Keith's Guide to RV Trip Planning

There are numerous trip planning apps you can choose from. I have tried most of them and actually find that NONE of them are all inclusive. I use Google maps, on my Iphone, while actually driving (I have a magnetic dash mount for my phone to provide hands free use). It is the most commonly used app and, therefore, has the best traffic updates. My experience has shown me that Google maps is the best for navigation and the RV planning apps I have seen do NOT export a map to Google. However, it is not perfect (NONE of the apps are) and on rare occasions may try to reroute you on some 'edgy' route so always be on guard.

Anytime you are not sure/comfortable with a route any app sends you on, pull over and check it out. If you have to, pull over in a wide spot on interstate (the best move is to take an off ramp and pull over).

I use 3 apps for my planning.

1. I use **RV Life Campground Reviews** to pick campgrounds. You don't have to register but the FREE registration gives a LOT more info on each location (including hookups and amenities).
2. I use **Google Maps** to plan the route and for navigation.
   If you have a Google account, (gmail, calendar, google drive, etc.) and Google Chrome on your device (Iphone for me), you can sync your bookmarks between devices.
3. I use **Google My Maps** to record the route, list POIs, hiking trails, and tons of other info.

Some apps will link/export your route plans to some GPS devices but I find that gps devices have led me astray far too often. I have also used apps like Waze but my experience has been pretty horrible at times with each one. I have RV Trip Wizard but just use it for fun (I got a free copy). **NO APP** is all inclusive with low clearance warnings – **NONE** – so don't trust them. Also, call the campground, if in doubt about the roads getting there, and ask them.

Using Google maps allows me to save my entire Google map trip and each daily trip as a Google Chrome bookmark that I can easily pull up for daily driving on the trip. Here's how to bookmark....
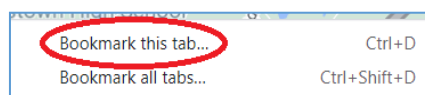
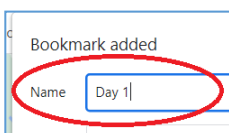A. Click on the three dots in the upper right corner of your browser.
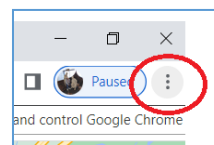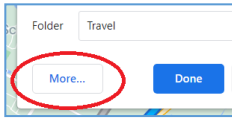

B. Click on Bookmarks.
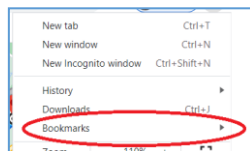
C. Select Bookmark this tab.

D. Enter a name for this map.

E. Select the Bookmark Folder you want to save to.

Bookmark added

Name   Day 1

Folder   Travel

Folder   Travel

More...   Done
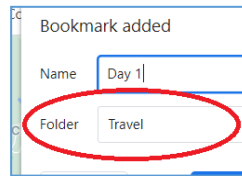
If you do not see the folder you want, click on More and locate it.

Name   Day 1

Folder   Travel

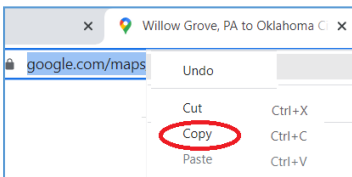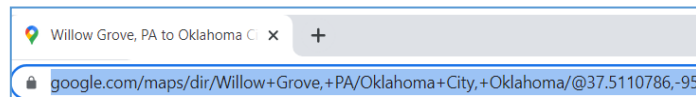F. Click on DONE.

More...   Done
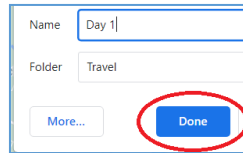
To access this map later, simply open the bookmark folder and click on the bookmark.

Day 1   Travel

Another option is to text or email it to yourself.

Highlight the complete URL.

Willow Grove, PA to Oklahoma C   ×   +

google.com/maps/dir/Willow+Grove,+PA/Oklahoma+City,+Oklahoma/@37.5110786,-95

×   Willow Grove, PA to Oklahoma C   ×

google.com/maps   Undo

Cut   Ctrl+X

Copy   Ctrl+C

Paste   Ctrl+V

Copy it. RIGHT click on the box and select Copy (or use the Ctrl – C shortcut).

Paste it into a text or email and send it to yourself.

On to the planning:

First, do your trip planning on a laptop or desktop at home. The bigger screen is a must for some of the screens you will be examining.

I will cover planning with:
1. Google Maps
2. My Maps (by Google)
3. RV Trip Wizard

In my example, we are traveling
From: Willow Grove, PA
To: Oklahoma City, Oklahoma

Basic choices.
Decide how far you would like to drive in one day. We often make the first day a longer day. We hook up the RV and have everything ready to go the night before so we can get an earlier start. We target 300 miles per day.
You can save the entire route as a bookmark now. I do this in case I have to make major changes later.

Part of your daily distance may be determined by the total mileage.
For instance, if the total trip mileage is 640 miles, you will most likely want to shoot for something like 320 miles each day or 340 the first day and 300 the second day.

The route I use in my examples is 1,384 miles. This results in 4.61 days at 300 mi/day (1384/300). This is fine with me as the fifth, and last, travel day getting to the destination is a shorter/easier day (184 mi). Also, this gives me flexibility to make other days shorter if needed. Occasionally, I find the desired distance would leave us in Nowhereville – no acceptable campgrounds within an acceptable distance from the location – and I prefer to shorten the day a little if that helps.
However, you can choose to average this to 4 longer days (346 mi/day), average it over 5 shorter days (277 mi/day), or any combo. If the route is very long, you should schedule a 'rest' day with no driving in the middle.

We did an 8,000+ mi 8 week trip from NJ to out West then back and had a rest day each way.
I will use 300 mi/day as my target distance.

Another consideration is to move to another campground closer to some activities or drive a longer way from a central location daily. Keep in mind that moving means a wasted day. I will not move, and lose a day, if the choices result in the same number of days – just my preference.

# **Planning a route with Google Maps:**
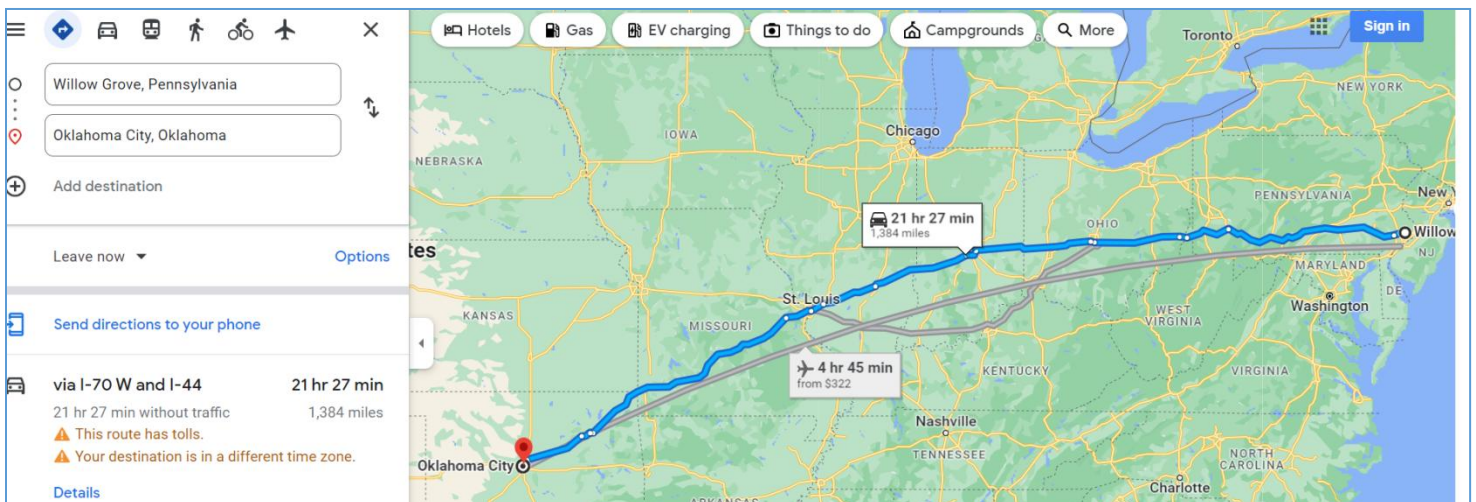
Start by entering your starting point and ending point into Google Maps. This trip comes up as 1,384 miles.

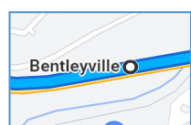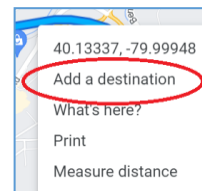1. Look for where 300 miles would place you.
Start by checking out the little white dots along the route. Point your mouse at the dot and hover there.

A box will pop up with driving directions and typically will show the distance from your starting point (342mi in the example). →
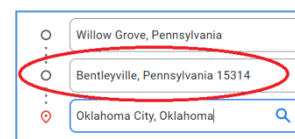

Keep left at the fork to continue on I-470 W, follow signs for Columbus
Distance 342 mi
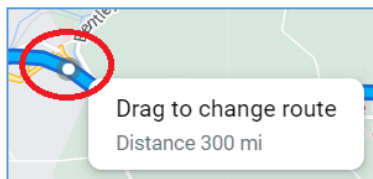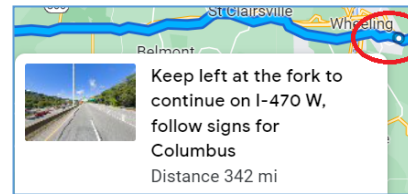
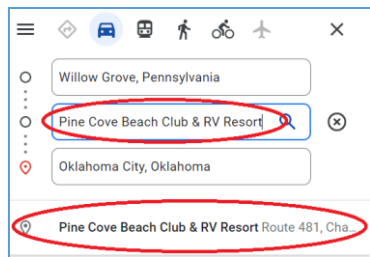← Once you have an idea ABOUT where to stop, zoom in and point your cursor at the route. It will tell you the distance.

Drag to change route
Distance 300 mi

2. Right Click on the dot and select *Add a destination* from the pop-up box. →

40.13337, -79.99948
Add a destination
What's here?
Print
Measure distance

Bentleyville ⃝

← It will add a stop onto your route (Bentleyville in the example). →

⃝ Willow Grove, Pennsylvania
⃝ Bentleyville, Pennsylvania 15314
⃝ Oklahoma City, Oklahoma

3. Look up the campgrounds near that point and determine which one you want to stay at.
We use Campground Reviews to pick where we want to stay.

⃝ Willow Grove, Pennsylvania
⃝ Pine Cove Beach Club & RV Resort
⃝ Oklahoma City, Oklahoma
⃝ Pine Cove Beach Club & RV Resort Route 481, Cha...

4. Once you have the campground name, try to add it as a stop in place of the stop you just placed.

← Type over the text in the box. Enter the campground name. If it is recognized, it will appear just below where you typed it in. Simply hit ENTER.
If it is not recognized, add it by using the street address.

5.
⃝ Willow Grove, Pennsylvania
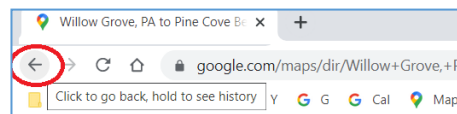⃝ Pine Cove Beach Club & RV Resort, 1495
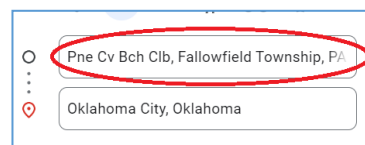⃝ Oklahoma City, Oklahoma ⊗
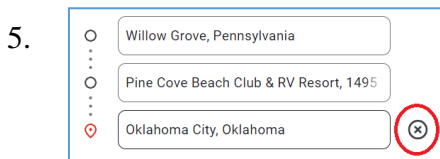
← Delete your final destination.

6. Save this as a daily travel map with a bookmark or any other option you may prefer. You can copy the url and email, or text, it to yourself or bookmark it if your phone is synced to you Google bookmarks.

Now we have to update the map for the next leg by removing this leg of the trip.

7. Go back to the previous map by clicking on the back button in the upper left corner. →

Willow Grove, PA to Pine Cove Be ✕ +
← → C ⌂ 🔒 google.com/maps/dir/Willow+Grove,+PA
Click to go back, hold to see history   Y G G G Cal 📍 Map

8.
⃝ Willow Grove, Pennsylvania ⊗
⃝ Pne Cv Bch Clb, Fallowfield Township, PA
⃝ Oklahoma City, Oklahoma

← Remove the previous starting point so the last stop becomes your new starting point. →

⃝ Pne Cv Bch Clb, Fallowfield Township, PA
⃝ Oklahoma City, Oklahoma

Repeat steps 1-8 until you complete the trip.

Critical notes:

If you decide to alter a route from the one Google suggests, you need to mark this change. Saving it, as is, will result in Google reverting back to the route WITHOUT your change when you open it back up later.


For instance, Google maps routes us through the Baltimore Harbor tunnel when we have to go past Baltimore, MD. →
However, you are NOT allowed to go through the tunnel with an RV carrying LP gas tanks. We have to take the Beltway over the Francis Scott Key bridge instead.
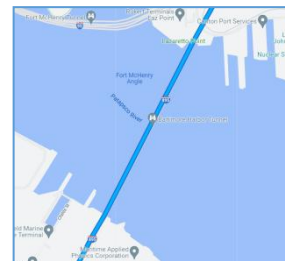
If I just DRAG the route over →
and save it this way, it will revert back and send us through the tunnel when I open the map later.
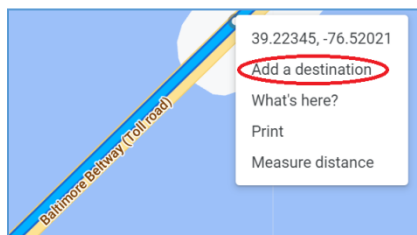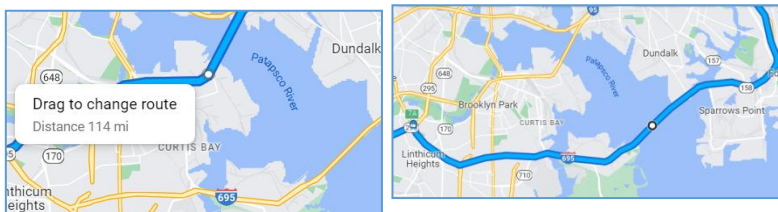
To avoid this, I add a stop on the bridge then save it.
You will need to 'continue on' when you reach this point but that is easy to do.
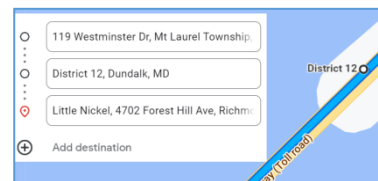
I always use Google maps with street view to check out side roads / country lanes for low clearances the apps might miss. I know of a low clearance that I have not found identified in ANY app. It is a road that goes through a train underpass heading into the little town of Barboursville, WV. →
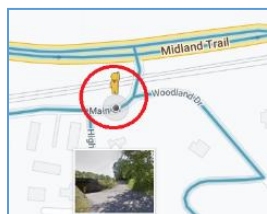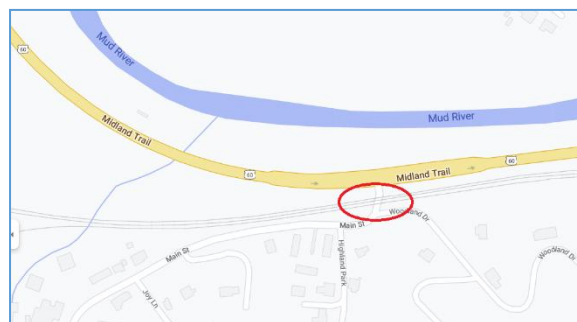
To see this at Google street view, click on the street view icon [image] (the little man– lower right corner)
← and drag it to the street you want to view at street level.

You can maneuver along the road and see a realistic view. →
← Here you see the 12' 6" clearance sign.
This is also quite useful to see what the approach to the campground looks like.

Google My Maps.

Once I have all my routes set,
I like to place everything into **Google My Maps**. This is different from regular basic Google Maps.
It allows you to add tons of other info.

To access My Maps, log into your Google account then click on the **9 dots** in the upper right →
corner and select Maps. I use a bookmark (once you are in My Maps, save it as a bookmark.)
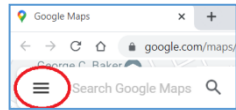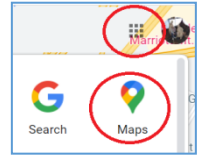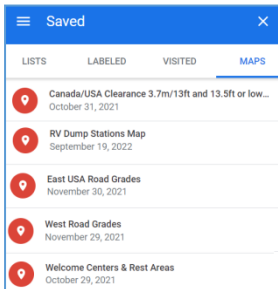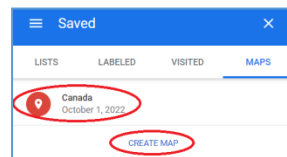
← Click on the 3 bars in the upper left corner and select **Your Places**. →
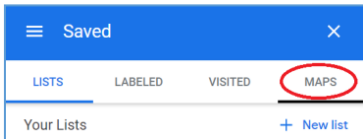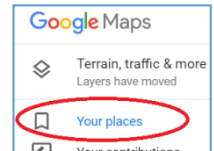
← Select **Maps**. You are now in Google My Maps.

You can create a new map or open a saved map. →

← Also, I have saved several free – shared maps and a couple I paid for. They are quite handy and you can import them into and trip you plan. Once you import them, you can turn them on or off as you can really clutter up a map quickly this way.

1. Create a new map. Name the map by clicking on
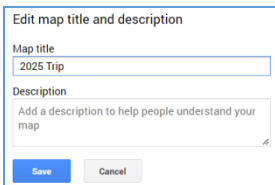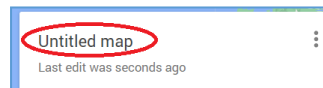
← Type the map name in then click **Save**.

Your map is now saved without any trip data.

You can create a driving route or layers, such as a list of interesting hikes. Everything will be in layers. Driving Direction layers have a limit of x entries each but you can do multiple driving levels. This can be the trip out, major legs of the trip, and the return trip.
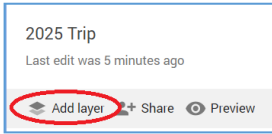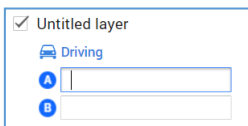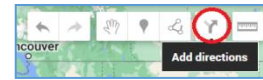
← To add a new layer, click on **Add Layer**.
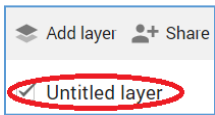
← To name a layer, click on it then type the name in and hit **Save**. →
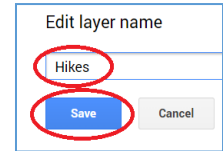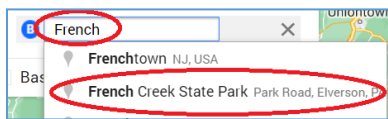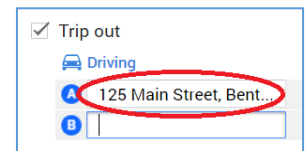
Route Directions:

1. To start a route directions layer, click on the **Add Directions** icon. →

← This will open a new box on the left. You can edit the name by clicking on it then type the name in and hit **Save**.

To add a starting point or stop into the route, type the address into the first empty line of the Driving directions box. →

← Some stops can be entered using the name of the location. It will show it in a drop-down box if recognized. This works well with Campgrounds, hotels, restaurants, and such.

As you add on stops, each will be lettered on the map. →
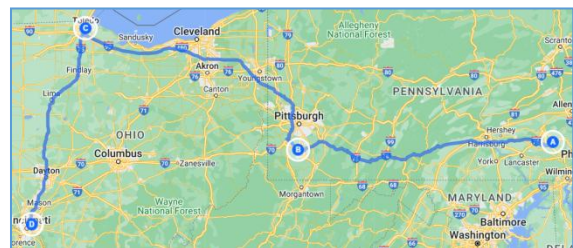
To enter points of interest (POIs), Select an existing layer or create a new one. I created Hikes for trails we thought looked good.

Before searching for the POI, make sure you select the layer you want to save it to. The selected layer will have a **BLUE** bar to the left. →
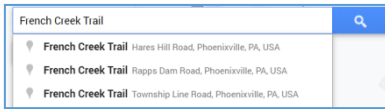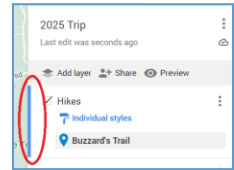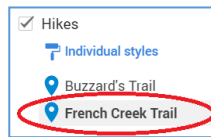

← Type the name of the POI into the search bar (near the upper center of the page). You will see it in the drop-down list if it is recognized. If not recognized, you can enter the street address.

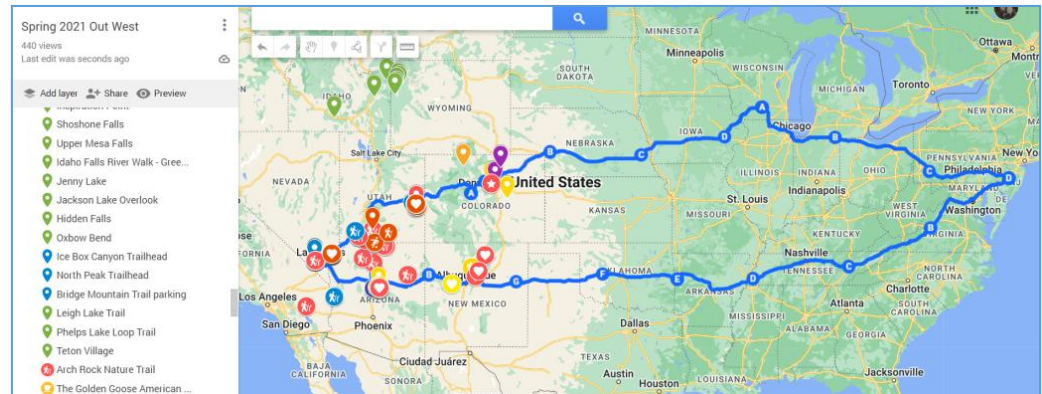Click on the correct line and a pop-up box will appear on the map in the location. →
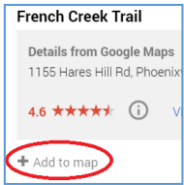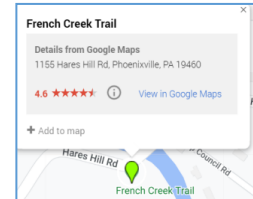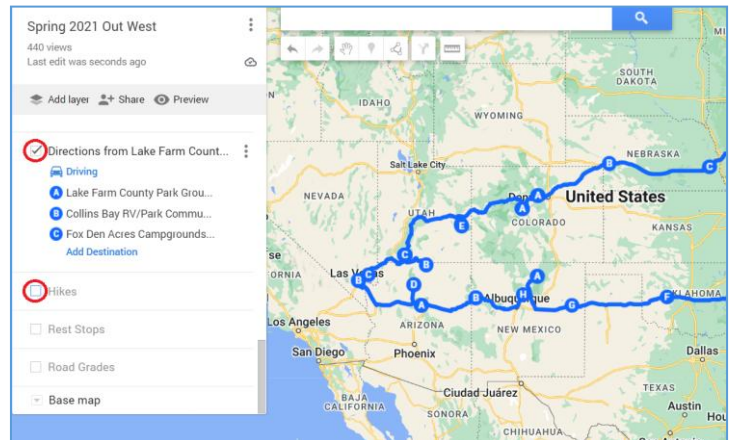

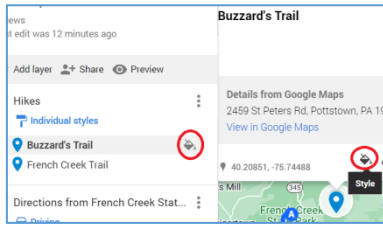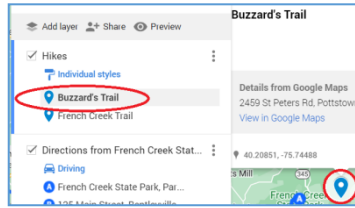← Click on Add to map.

It will appear on the layer. →

If you have a BIG trip and lots of POIs, the map can get rather busy . . .

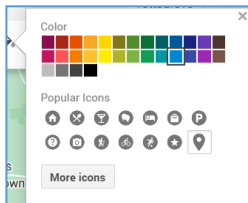To clean the view up, simply turn various layers on or off by clicking on the box for that layer. →

I like to customize the icons for the POIs.
The default is a blue tear drop. →
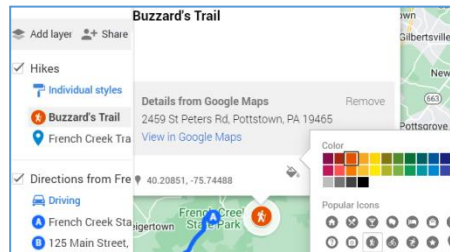
← Edit it by clicking on the style button on listing in the layer or the map window (when selected).
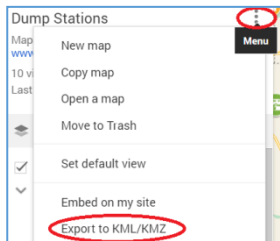
You   can   edit the color and the icon. →   →
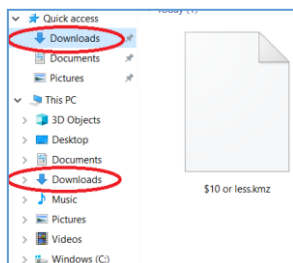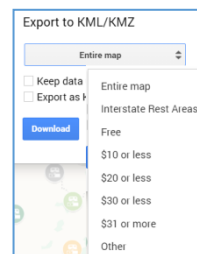
IMPORTING MAPS.

If you have an existing map you would like to import into your map, you first need to export into an acceptable format.
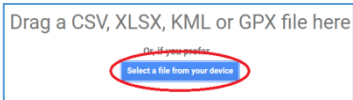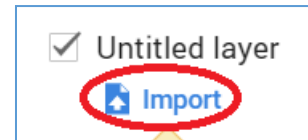← Click on the menu icon right of the layer name then select Export to KML/KMZ..

You can export the entire map or select only parts of it. →

Click on **Download** to export.

← The export will automatically be saved into your Downloads folder on your computer. You can open that folder and move it to another folder if desired. Just remember where you moved it to.

To import a map, open a new layer and click on **Import**. →

☑ Untitled layer
Import

Drag a CSV, XLSX, KML or GPX file here
Select a file from your device

← Click on **Select a file from your device** in the window.
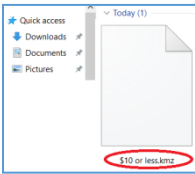
It should open the download folder automatically but you can search any folder.

Select the file to import and click **Open**.

Some of these files have so much data, they are overwhelming. When this happens, I copy the POIs I'd like to keep into a new layer.

Simply click on the icon to the left of the POI to be moved and drag it into the new layer.

One you have moved all the items you want to keep, you can either just turn the imported layer off or delete it from your file.
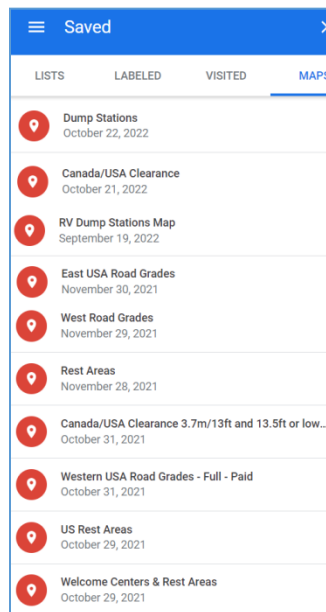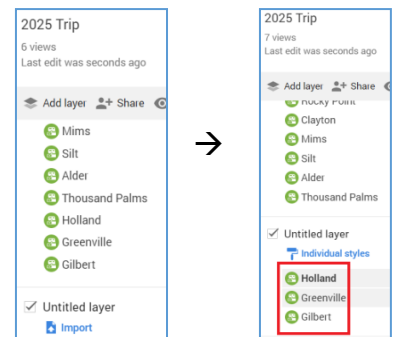
There are many useful maps available.
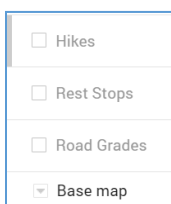
Some I find the most useful are:
Clearances
Rest Stops (found at http://restareas.appspot.com/)
Road Grades (found at https://maps.srfox.net/)

You will likely want to create some of your own. I have a Hiking Trails map. As I discover new trails of interest, I add them to the map so I can recall them as needed.
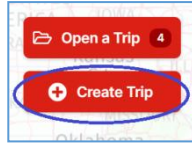
It's nice to have an all inclusive map and

You can turn each item on or off as desired,

Planning a route with RV Trip Wizard:
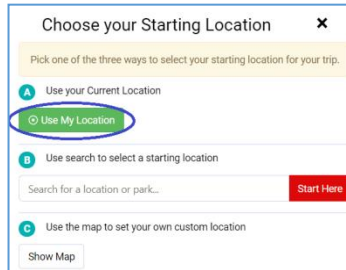
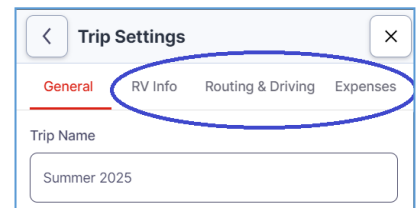Select either **Open a Trip**   or **Create Trip**

← Name the trip and click **Create**.

Set your starting point. →

If you have not already done so, you can enter info about your RV, driving preferences and more here and it will be saved and used in the future. →

Click on **SAVE**.

The map will show a single day travel area. By default, it is by distance (300 mi in this pic) →

← A very nice feature of RV Trip Wizard that Google maps does not offer is 'smart' distances. Once you enter your driving preferences (avg. speed, daily travel distance or time) it will show you how far you can reach driving specific roads. This is a jagged edge since some routes are slower. You might find this worth paying for the app.

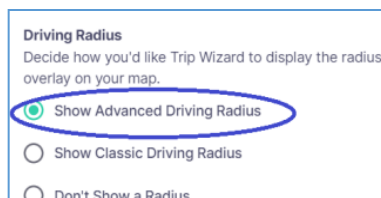To see this, click on the Trip tools icon. →
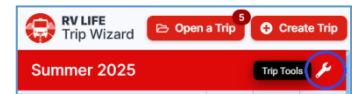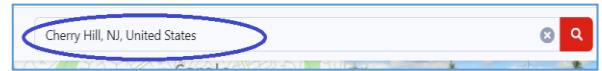
Select **Trip settings** from the box. →
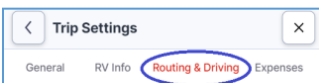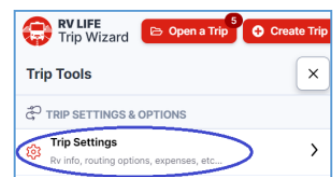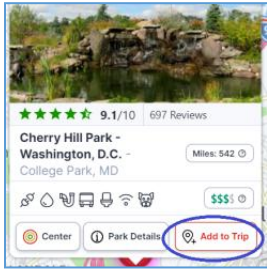
← Click on **Routing & Driving**

then select Show **Advanced Driving Radius**. →

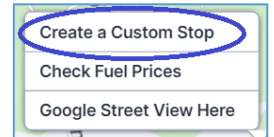You can add stops by entering them into the search bar at the top

Cherry Hill, NJ, United States

← then click on **Add to Trip** in the info box that appears

★★★★⯪ 9.1/10 | 697 Reviews
Cherry Hill Park -
Washington, D.C. -
College Park, MD
Miles: 542

$$$$
Center | Park Details | Add to Trip

Or

Find the place on the map then right click on it and choose xxx from the list in the box. →

Create a Custom Stop
Check Fuel Prices
Google Street View Here

← You can also see a list of recognized campgrounds by selecting the
Parks tab [Parks | Points of Interest] (in the Research section).
2 Parks in View | Sort
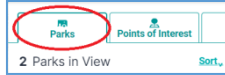
To see this, click on the **Research** tab (on the right) → .

Research

Right click on any one on the map for more info and to add it to your trip. →

☆☆☆☆☆ No Reviews
Ridley Creek State Park -
Media, PA
Miles: 16

$$$
Center | Park Details | Add to Trip

2 | Sun, 06/04/23 - Shippenville, PA
Rustic Acres RV Resort
and Campground

3 | Mon, 06/05/23 - Milford, MI
Camp Dearborn

4 | Tue, 06/06/23 - Mackinaw City, MI
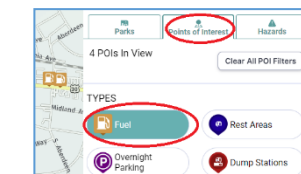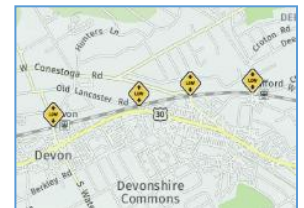Mackinaw City /
Mackinac Island KOA
Journey
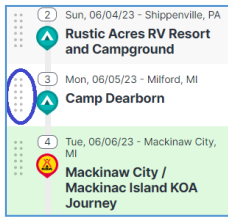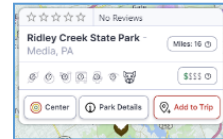
To move the order of a stop in the list, click on the group of dots to the left of it and drag it up or down.

RV Wizard does include a Low Clearance hazard warning feature under the Research section.

Parks | Points of Interest | Hazards

12 Hazards In View | Clear All Hazards
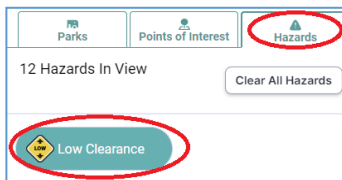
Low Clearance

← Select the **Hazards** tab and make sure Low Clearance is on.

If there are any warnings present, within the area you are presently viewing on the map, you will see them. →

Parks | Points of Interest | Hazards

4 POIs In View | Clear All POI Filters

TYPES
Fuel | Rest Areas
Overnight Parking | Dump Stations

You cannot save custom POIs in this app but it will show programmed POIs such as Fuel. This is activated under the **Points of Interest** tab.

You can also open up Google maps directly into street view with the icon in the lower right corner of the map. →

NEW MAP | TA
Street View (Drag and Drop)