may be towed behind passenger of pleasure vehicles.
- COLORADO**-No trailers permitted on Broadmoor-Chyenne Mountain Highway Or Pikes Peak Auto Highway.
- CONNECTICUT**-Recreational Vehicles whose limits exceed 7 1/2 ft. wide, 8 ft. high, 24 ft long and 7,500 lbs. are prohibited on Merritt and Wilbur Parkways.
- ILLINOIS**-No trailers on bridge between Fulton, Illinois, and Clinton, Iowa.
- IOWA**-Travel trailers, house trailers and mobile homes over 3,000 lbs. are required to have brakes, equalizing hitches and sway control.
- MARYLAND**-No vehicles with bottled gas permitted in Baltimore Harbor Tunnel and Fort McHenry Tunnel.
- MINNESOTA**-Breakaway brakes are required for trailers weighing 6,000 lbs. gross and over.
- MISSISSIPPI**-Trailers longer than 32 ft. prohibited on Natchez Trace.
- MONTANA**-See Glacier National Park for RV restrictions on the Going-to-the-Sun Road.
- NEVADA**-More than one boat or general utility trailer may be towed behind passenger or pleasure vehicles; check with state restrictions.
- NEW YORK**-Use on most parkways prohibited; check with state for restrictions.
- NORTH CAROLINA**-Independent brake system required on house trailers weighing more than 1,000 lbs. and manufactured after December 31, 1974.
- UTAH**-Breakaway braking system required if over 3,000 lbs.

VIRGINIA-No camping vehicles carrying more than two non-permanently mounted 45 lbs. bottled gas tanks with valves closed: Hampton Roads Bridge Tunnel, Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel and Norfolk-Portsmouth Tunnel.

WISCONSIN-Riding in fifth-wheel trailers permitted under certain conditions.