



good news



EDITED
BY JOHN
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MEMBER NEWS

Fifteen years ago, Good Sam member Fred Dow treated his wife, Suzanne, to a two-week camping trip to celebrate earning her master's degree. Fred, who had tent-camped throughout Europe during an Army stint, knew his wife would enjoy the adventure. He didn't realize, however, that the couple's shared love of the outdoors would inspire them to embark on a 250,000-mile RV odyssey.

That same year, the Dows set out on a mission to create a guidebook covering all 2,345 campgrounds on 153 U.S. Forest Service lands (three of the country's 156 national forests don't have developed campgrounds).



Seeing the Forests and the Trees

The couple completed their journey last year with trips to Alaska's Tongass and Chugach national forests.

RVers can enjoy the fruits of their labor on the couple's website, www.forestcamping.com, which features information gathered firsthand by the Dows. Fred and Suzanne have also published a soft-cover forest service campground guide and a number of regional guides.

"Every national forest is our favorite," says Suzanne, a former instructor at George Mason University. "Each forest is unique," adds Fred, a former employee with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

The Dows, who travel in

an Itasca Spirit Class C with their two dogs, capture their impressions on their website, which contains a blog, online forums, newsletters and opportunities to purchase soft-cover and electronic versions of their books.

Although the couple doesn't rate campgrounds, they provide plenty of detailed information, including price, RV accommodations, scenery and surrounding recreation. The Dows include only developed campgrounds with 10 or more designated sites that are accessible by "at least the family sedan." Campgrounds can be searched by park name or by state.

The Dows are quick to point out the many perks of

national forest camping, such as discounts available to visitors 62 and older through the America the Beautiful—National Parks and Federal Recreational Lands Senior Pass (www.nps.gov/fees_passes.htm).

They advise that it's wise to phone the district offices of forests you plan to visit to verify open status, availability of water and locations of the nearest dump facilities.

The Dows promote volunteering through district ranger offices to assist with trail maintenance, hosting, bird counting and other projects. You can do your part by signing up with the Good Sam Club's campground-host program (www.goodsamclub.com/volunteering), which places RVers in U.S. Forest Service campgrounds and national and state park campgrounds.—PAULA LOEHR

Good Sam
members
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Suzanne Dow
spread the
good word
about national
forest camp-
grounds