

[Even during recession, RV parks invest in improvements](#)

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LARKSPUR, Colo., March 17, 2009 –Despite the recession, private RV parks and campgrounds are collectively spending millions of dollars in capital improvement projects for RV enthusiasts.

“The recession is temporary, and most campground and RV resort operators believe that it behooves them to move forward with their improvement plans if they want to remain competitive with other travel and tourism options,” said Linda Profaizer, president and CEO of the National Association of RV Parks and Campgrounds in Larkspur, Colo., which represents more than 4,000 private parks across the country.

As a result, she said, many private park operators are investing in new facilities and amenities this year, which include everything from cabins and yurts to miniature golf courses, skate parks and waterslides.

The push by private park operators to improve their facilities has been going on for many years. In fact, three quarters of private park owners made an average of \$147,508 in improvements to their parks in 2007, according to a national survey by the [Arizona](#) Hospitality Research & Resource Center at Northern Arizona University in Flagstaff.

Profaizer cautioned that not every park is investing in capital improvements this year, and some may hold until later this year until they get a better sense of where the economy is going. However, there are numerous examples of parks across the country that are making substantial investments in improvements and, in some cases, expansions. Consider these examples:

Adventure Bound Camping Resort in Gatlinburg, Tenn.: This Great Smoky Mountains area park, whose amenities include a 500-foot waterslide, is spending \$70,000 in swimming pool, water heating and other improvements this year.

Arctic RV Park in Cosmopolis, Wash.: This park, located on the southern border of Olympic National Park, is making an effort to accommodate bigger rigs by investing \$10,000 for improvements this year, much of which will involve converting four back in sites with 30-amp electrical hookups to three, pull-through sites with 50-amp service.

Buttonwood Campground, [Mexico](#), Penn.: This central Pennsylvania park plans to invest \$160,000 in improvements this year, including a miniature golf course, a new satellite cable TV system, an upgraded wireless Internet or WiFi system, laundry facilities and two park model cabins.

Campland on the Bay, San Diego, Calif.: This RV resort, located near Sea World and the San Diego Zoo, is spending up to \$50,000 this year on a skate park, which is expected to open by Memorial Day Weekend. The park is also spending \$100,000 on other infrastructure improvements.

Flying Flags RV Resort, Buellton, Calif.: This RV resort, located near the Dutch-themed town of Solvang, has budgeted \$550,000 for improvements this year, including three park model cabin [rental units](#), a fitness center, electrical and sewer service upgrades, renovation of campsites, cable television system upgrades and new landscaping.

Fox Hill RV Park in Baraboo, Wis.: This park, located 45 miles northwest of Madison, is planning to invest \$10,000 to \$15,000 in improvements this year, which will pay for improvements to its pool, construction of new seasonal sites and new activities.

[Holiday](#) Cove RV Resort in Cortez, Fla.: This park just completed \$1.4 million in a complete overhaul, which included the addition of 50-amp electrical hookups at every site, brick paver pads and patios at each campsite, a new laundry and fitness center building, new pool decking and landscaping, the paving of all roads inside the park and the installation of security fencing.

Kozy Rest Kampground, Harrisville, Penn.: This western Pennsylvania park is investing \$300,000 in improvements this year, including the addition of two full-service cabins, a new maintenance building, a new bathhouse and laundry, as well as the installation of sewage service to 22 of its campsites.

Lake George RV Park in Lake George, N.Y.: This park is investing \$150,000 to \$200,000 in upgrades this year, which will include new landscaping, a new cable television system and other infrastructure upgrades.

Normandy Farms Campground in Foxboro, Mass: This park, located 30 miles southwest of Boston, is adding 20 new campsites and an additional yurt this year and next at a cost of approximately \$40,000.

Port of Siuslaw Campground in Florence, Ore.: This campground, located near the famous Oregon sand dunes, is investing \$53,000 in electrical upgrades this year as it upgrades many of its campsites with 50-amp electrical service.

Stony Ridge KOA in Perrysville, Ohio: This park, located 90 miles southeast of Cleveland, is spending \$6,000 on a new pavilion and plans to spend another \$1,000 on hay rides and other new activities this year.

The Vineyards Campground and Cabins in Grapevine, Texas: This park plans to begin making \$1.5 million worth of capital improvements this year, including additional RV sites, cabins, sewer system upgrades, a new gatehouse and store and landscaping. Geocaching and kayak rentals are also being added to the park this spring.

Yogi Bear's Jellystone Park Camp-Resort in Cave City, Ky.: This 129-site park plans to invest roughly \$400,000 in new facilities and other upgrades this year, including new cabins with fireplaces and pull out sofa beds, upgrades to its miniature golf course, improvements to its water slide as well as new landscaping and new tile in its bathhouse.

RESORT CHAINS ALSO SPENDING BIG

Resort chains, too, are also moving ahead with expansion plans, including Chicago-based Equity LifeStyle Properties, which spent more than \$13 million in improvements to its 170 RV resorts last year. This year's improvements include \$2 million in upgrades to its Thousand Trails campgrounds for interior roadway improvements, new electrical hookups, new kayaks, paddleboats, picnic tables and barbecue grills. Other ELS projects include new fitness centers and pool area upgrades at Sunshine Key RV Resort and Marina in Big Pine Key, Fla. and clubhouse renovations at Crystal Isle RV Resort in Crystal River, Fla.

Other RV resort companies making improvements this year include Salt Springs, Fla.-based Elite Resorts of America, which is overseeing \$1.2 million in proposed renovation work at Ocala Sun RV Resort in Ocala; \$300,000 worth of improvements at Desert Gardens RV Oasis in Florence, Ariz.; and roughly \$500,000 worth of improvements at Palm Lake RV Resort in Foley, Ala., according to Ed Mayer, president of Elite Resorts, which is managing these properties on behalf of a [Philadelphia](#)-based investment group.

Elite Resorts is also planning to invest \$200,000 in improvements at its namesake parks in Salt Springs, [Clermont](#) and Crystal River, Mayer said.

Of course, not every park is spending money in facility or amenity improvements right now. Some, in fact, have not been able to move forward with their expansion or improvement plans because of difficulties obtaining loans. But that's doesn't always stop them.

The Jellystone Park in Cobb, Calif., north of Napa Valley, was planning to spend half a million dollars on a miniature golf course when its lender stopped issuing loans after the golf course was 75 percent completed. But that didn't stop park owner Brian Barnhart. He negotiated a deal with the golf course builder that allowed him to finish the golf course himself.

"This is looking like it's going to be a very good year for our campground business," Barnhart said, adding, "I think we're going to do a lot better than last year."

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