

Our tips for finding a place to sleep in a converted vehicle



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By Floriane

Wondering how to find a place to sleep in a van or camper van? What are the rules for wilderness bivouacs on your road trip? You've come to the right place!

After a tour of Southern Europe and Scandinavia, during our many months in the motorhome, we had to look for around **250 places to sleep!** Naturally, we set up strategies to find the right spot as quickly as possible.

We give you **all our tips** and **tricks** below, which apps to download, which filters to apply...

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Our long trips in a converted vehicle

To give you an idea of who we are and our history as “campingcarists” / “vanliffeur”, we bought our **converted vehicle in 2021**, then we made several long trips :

- [10 months in Southern Europe](#) (Portugal, Spain, Italy, Greece, Bulgaria, Romania, Hungary, Austria, Germany)
- 4 months in [Scandinavia](#) (Denmark, Sweden and Norway)
- Several weeks' vacation in France, including [Brittany](#), the north-east and the region around Lyon
- 2 weeks in [Amsterdam](#)

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Itinerary Northern Europe – *Map on TravelBoast*

Before 2021, we tended to travel by **backpack**, and even did a [round-the-world trip in 2016 and 2017](#).

After the birth of our daughter in 2020, **the purchase of a motorhome** seemed an obvious choice for our family vacations with a young child.

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Indispensable applications for finding a bivouac where to spend the night

- **[Park4Night](#)** Park4Night: this is the app to have on your phone, listing places where you can park for the night, with comments and ratings from other users.

With the paid option (around €2/month or €10/year) we can add filters to our search, looking for spots around us via the “Around me” button.

- **Google maps:** another must-have in our opinion, satellite maps are super useful for finding places to sleep.

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Park4night all our spots in Southern Europe

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Google maps satellite view

- **France Passion, Agricamper (in Italy)**... these applications, in return for a small monthly or annual subscription fee, enable you to find free pitches with producers. We stayed with winegrowers, a farmer, a saffron producer and an olive grower. It's a guarantee of great encounters!
- **iOverlander**: it works very much like Park4night, but honestly, we don't use it much.

The different types of pitches

We've tried to categorize the different types of pitches we've stayed at to give you a clearer idea of what to expect on your road trip:

- Out in **nature**: that's the category we're all looking for. We've found some stunning locations, by the sea or in the heart of nature, in Greece, Sweden and Romania.

The most complicated country for bivouacs was Italy, where we slept many nights in unglamorous parking lots.

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It's free

Sleep in nature

-

Not always easy to find

Possibility of being woken by cows or other animals (this has happened to us on 2 occasions).

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Bivouac in Sweden

Spotlight on Greece

- **Parking lots:** we try to be as discreet as possible **in** these areas. We avoid parking lots too close to the road (we like a quiet place to sleep), restaurants, especially at weekends, and busy areas so as not to disturb other drivers, especially the locals.

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It's free

Sleep in the city or near points of interest

-

Often noisy

Sleeping spot on the Lofoten Islands

- **The communal areas** (many town halls play the game) are often packed in like sardines, so it's not at all Instagrammable, but for one night, it's more than enough. Green logo "free CC. stat. area" on the Park4night app.

We found them mainly in France, Spain, Austria and Germany. The services are generally free and since parking is allowed, we could sleep without fear of being disturbed or woken up in the middle of the night, what more could we ask for?

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Free and authorized

Nearby playground / sports field

-

Often roadside parking

Bivouac in Brittany

- **With producers:** this is an option we like a lot. Via the [France Passion](#) app or directly on Park4night, producers offer a piece of their land.

Generally, you'll be able to test their products and buy some if you like.

+

Authorized and secure parking

Nice to meet you

-

Paid subscription

- **Homestay:** private individuals can rent out one or more pitches. We only did this once in Stockholm, as the campsites around capital cities are generally not very good.

+

Authorized and secure parking

Nice to meet you

-

Paying

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Spotlight on homestay in Stockholm

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- **Campsite or caravan park:** this is an option we like a lot, where we stop to do the machines, take showers with a good flow, and generally in Scandinavia campsites are equipped with a kitchen.

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Authorized and secure parking

Numerous services (washing machine, swimming pool, playground...)

Cleanliness of premises

-

Some are expensive for the services offered

Camping in Goteborg, Sweden

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Our methodology for finding a free place to sleep in a van or camper van

After numerous spot searches, we have developed a methodology that allows us to find our happiness quickly:

As you can imagine, the aim is to spend as little time as possible on this task while sleeping peacefully and in a cool place.

1. Find out about parking permits by country

In the country where you will be vacationing, try to find up-to-date information, as regulations can change.

In most of the countries we visited, outside of **nature parks and protected areas**, we found bivouacs for **motorhomes and vans that were free** and authorized 90% of the time.

In our view, the countries with specific regulations in Europe are at least: **Portugal**, **Slovenia** and **Croatia**. Feel free to add countries in the comments if we've missed any.

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Bivouac in Norway

2. Application search

We open our **Park 4 night** app, to start our search with several filters:

- “rating higher than 4/5”
- “free CC stat. area”
- “play area” ideal for keeping our daughter occupied and meeting other children.

Then we look around the **point of interest/geographical area** we’re targeting for the night.

You can also **create lists** to organize all your spots by country or geographic zone. We’ve just realized that we no longer have access to it with the free option.

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3. Reading notices

A very important point to avoid unpleasant surprises is to read the reviews carefully and check their publication date. We usually take spots with **at least 3 months' notice**.

Spot in Swedish Lapland

4. Spot location on Google maps in satellite view

This is very important, as you can set your **Park 4 Night** map directly to satellite mode (top right).

This allows us to study the environment, for example, if you notice a freeway next to the spot, run away... Avoid sleeping in the immediate vicinity of dwellings.

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Here's a snapshot of the same location in a classic Google view and in a **Google satellite** view, and the change is obvious. We slept in the parking lot north of Capitaine Marée.

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5. Rendezvous at your day bivouac

This advice seems obvious, but in reality it's not so easy to follow. It's always best to see the environment around your wilderness bivouac by day.

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6. Trust your instincts!

Once you' **re there**, if you have any doubts, don't hesitate to drive a few kilometers further to find something else.

In Greece, we had found a spot next to an abandoned building that seemed to be squatted regularly, with food and drink left over, so we preferred to look for something else so as not to potentially be disturbed in the middle of the night.

Our final tips

Our latest tips for finding a dream wilderness bivouac :

- Choose **locations away from main points of interest**
- **Off-season** travel
- Ask **locals** if it's possible to park overnight
- Sharing **good spots with other travelers**
- Respecting the environment for future travellers

Have you ever slept in a wilderness bivouac with your vehicle? Do you have any other advice for travelers?

Feel free to leave us a **quick note** or **5 stars** below, ask any questions you may

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have, below or on [Instagram](#) we'll get back to you with great pleasure.

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