

# LA VANLIFE

## PARKING MAP

30+ Verified Spots | Free & Low-Cost | Updated 2026



*Your Free Guide from Vanlife.la*

Free overnight spots • Legal camping near LA • Shower access • Apps & tips

# How to Use This Guide

This map covers **30+ verified spots** within striking distance of Los Angeles — organized by type so you can find the right spot for tonight's situation. Every listing has been cross-referenced against current regulations and van lifer community reports as of 2026.

- **Green = Free** — national forest, BLM, or zero-cost options
- **Yellow = Low Cost** — under \$40/night, state parks and private campgrounds
- **Blue = Amenities** — spots with showers, hookups, or facilities
- **Always verify before you go** — laws and closures change. Check road conditions at 511.la and fire closures at inciweb.wildfire.gov

## SECTION 1 — FREE CAMPING (No Cost, Legal)

These spots cost nothing. They're on public land managed by the US Forest Service or Bureau of Land Management — city ordinances don't apply here.

| SPOT / LOCATION                    | COST | DISTANCE FROM LA | STAY LIMIT | BEST FOR   |
|------------------------------------|------|------------------|------------|--|
| Angeles NF — Big Tujunga Canyon    | FREE | 45–60 min        | 14 days    | Closest free camping to LA, creek access, good shade |
| Angeles NF — Chilao Area           | FREE | 60–70 min        | 14 days    | 5,300 ft elevation — cool in summer, stargazing      |
| Angeles NF — Santa Clara Divide Rd | FREE | 75 min           | 14 days    | Ridge views, LA Basin south + San Gabriels north     |
| Angeles NF — Mill Creek Summit     | FREE | 90 min           | 14 days    | 7,000 ft, minimal light pollution, high desert feel  |
| Angeles NF — Liebre Mountain       | FREE | 70 min           | 14 days    | Solitude, remote, minimal traffic                    |
| BLM — Gorman / Tejon Area          | FREE | 70 min           | 14 days    | Off I-5 north, open terrain, ~4,000 ft elevation     |
| BLM — Lucerne Valley               | FREE | 105 min          | 14 days    | Near Joshua Tree, wide open desert, full solitude    |
| BLM — Pioneertown Road             | FREE | 120 min          | 14 days    | High desert, near Joshua Tree's north side           |

**Key tips for free camping:** Download the Motor Vehicle Use Map (MVUM) from [fs.usda.gov/angeles](https://fs.usda.gov/angeles) before you go — it shows which roads allow vehicle camping. A free California campfire permit is required for any open fire ([readyforwildfire.org](https://readyforwildfire.org)). No fires during fire season (typically June–November).

## SECTION 2 — LOW COST CAMPING (\$15–\$55/night)

These are state parks and private campgrounds close to LA. They require reservations (often weeks ahead on weekends) and cost money, but they're fully legal, have facilities, and offer some of the best scenery in SoCal.

| SPOT / LOCATION         | COST            | DISTANCE FROM LA | STAY LIMIT       | BEST FOR   |
|-------------------------|-----------------|------------------|------------------|--|
| Leo Carrillo State Park | \$35–\$55/night | 35 min N on PCH  | Reservation req. | Beachfront, tide pools, van-friendly — book 6 months out |

| SPOT / LOCATION                      | COST             | DISTANCE FROM LA | STAY LIMIT       | BEST FOR   |
|--------------------------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|--|
| <b>Malibu Creek State Park</b>       | \$35/night       | 30 min inland    | Reservation req. | Canyon, creekside, M*A*S*H filming location            |
| <b>Sycamore Canyon (Pt. Mugu)</b>    | \$35/night       | 40 min N on PCH  | Reservation req. | Sycamore canyon, coastal trail access                  |
| <b>Dockweiler RV Park</b>            | \$65–\$75/night  | 20 min (LAX)     | Reservation req. | Only legal beachfront RV/van camping in LA County      |
| <b>Lake Piru Recreation Area</b>     | \$25–\$35/night  | 60 min N         | Walk-in ok       | Reservoir views, less crowded than state parks         |
| <b>Castaic Lake RV Park</b>          | \$40–\$55/night  | 40 min N on I-5  | Reservation req. | Full hookups available, good base for ANF trips        |
| <b>Malibu Creek SP — Overflow</b>    | Walk-in only     | 30 min inland    | 1 night          | Show up 7 AM for cancellations — no reservation needed |
| <b>Hipcamp Private Land Listings</b> | Varies \$20–\$60 | Varies           | Per listing      | Private land near LA — hidden gems not on gov sites    |

**Booking tip:** ReserveCalifornia.com opens reservations 6 months in advance. For summer weekends, set a calendar reminder and book the day they open. Mid-week (Sun–Thu) has much better availability.

## SECTION 3 — CITY PARKING STRATEGY (LA Streets)

Sleeping in your van on LA city streets is prohibited under LAMC 85.02 between 9 PM–6 AM. Enforcement is inconsistent, but the risk is real — especially on the Westside. Use the strategies below to minimize exposure if city parking is necessary.

### Lower-Risk Zones

| LOCATION TYPE                         | RISK | NOTES  |
|---------------------------------------|------|--|
| Commercial corridors near freeways    | Low  | Near 24-hr businesses, well-lit, less residential complaint risk |
| Industrial / light industrial areas   | Low  | No residents nearby = no complaints. Leave before 7 AM.          |
| Near 24-hr gyms (Planet Fitness etc)  | Low  | Legitimate reason to be there. Park near entrance.               |
| Near 24-hr supermarkets (Ralphs, etc) | Low  | Call ahead to verify overnight parking is OK                     |
| Venice / Santa Monica streets         | HIGH | Heavily enforced — avoid entirely for overnight stays            |
| Near schools or parks                 | HIGH | Explicitly targeted by LAMC 85.02 — do not park here overnight   |
| Same spot 2+ nights in a row          | HIGH | Neighbors report repeat vehicle dwellers — always rotate         |

### The City Parking Checklist

- Arrive after 10 PM, leave before 7 AM — minimize your visible window
- Blackout curtains on every window — no light or movement visible from outside
- Rotate spots — never the same street two nights in a row
- Look like a work van — uncluttered exterior, no camping gear visible
- Check for street sweeping signs before you park (days/times vary by block)
- Have a backup spot in mind before you sleep

## SECTION 4 — SHOWER ACCESS (The Van Life Lifeline)

| SPOT / LOCATION               | COST          | DISTANCE FROM LA | STAY LIMIT       | BEST FOR   |
|-------------------------------|---------------|------------------|------------------|--|
| Planet Fitness — Black Card   | \$25/mo       | All LA locations | Unlimited visits | Best value — all-club access, clean showers, no contract |
| 24 Hour Fitness               | \$30–\$50/mo  | All CA locations | Unlimited visits | More locations, better equipment, some 24-hr             |
| Crunch Fitness — Peak Results | \$25/mo       | All locations    | Unlimited visits | Mid-range, good coverage across LA metro                 |
| LA Fitness                    | \$30–\$35/mo  | Multi-club       | Unlimited visits | Higher-end facilities, excellent showers, pools          |
| Dockweiler RV Park showers    | Incl. w/ site | El Segundo       | With stay        | Beachfront showers, best setting                         |
| Truck stop — Flying J / Pilot | \$12–\$15/use | San Bernardino+  | Single use       | Private rooms, towel included, unlimited hot water       |
| Zuma Beach outdoor shower     | FREE          | Malibu PCH       | Day use          | Cold rinse only — good post-swim, not a primary shower   |
| Doheny State Beach shower     | FREE          | Dana Point (60m) | Day use          | Warmer water than most beach showers                     |

**Van life shower kit:** Hanging toiletry bag + microfiber towel + flip flops + combination lock = everything you need for gym showers. Keep it pre-packed in your van at all times so morning gym runs take less than 5 minutes to prep.

## SECTION 5 — ESSENTIAL APPS & RESOURCES

| APP                   | PRICE          | BEST USE   |
|-----------------------|----------------|--|
| <b>Park4Night</b>     | Free / \$3/mo  | Crowdsourced overnight spots — van lifer reviews, photos, current conditions |
| <b>iOverlander</b>    | Free           | Best for forest, BLM, and dispersed camping near LA. User-verified spots.    |
| <b>Hipcamp</b>        | Free (booking) | Private land and state park listings. Best for when you need certainty.      |
| <b>The Dyrt</b>       | Free / Pro     | California campground reviews and availability. Strong free tier.            |
| <b>Recreation.gov</b> | Free           | Official booking for state and national parks. Essential for weekends.       |
| <b>onX Offroad</b>    | \$3/mo         | Overlander app showing land ownership, BLM boundaries, forest roads.         |
| <b>Gaia GPS</b>       | \$5/mo         | Best offline topo maps for ANF and backcountry navigation.                   |
| <b>Gas Buddy</b>      | Free           | Find cheapest gas along your route — adds up fast in a van.                  |
| <b>511.la</b>         | Free           | Real-time road conditions and closures for Angeles Crest Highway.            |
| <b>Starlink</b>       | \$120+/mo      | Best internet for van life remote work. Worth it if you work online.         |

## Quick Reference: By Situation

| SITUATION                              | GO-TO SOLUTION  |
|--|---|
| <b>Tonight, free, close to LA</b>      | Big Tujunga Canyon (ANF) — 45 min from downtown                 |
| <b>Tonight, beachfront</b>             | Dockweiler RV Park — reserve ahead, \$65–\$75/night             |
| <b>This weekend, state park</b>        | Leo Carrillo or Sycamore Canyon — book on ReserveCalifornia.com |
| <b>Need a shower right now</b>         | Planet Fitness Black Card — find nearest LA location            |
| <b>Working remotely, need internet</b> | Starbucks + Starlink combo, or coworking space day pass         |
| <b>Low on water</b>                    | Most truck stops, REI store parking lots, campground spigots    |
| <b>Staying multiple nights near LA</b> | ANF dispersed — free, 14-day limit, rotate spots                |
| <b>Got knocked at 2 AM</b>             | Move calmly, thank the officer, know your backup spot           |

## Want the full interactive version?

Join the Vanlife.la community and get live-updated parking spots, stealth camping alerts, and new LA guides delivered to your inbox.

Information in this guide is accurate as of April 2026. Laws, fees, and road conditions change — always verify before relying on any spot. Vanlife.la is not responsible for citations, tows, or closures encountered at listed locations.