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Resort amenities and activities — plus a number of longterm motorhomes — make snowbirding a popular activity this time of year (section begins page 28).



The Wonder RTB Class C from Leisure Travel Vans offers an exterior garage compartment that can hold two full-size bikes. Pg. 16

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Coachmen's Frelander 26RS crosses Moody Bridge Road in Hadley, Hampshire County, Massachusetts. The Class C is constructed with durable materials, including Azdel composites and aluminum framing (see test on page 44). Photo by Michael Gordon.





By Kristopher Bunker

Fall Favorites

October is my favorite time of the year. For the first time in months, a chill fills the air as the breeze sighs through Technicolor trees resplendent in the golds, oranges and reds of the season. Pumpkins make their annual appearances on porches, and the festive holiday kickoff lurks holly jolly right around the corner. This is truly a great time to enjoy life in a motorhome; crisp, clear mornings, followed by warmer afternoons and mild evenings just perfect for campfires, strolls or impromptu ballgames.

And, with the little ones all back in school, it may even be a tad easier to locate a weekend campground with available sites — even if you're doing so on the fly. One of the most enjoyable aspects of RVing is the ability to throw caution to the wind and make a last-second decision to spend a few days in the motorhome (space permitting, of course). Which brings us to another group of motorhome owners: snowbirds. Snowbirds are the antitheses of the weekend-warrior crowd, as the unique, temporarily migratory lifestyle often requires months of careful preplanning and investigation.

By definition, a snowbird is somebody who lives in an area that tends to get cold during the winter (usually beginning around this time of year). Not exactly dreaming of winter wonderlands, a snowbird will set out to a warmer region, often in what is referred to as the Sun Belt — which essentially encompasses the region

running from the southeast in Florida to the southwest in California.

Once a snowbird arrives at a destination, he or she is likely to call that place home for the duration of the winter — and sometimes beyond. So, it should come as no surprise that when a snowbird is in search of a suitable roost, the RV resort (or campground) in question needs to supply more than simply a picnic table and fire ring. In order to appeal to this full-timer lifestyle, the resort needs to provide not only full hookups, but also a full slate of activities, a full list of amenities and a full platter of nearby attractions.

And, recognizing the need for accommodating the annual flock, many resort and campground owners continue to upgrade their facilities

(or purchase new ones) to ensure the ultimate snowbird experience.

Our special snowbird section, “Fun in the Sun,” beginning on page 28, details the measures these owners are taking to upgrade their facilities. Many popular amenities such as pickleball courts, swimming pools, exercise rooms and on-site restaurants are all undergoing facelifts, making certain that selective snowbirds will have more than enough to do when they settle their nests for the winter season.

Also included is a list of top tips from frequent contributor, Morey Edelman, who along with his wife, Ruth, have been snowbirds for years. They share their first-hand knowledge about the ins and outs of planning, preparation and life on the road. And, to help you decide where you should consider bedding down for seasons to come, the list of “50 More Snowbird Parks” should offer plenty of choices for future roosts.

We hope your fall season is low on tricks but full of treats, and that the coming months are booked with delightful autumn adventures, whether you stay near your residence or head out in search of the sun. **M**

“Recognizing the need for accommodating the annual flock, many resort and campground owners continue to upgrade their facilities (or purchase new ones).”

Contributors | October



Jeff Crider is a Palm Desert, California-based freelance writer, photographer and camping enthusiast who has written hundreds of articles about campgrounds and travel destinations over the past 25 years.



Morey Edelman and his wife, Ruth, are adventure-loving RVers who travel six months a year in their 2017 Winnebago Sunstar. They are continually amazed at the sights they encounter while on the road.



Pam Windsor is a freelance writer and photographer in Louisville, Kentucky. She enjoys traveling and sharing the stories of the many fascinating people and places she finds along the way.

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If you (or somebody you know) have been placed on oxygen by a physician, how do you manage the equipment while traveling? Do you have any tips on storage, usage, power, etc.?

Those are the questions we asked in the July issue, and here are some of the responses we received.

Shop Around

I am a retired respiratory therapist with experience working in homecare and addressing the challenges of long-term oxygen use. The issue of traveling while using supplemental oxygen is not new and will certainly be a growing need. Unfortunately, the prescribing physician may not always be the best source of information on what equipment and options are available. Someone who travels frequently, or for long periods, will be best served with a portable oxygen concentrator. They can be powered by 120 volts AC, 12 volts DC or an internal battery and “make” their own oxygen. There are many manufacturers, and the devices have gotten quite good, in terms of weight, reliability and duration of use. Bear in mind if you travel to high altitudes you want a more robust unit. I recommend contacting more than one of the national homecare companies to learn what products they offer, and how an out-of-state repair or exchange would be handled, if needed.

Dale Willrich | Via email

Keep it Secure

My wife is on oxygen 24/7 and we have a portable and a home oxygen concentrator. We travel with both, and we usually store the big machine in the bathroom so it can't move around in the motorhome while we're driving. The portable one is plugged into the 12-volt DC cigarette lighter while we're driving. We've learned our lesson on traveling with the oxygen: Once, we thought the machine was secured and wedged in, but a sharp turn and sudden stop propelled it into our shower door and shattered it — now it's secure in the bathroom with the door closed.

Neil Gerstein | St. Louis, Missouri

As Seen on TV

I have been on supplemental oxygen the past five years and found traveling in the RV with a basket full of small oxygen tanks was cumbersome and took a lot of the fun out of the journey. I now use two sources of oxygen while traveling. I saw an ad on TV with a

lady carrying a small concentrator on her shoulder and contacted www.inogen.com for information. I bought the Inogen One G4, and it is great for travel. It runs off a rechargeable battery that can be plugged into the 12-volt DC cigarette lighter as I drive, and it can be used while it is being charged. The battery can also be charged with 120-volt AC power when available. The other oxygen supply is the standard concentrator that I use at home. While not portable, it is small enough to move to the RV. I keep mine under the table and use it when we are parked and hooked up to power. Mine is the AirSep VisionAire 5. The home concentrator cost \$750 and the Inogen \$2,500, which was well worth it to me. Most insurance companies cover oxygen therapy, but I paid for them outright to save the hassle of dealing with insurance. I realize the use of concentrators can be limited due to the amount of oxygen needed, but I have found they are ideal for traveling.

Larry Mongan | Emily, Minnesota

Featured Letter

Call for Backup

I have been on oxygen 24/7 for more than a year and travel about three months in our motorhome each year. I carry two 8-hour tanks for emergency use, stowed under the dinette seat. I secure my home oxygen concentrator under the dinette table so it is available when hooked to shorepower or while running on generator power. While driving, or while in our toad sightseeing, I have my portable concentrator. I carry two batteries so I have a backup at all times. Be sure everything is secured — you sure do not want tanks or concentrators flying around in an emergency.

Jim Black | Inverness, Florida



Options

In the July issue, George Forson asked about the use of oxygen on the road. I, too, was put on oxygen a few months ago. I have a 120-volt AC roll-around unit that I keep beside my bed at home. I also have a portable unit that is either 120-volt AC, battery- or 12-volt DC powered using the supplied adapters. If we are going to be gone for several weeks, I put the large unit next to my bed in the motorhome for use at night. The portable unit I plug into the 12-volt DC cigarette lighter and use it on the road. If I go outside, I use just the battery in the unit. It works great and I can go anywhere I want.

Ray Posey | Via email

Exchange Program

Don't let your oxygen needs stop you from traveling. My husband was placed on oxygen several years ago by his physician, but we have continued our snowbird travels each winter (as well as summer getaways). My husband has a floor unit oxygen concentrator that measures 15-by-9-by-23 inches and has a handle for transporting. It weighs approximately 30 pounds, but I can easily move it myself. We use it whenever we are hooked up to shorepower. We have a 25-foot hose so we keep the unit centrally located and he moves about our motorhome with no problem. When we are on the go, he uses portable tanks.

Our oxygen supplier, Lincare, has offices nationwide. We can exchange tanks and receive supplies by requesting a delivery or stopping by an area office, which is easily found at www.lincare.com. Since it is so easy to exchange tanks when needed, we carry only four small tanks that don't take up much storage space.

Cathy Gearing | Via email

Flame Off

I have been on oxygen since 2008, and have traveled across the country twice with my O2. Needless to say, when traveling with oxygen, you must stay away from open flames. When you use O2, a cloud of oxygen is around you

like an aura, it sticks to your clothes, hair and skin, so you need to be very careful of open flames. Always turn on the exhaust fan when you are cooking. I use an electric skillet, a NuWave induction hotplate, a slow cooker, a microwave and a digital pressure cooker. We also have a small gas grill that has the flame completely covered and will not flare up. I hope this is helpful and happy traveling!

Sandy Lyons | Via email

Check the Altitude

I have been on oxygen for about two years. I have a portable unit, a stationary unit and a 2-liter tank. While traveling, I use the portable unit when driving and sleeping, carrying the tank in case something happens while we are gone. We had a 12-volt DC plug installed in the bedroom area for when I sleep. I have an oxygen meter to check the levels while we are out.

The biggest thing I found is that

Originally, I left with only one portable unit (Inogen); however, two weeks into the trip, I decided to purchase a second unit. Then, using the vehicle charging cord and longer tubing (and keeping one unit fully charged at all times), I had no problems the rest of the trip.

Purchasing a second unit was an expensive choice, but it made the trip worry-free and more comfortable. I do not drive, so my daughter did all the driving, hooking up and stuff. We had a National Park Pass and a State of Texas Park Pass, which helped us a lot.

So, I say go for it — oxygen and all! Hopefully I can do it again. Sharing ideas, tips and experiences is the way to more fully enjoy your trips and friends.

Jeanne Huss | Arlington, Texas

Same Old, Same Old

I have an Inogen home unit and a portable unit. I've learned the hard way that things may take 20-30 minutes

“Sharing ideas, tips and experiences is the way to more fully enjoy your trips and friends.”

all portable units aren't the same. My unit is good for up to 10,000 feet in elevation. While camping, we were at 4,000 feet, but while sightseeing we reached 12,000 feet. I had the unit plugged into my car and had to increase the flow from 2 liters to 4 liters. We spent a week there with no side effects. (I wasn't running up hills, but I saw a lot of beautiful country.)

The best advice I can offer is to talk to your doctor and tell him or her what you want to do. Also, check your unit to see that it is good for the altitude you'll be at and have fun.

D.E. Miller | Via email

I Second That

I am 80 years old and have been on oxygen 24/7 for a long time. I have tried to not let it stop me from going places. In April 2016, my daughter and I spent four months traveling the western half of the U.S. It was a fantastic trip!

longer when dealing with oxygen. We always camp where electricity is available. We purchased two of the large oxygen canisters for use in an emergency at my physician's recommendation. They don't take up much space (or weigh too much), and it makes me feel more secure. We plug in the home unit as far from the sleeping area as possible to minimize the noise during the night. I use the portable unit, helping my husband set up, and once that is done hook up to the home unit for the rest of the night.

We purchased oxygen tubing the ideal length for use in our RV and to reach the nearby picnic table so as to avoid tripping on excessive tubing. With the exception of using my home unit when set up for the night, I didn't find using oxygen in the RV that different from traveling in our car.

**Patricia Kucera
Chippewa Falls, Wisconsin**

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I'm Going Everywhere, Man

The July Road Ahead, "I've Been Everywhere," was so pleasant to read and so motivating. Even though I have been camping pretty much all my life, we have only been doing so with a motorhome for the past seven years, and my wife and I feel that it is a wonderful way to "travel every road in this here land ..." (as the song goes!). During those seven years, we have traveled to 18 states and six provinces, for a total of about 50,000 miles, and all these trips were memorable in their own way.

As for the trip I have always dreamed of, since 1969, we will pursue it one week from now. Back in 1969, I went to the Woodstock Festival, and I promised my traveling buddy that California would be the next venture of my hippie life ... but a few months later, I met the wonderful woman who became my wife (and still is), and plans changed a bit.

Next week, we will be leaving for a two-month road trip that will take us across 12 more states (Indiana, Illinois, Iowa, Nebraska, Colorado, Arizona, Nevada, California, Wyoming, South Dakota, Minnesota and Wisconsin), including one month along the California coast, where I will celebrate my 69th birthday as well as four years of remission from a 2014 cancer. Now, if that is not a dream come true on the wonderful road ahead!

Yvan Jerome | Laval, Quebec, Canada

Where HAVE You Been?

I have definitely NOT been everywhere, but Alan Rider's column made me smile as I reflected on the many, many places I HAVE been! And, like many happy RV travelers, I have memorialized many of the stops not only for others, but also for myself and my long-term memories! Blogging is definitely a great way to keep track of all the "everywheres" we visit.

Tessa Miller | Via email

Messy Memories

I have a comment on one of the motorhomes mentioned in The Classic Ride story in the July issue. On page

88, you mention the Ford Condor. In the summer of 1963, two mothers and five kids (ranging from 9 to 13 years old) set off from the San Francisco Bay area for the New York World's Fair in a Condor. We crossed the center of the country on the way, and returned through the South.

I can assure you that the Therman waste disposal system was not installed on ours (as I recall, it was one of the first Condors produced). As one of the two boys onboard, I know that the black-water tank (which I think also contained the gray water) was not "literally vaporized." It was laboriously drained (by us, every night) through a hose like a normal RV. Except for that one occasion in New Jersey when we couldn't find a sewer dump, and were in desperate need of draining the tank, and unspeakably horrid liquid filth was sloshing around on the shower floor. We decided the only solution was to use our pots and pans to carry the disgusting slop inside to our motel room toilet. That worked about as well as one might expect, which is not very. But it was slowly (very slowly) doing the job, until one of the dads, who'd flown out to meet us, walked into the wrong motel room. I'm still not clear on exactly how the conversation with the rightful room occupants went, but it must have been, uh, uncomfortable.

The other thing I noticed in the magazine story is that no mention was made of the Clark Cortez. In 1963, the only other motorhomes we saw, other than a very few Fords, were Clarks, and we saw a lot more of them than Condors.

In any case, I really enjoyed the trip through time in *MotorHome* magazine.

Jon A. Marchant | Via email

Toyota Power

Regarding the history of motorized RVing ("Going for the Gold") in the July issue, no doubt you heard from many readers who felt slighted that the article left out a very important part of the history: the compact and affordable Toyota-powered motorhomes that roamed the highways and byways from the 1970s to early '90s. The

motorhomes had their quirks and problems, but devoted fans are still driving the likes of the Dolphins, Chinooks, Itascas and Winnebagos. We owners gather in rallies and give each other a thumbs up when passing on the road. I'm a proud owner of a 1990 Sunrader.

Rollie Henkes | Monona, Iowa

Cutting Corners

I find *MotorHome's* "Question of the Month" to be very helpful and informative, and I have one of my own. Many of the increasingly popular 18-to-24-foot-plus Class C's and B's (with no slideouts) have a rear "cut-corner" bed, such as the Winnebago View 24J featured in your May issue and our 24½-foot Dynamax Isata. Making up these cut-corner beds is a real challenge to say the least. Getting the bottom sheet (fitted or flat) tucked under along the outside wall is next to impossible! You have to kneel on the bed, lift the corner of the mattress while struggling to get the bottom sheet tucked under, let it flop down, then tackle the head of the mattress, try to get the sheet under *that* — all of which destroys any tautness you have been able to achieve because your knees mess it all up! I'm pretty physically fit, but making this bed exhausts me.

I'm guessing I'm not the only one having difficulty making one of these rear-corner beds. I'd sure appreciate any suggestions (other than forgetting about a bottom sheet and using a queen-size sleeping bag opened up, which is difficult to wash, too hot, etc.).

A.D. Elliott | Anza, California

Question of the Month

If your motorhome is equipped with a corner bed — or if you have such a setup in your residential home — do you have any tips and tricks on how to easily (and effectively) install the bottom sheet?

Send your comments to:

MotorHome, 2750 Park View Court, Suite 240, Oxnard, CA 93036; or email letters@motorhomemagazine.com



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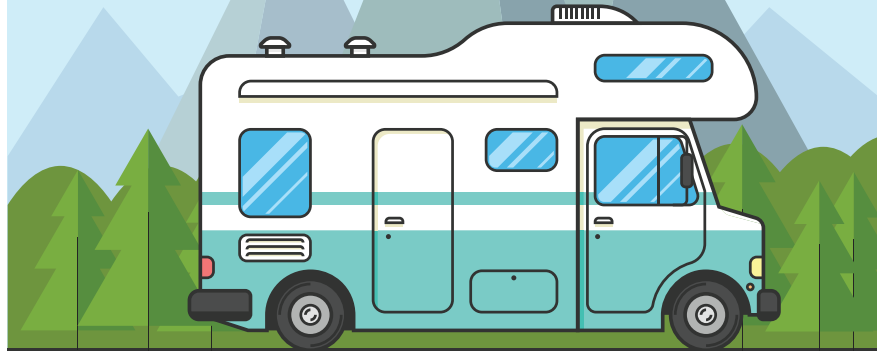
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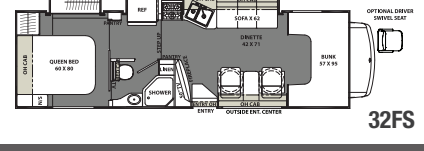
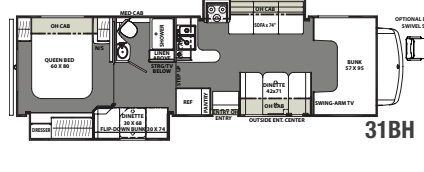
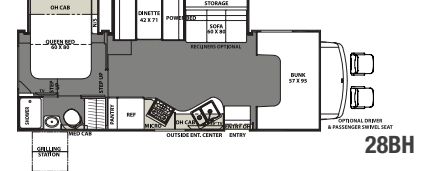
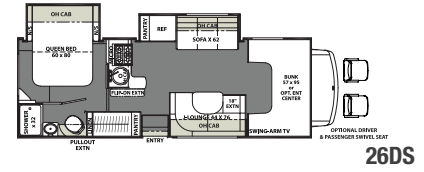
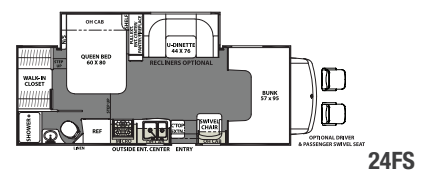
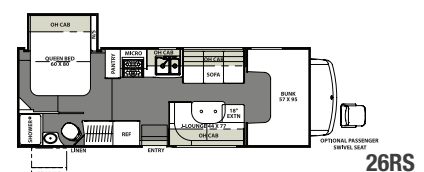
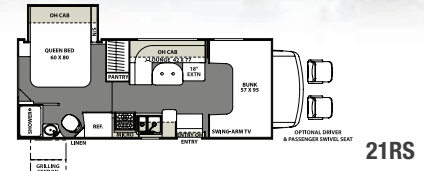
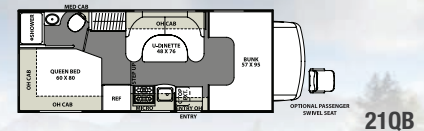
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Water World

A trio of falls in Grand Canyon National Park rewards hikers with natural beauty and a refreshing swim

By Morey Edelman

Watching turquoise waters drop 98 feet over a travertine cliff is beyond any sight we've ever witnessed. Havasu Falls is one of three major falls located on the Havasupai Indian Reservation, located within Grand Canyon National Park in Arizona. Fed by a natural spring, the water passes over Navajo Falls, Havasu Falls and then Mooney Falls, on its way to the Colorado River. Hiking trails from the village of Supai lead you to the three falls, where visitors also have the opportunity to take a dip in the pools at the base of the falls.

Although it takes some effort and a good amount of preplanning to get to these natural wonders, it's worth it. All visitors entering Supai are required to have a reservation prior to arrival — no day hiking is allowed. Since the

village of Supai is 8 miles by trail from the Hualapai Hilltop trailhead, you can choose to hike the trail (as we did) or take a weekend helicopter ride. Once at Supai village, the falls follow along a 2-mile trail.

All visits require at least a one-night reservation at either the onsite lodge or campground (tents only). If you decide to hike and camp, you can hire space on one of the pack mules for your camping gear. There is a small grocery store and a basic café in Supai.

Havasu Falls is a very popular attraction — plan to book your trip well in advance (we did so almost a year out).

Since parking is very limited at the Hualapai Hilltop trailhead, we opted for our dinghy vehicle and left the motorhome at Grand Canyon Caverns RV Park in Peach Springs, some 60 miles away. Visitors can also park the motorhome farther down Route 66 in Kingman.

For more information and to book reservations, call 928-448-2121 or go to <http://theofficialhavasupaitribe.com>



Access to the falls requires a long hike, but the surrounding beauty helps the miles fly by. Pack mules can shuttle supplies between Hilltop Trailhead and the campground or the lodge (a separate fee is required).



New Discovery

REV Recreation Group has introduced the 2019 Fleetwood RV Discovery LXE Class A diesel motorhome. The LXE is available in five floorplans appointed with upscale features, including an exterior 48-inch LED TV, integrated roof-mounted patio awning, polished porcelain tile floor, residential-style furniture, and an Aqua-Hot system for comfort heating and hot water. The list of standards goes on to include a full tile shower, front zone floor heat, a cook's kitchen with residential refrigerator and induction cooktop, a 10-inch dash touch screen, Bose sound bar and a Firefly command center for onboard electronics. The LXE rides on a Freightliner Custom Chassis and integrates Fleetwood RV's Power Bridge frame, which helps increase pass-through storage capacity. Floorplans range from 40- to 44-foot lengths, and the Discovery is powered by a 380- or 450-hp Cummins engine. An optional Technology Package offers a Bluetooth speaker/porch light, Wi-Fi extender, cell booster, a 160-watt solar panel and Mobileye collision avoidance. MSRP starts at \$345,833.

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Gear Garage

Compact Class C motorhomes are a popular option among outdoor adventurers, but their size can often limit the amount of gear that owners can bring along. Leisure Travel Vans introduces the Wonder Rear Twin Bed (RTB) on the Ford Transit chassis that is equipped with an exterior garage large enough for storing two full-size bicycles or other gear (within weight capacities). Inside, the RTB's layout features separate areas to lounge, eat and sleep, plus a three-piece dry bathroom and a large galley. Interior storage can also be found throughout the new Wonder, including two full-size hanging wardrobes and cabinetry. Entertainment options include two smart LED TVs, a Bluetooth soundbar and Blu-ray player, while a centralized touch-screen display controls everything from lighting to heating and cooling, freshwater and holding tanks, battery level monitoring and more. Cutting-edge features also include Ford SYNC with infotainment system and integrated GPS navigation. Base MSRP: \$118,300.

Leisure Travel Vans | 877-992-9906, www.leisurevans.com



FitMaster

One of the most common questions among motorhome owners is "What equipment do I need to tow a dinghy vehicle?" Roadmaster's website can help you determine what to buy with its new FitMaster function. FitMaster offers a visual representation of all towing components in a user-friendly format, including part numbers from the company's extensive product line. And, Roadmaster says, it also provides information to the technicians installing the equipment, including wiring and lighting diagrams, and procedures. Roadmaster also claims FitMaster eliminates any surprises about necessary hardware that often pop up during installation due to the website's "comprehensive list of what you need to tow, right from the get-go." The list of components is based on vehicles the company has actually inspected — and outfitted — in its factory. To access FitMaster, log on to www.roadmasterinc.com and select the "FitMaster" tab.

Roadmaster Inc. | 800-669-9690, www.roadmasterinc.com



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Active RV Upholstery Center now offers custom RV Steering Wheel Covers for Class A and C motorhomes. The covers are designed to enhance grip and comfort while driving in even the most extreme weather conditions. Plush Velour fabric covers (\$29.95) are available in 12 colors, while Brushed Suede fabric covers (\$39.95) come in six colors. All have been manufactured for easy installation, and the company offers a 30-day satisfaction guarantee.

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Julian, California

Easy As Pie

The town of Julian, once famous for gold mining, has become a quaint spot to escape the desert heat in Southern California. Located along the northern edge of the Cuyamaca Mountains in San Diego County, Julian sits at an elevation of 4,226 feet, where orchards of fruit trees thrive. And where there are fruit trees, there is pie.

Julian Pie Co. at 2225 Main Street is known far and wide as home to some of the best-tasting fruit pies in the state. We had a tough time choosing between the varieties, so we ended up with two pies cut up into six flavors each. From apple to strawberry-rhubarb to mixed berry and more, there are more than 20 different choices.

Julian's Main Street also includes other bakeries, specialty food stores and gift shops. If you want to stay the night, there are a number of private RV parks and the William Heise County Park (20 electric sites, 37 dry camping sites) within a few miles of Julian.

For more information about the Julian Pie Co. — or to have a pie shipped to you — call 760-765-2449 or visit www.julianpie.com — *Morey Edelman*



Photo: Julian Pie Co.

Greeneville, Tennessee

Tailor Shops and Llamas

The Andrew Johnson National Historic Site, located in the northeast corner of Greeneville, Tennessee, was established to honor the 17th president of the United States (he became president after the assassination of President Abraham Lincoln). The site consists of 16 acres and includes two homes (Johnson's Early Home and the Homestead), a visitor center with his tailor shop, and the Andrew Johnson National Cemetery, where he is buried.

Andrew Johnson arrived in the

town in 1826 and started his tailor shop. His business became the local gathering place where political talk shaped his views, thus launching his political career.

About 8½ miles away from the historic site, in Chuckey, is the Lazy Llama Campground and RV Park (423-823-2100, www.llamacampground.com). It's an unusual RV park that the entire family will enjoy, with amenities that include a llama farm, art classes for children and opportunities to trek with llamas.

For more information about the Andrew Johnson National Historic Site, call 423-638-3551 or go to www.nps.gov/anjo — *James Richardson* **M**

Photo: James Richardson





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Pages From the Past

Retracing *MotorHome's* October issues over the years

“A motorhome is like a house on wheels but somebody drives it.” That may be the simplest of explanations for the muse of our lifestyle of choice, but what more could we expect from a precocious third-grader? In “If I Had a Motorhome,” in the October 1985 issue, a creative writing teacher queries 75 elementary-school students about their definitions of a motorhome, and what they would do with one. In addition to practical places around the planet, there were more than a few answers involving time travel, a couple including jet-pack additions and one that even suggested converting a motorhome into a submarine. Clearly, a motorhome is a door to imagination, to virtually any destination, providing safety and comfort along the way.

And though *MotorHome* hasn't yet mastered the art of turning back the years or traveling beneath the ocean's surface, we have taken our readers to destinations across the globe for more than a half-century.

Adventures to places like Mexico and Alaska — two favorites to this day — were first documented in the 1969 Fall issue. The Atlantic coast is the “Maine” attraction in the October 1973

issue, and again in '86, where we also explore the stunning autumn splendor of leaf-peeping in Utah.

The 1996 cover boasts of “Autumn Adventures,” including trips to New England, Idaho, Indiana and beyond. That same issue includes a roundup of rearview video monitors, which were cutting-edge technology at the time. And they still are today, but the picture tubes of those bygone monitors have been

replaced with LCD screens (the feature points out LCD technology as being inconsistent and unreliable — yikes!).

The turn of the century ushered in even more delicious fall beauty. The 2004 issue combines pumpkins and fall foliage, including a multihued expedition ranging from California to Canada.

And, what fall tour would be complete without traversing the famed Blue Ridge Parkway and Great Smoky Mountains National Park? In 2016's “Fall Fantasy,” following his exploration of the esteemed area, the author points out “We thought we had picked the perfect time to see the Great Smoky Mountains with its vibrant fall colors.” We think so, too. **M**



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Texas Ranch Life's John Elick demonstrates cowboy skills such as the art of "cutting" cattle from a herd.

The Birthplace of Texas

Celebrate the Lone Star State's independence in Washington County, home to history, beautiful flowers, delicious wines and desserts — and cowboys, of course

By Pam Windsor

Washington County, Texas — a 622-square-mile area located roughly halfway between Austin and Houston on U.S. Route 290 — offers an experience that appeals to the senses, as well as a look at some unique American history. Small towns like Brenham, Burton, Chappell Hill and Independence have some special attractions — from historical sites and cattle ranches to wine and roses — that make a visit well worth it.

The Washington-on-the-Brazos State Historic Site is known as the birthplace of Texas. This marks the spot where the state declared independence from Mexico in 1836. Visitors to this massive park can tour a replica of Independence Hall (where representatives met for the formal declaration), see what life might have been like on a working farm that re-creates pioneer life, and visit the Star of the Republic

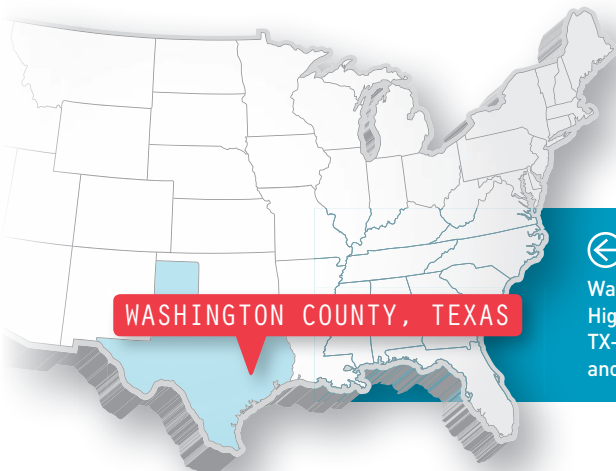
Museum, which focuses on the 10 years when Texas was its own country.

You'll hear colorful stories about the people and places that made Texas great wherever you go. Sam Houston, who led the fight for Texas' independence, remains one of the state's greatest heroes. Growing up in Tennessee, he spent time with the Cherokee, then went on to become a soldier and a politician, serving as governor of both Tennessee and Texas. Houston was baptized — later in life — in Independence, Texas. The church still exists.

"It happened at Independence Baptist Church, which is the oldest continuously operating Baptist church in Texas," explained Page Michel, President/CEO of the Brenham-Washington County Chamber of Commerce. "Baptists did it in the river back then. When Sam Houston was baptized, the pastor dumped him in the water, and when he brought him back up said, 'Sir, your sins have been washed away.' And Houston said, 'I pity the fish downstream.'"

The tiny town of Burton is home to the Texas Cotton Gin Museum, as well as what Museum Director Linda Russell calls the "oldest working cotton gin in the world." Tours start inside the

Photos: Pam Windsor



← Getting There

Washington County is located about 90 minutes east of Austin. From Austin, take Texas State Highway 71 East toward Bastrop. After about 22 miles, turn left onto State Highway 95/TX-21/TX-95. After a little more than 10 miles, merge onto U.S. Route 290 East and continue for another 2 miles.



From far left: The Cotton Gin Museum details the history of Eli Whitney's invention, culminating in a tour of the Burton Farmers Gin, built in 1914. The George H.W. Bush Presidential Library Center in College Station covers the life and times of the 41st president, including an exhibit replicating the Oval Office.

museum with Russell outlining the history of the cotton gin, followed by a tour of the Burton Farmers Gin nearby, built in 1914.

"Eli Whitney invented the cotton gin in 1793," she said, noting the difference it made in the slow, painstaking process. "In 10 hours you could gin 1 pound of fiber, 2 pounds of seed. After Whitney's invention, in the same 10 hours you could gin 50 pounds of fiber, 100 pounds of seed." She used a small box with a saw blade that pulls the fiber from the seed to show Whitney's process.

"Our friend Eli Whitney thought outside the box. You don't get the seed out of the cotton, you get the cotton off the seed. And that process, which Whitney patented in 1793, is the same process used today. The only thing that's different is the power that turns those side blades."

The museum highlights some interesting facts about cotton and its many uses. And while the Burton Farmers Gin closed in 1974, it revs back up every year to bale cotton for the annual Burton Cotton Gin Festival

in April.

Texas pride shines through at the George H.W. Bush Presidential Library Center just outside Washington County in nearby College Station — that's George Herbert Walker Bush. The library on the campus of Texas A&M University covers the life and times of America's 41st president with replicas of the White House Situation Room, the Press Room and the Oval Office, where visitors can take their very own photo at the president's desk.

Tour guide Ron Kay said the museum gives a thorough overview of President Bush's life and career, his time in office and his experience as a Navy pilot during World War II.

"The Oval Office, I think, is probably the most striking [exhibit]. The area with all of the World War II artifacts and the plane, as well as the model of the submarine that actually pulled him out of the life raft after he was shot down, that's pretty interesting stuff."

Letters, videos and other displays offer deeper insight into the president as a man devoted to his family and who deeply revered his parents. "His

mother had a huge influence," noted Director Warren Finch. "She told him when he was a boy not to be a braggadocio, to give other people credit. And he's probably, throughout his life, bent over backward giving other people credit."

The small town of Brenham wears its heritage proudly with more than 120 historic sites and markers in or around it. This picturesque town is full of unique shops, restaurants and wineries, and welcomes visitors with good old fashioned hospitality.

While Spanish missionaries first planted grapes in the state more than 300 years ago, the Texas wine industry didn't kick off on a commercial scale until the 1970s. Stephen Morgan owns Saddlehorn Winery, which began almost a decade ago.

"Most of the wineries here are small, and because they're small, you have the opportunity to actually come into the winery and meet the owners and the winemakers and talk about the wine."

Windy Winery offers traditional grape-stomping in July and August (from the Fourth of July to August 26) if that's something you have on your bucket list.

Keep in mind if you find a local wine you like, you need to buy it in Texas. Most of these small wineries don't ship out of state.

If you're up for a fun side of history and a sensory treat — consider an ice cream stop. Blue Bell Creameries began in Brenham more than 100



Much of Washington county is rural, so encounters with animals — including the state's famous longhorn cattle — are common.

years ago, and offers behind-the-scenes tours at its factory. If you plan on making a visit, note that tours are only available Monday through Friday, as Blue Bell gives factory employees weekends off.

If you're traveling through Washington County between mid-March and mid-April, prepare for a spectacular sight featuring nature as its best. The region is known as "Bluebonnet Country" for the bright blue, scented flowers that fill the fields and stretch for miles when they're at their peak.

And if you enjoy flowers, you might want to stop by the Antique Rose Emporium. This nationally recognized mail-order nursery is famous for its antique roses, which owner Mike Shoup says destroys the myth that roses are difficult to grow and maintain. Although this 8-acre collection of gardens highlights roses, you'll find a variety of plants and flowers growing here.

It wouldn't be a visit to Texas if you didn't get a chance to see life on the range. If you want to catch a close-up look at cowboy life, check out Texas Ranch Life in Chappell Hill. This

There are a number of RV parks in the area, including Dixieland Texas Retreat RV Park in Carmine, which features 40 pull-through sites on 15 acres in a clean, country setting.



working cattle ranch offers horseback riding, as well as ranch work demonstrations that include roping, bronc breaking and cattle herding. During a recent visit, owner John Elick gave a "cutting" demonstration.

"You take a set of cattle like this and the horse will separate one from the herd," he explained. "I could have a herd of 100 animals and I might want to separate 10 to go sell them or do something with them. And I'll cut them out of there and send them to a different area."

Craig Bauer, a day work cowboy (cowboy-for-hire) at the ranch, handles horseback riding.

"You just call ahead. It's about 30 minutes of a lesson, knowing what to do with a horse and then it's about a two-hour ride. We show people a lot of pretty country, cows, wildlife, wildflowers and all kinds of stuff."

The ranch also offers Kawasaki riding, fishing in 12 lakes on the property and tomahawk throwing. "Who do you think likes tomahawk throwing the most?" asked Elick. "Men beginning around 45 or 50. I take groups of about 20 or so to those targets out there."

Much of Washington County is somewhat rural, and RV parks are limited. In fact, you might choose to stay closer to Austin or Houston. There are some small parks in the area, such as Dixieland Texas Retreat RV Park in Carmine or Artesian Park RV Campground in Brenham. Donna Pavloski spent weeks with her Allegro

Class A at Dixieland RV Park.

"They have full hookup sites and Wi-Fi," she said, adding, "They don't have cable. They do have a laundry room and keep everything very clean. It's a nice park, it really is."

While Washington County covers a large rural area, RVers should have few problems traveling through the region. The Sheriff's Department does warn that an old railroad trestle overpass on FM (Farm to Market) 390 in the northern part of the county in the Gay Hill area should be avoided. The overpass has a clearance height of 9 feet 6 inches, but the number is misleading because the overpass is built in the form of an arch and the height relates to the highest point, so plan accordingly.

If you enjoy long scenic drives with some Texas history and hospitality thrown in, consider a visit to Washington County. **M**

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Artesian Park RV Campground
979-836-0680, <http://artesianrvpark.com>

Blue Bell Creameries
979-836-7977, www.bluebell.com

Dixieland Texas Retreat RV Park
979-278-3805, www.dixielandrmpark.com

George H.W. Bush Presidential Library Center
979-862-2251, www.bush41.org

Texas Cotton Gin Museum
979-289-3378, www.cottonginmuseum.org

Washington County Visitor Center
888-273-6426, www.visitbrenhamtexas.com

Washington-on-the-Brazos State Historic Site
936-878-2214, <http://wheretexasbecametexas.org>

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FUN IN THE SUN

NEW SNOWBIRD-FRIENDLY RESORTS – AND RENOVATIONS TO EXISTING LOCATIONS – CONTINUE TO ATTRACT MOTORHOME OWNERS IN SEARCH OF WARM WINTER WEATHER



New pickleball courts, exercise rooms, swimming pools and clubhouses are among the latest amenities that have been installed at snowbird-friendly RV resorts across the Sun Belt.

New and newly refurbished RV parks are also expected to open this fall in Florida and California, while additional new parks are expected to open next fall in both Florida and Arizona, according to park operators and developers.

"Florida needs more parks," said Gerry Herron, who plans to open 4 Lakes Campground on a 49.5-acre site 27 miles south of St. Augustine, Florida, in November.

The 52-site park will have RV sites that average 45-by-68 feet with full hookups, including cable TV and Wi-Fi service,

plus newly planted trees. The park also has walking trails as well as four ponds with a combined surface area of about 12 acres, which Herron plans to eventually stock for catch-and-release fishing.

But while 4 Lakes Campground will initially have gravel campsites and milling-covered roads, more amenities are planned for next year, including a dog park, which Herron hopes to open by spring.

Meanwhile, Tom Reinard, and his parents, Cathy and Gary Reinard, are spending more than half a million dollars fixing up the former Jennings Outdoor Resort in Jennings, Florida, which they plan to reopen this fall as the Jennings KOA Holiday campground.

"It's an amazingly beautiful setting," said Cathy Reinard, whose family acquired the park earlier this year. "It's a beautiful property. We feel great about it. We just have to get it where it needs to be."

The Reinards know what they're getting into. They previously owned and operated the Copake KOA in New York, which was one of the highest rated KOA Holiday campgrounds in the country. By the time of this writing, the Reinards had already redone their laundry room and were preparing to redo the park entrance, remodel their restrooms and the park store.

One thing the Reinards don't have to worry about are their RV sites, which can easily accommodate most rigs. "Our average site is at least 60 feet long and 35 feet wide, and all of them are pull-throughs. We will be adding even bigger deluxe patio sites sometime this winter," Reinard said.

Meanwhile, Jennings Realty Inc. (a fifth-generation family-owned business based in Evanston, Illinois) and Rymer Companies of Minnesota were planning to break ground this year on Sunkissed Village, a 267-site RV resort in Summerfield, Florida, near Ocala, which is expected to open in the fall of 2019, according to Darla Sinnard, who manages Jennings Realty's sister park, Bay Bayou RV Resort in Tampa.

In Coachella, California, the first phase of a 188-site condo-style RV resort, with sites for sale and for rent, was expected to open before the end of the year, according to Patty Nugent of Coachella Vineyards Luxury RV Park LLC. She said the park would be a high-end resort with lot sites starting in the mid-\$200,000 range.

Across the country, two new resorts are also expected to open in Arizona



Lake Conroe RV and Camping Resort in Texas features a new tree-lined RV section with pull-through sites and 50-amp service.

by fall of 2019, including a 414-site RV resort in Camp Verde, roughly 40 minutes south of Sedona and 90 minutes north Phoenix. The as-yet-unnamed RV resort will be just west of Interstate 17 and just north of State Route 260.

"It's a scenic location and what we think will be a great RV resort," said Ryan Day, who handles national manufactured housing and RV resort acquisitions and development for Plymouth, Minnesota-based Provident Real Estate Ventures, which is providing financing for the project. The park itself is being developed by Red Moon Development & Construction of Scottsdale, Arizona, which plans to equip the resort with full amenities, including swimming pools, pickleball courts, walking trails, a dog park and desert landscaping.

Farther south, Carl J. Rygg is building Sonora RV Resort, a 70-site resort on a 20-acre site that he expects to open by fall of 2019. The \$2 million resort is on the west side of State Route 85, about 13 miles north of downtown Gila Bend. It will include a 2-acre lake that will be suitable for swimming and kayaking. The park will also include several amenities, including a full-service restaurant, a

3,000-square-foot clubhouse as well as pickleball and tennis courts.

Sonora RV Resort abuts off-road trails, which guests can explore in their RZR's and other off-road vehicles. Rygg said he plans to provide guided tours of the desert backroads for people who would like to explore the desert but don't have their own off-road vehicles.

Meanwhile, operators of snowbird-friendly parks in California, Arizona, Texas and Florida are investing in new amenities and improvements.

The Springs at Borrego RV Resort in Borrego Springs, California, recently converted its existing tennis courts into eight dedicated pickleball courts and built a separate tennis court in another area that's sunken into the ground with retaining walls around it.

Resort General Manager Daniel Wright said serious pickleball players prefer having dedicated pickleball courts, rather than courts that double as tennis courts because it's too confusing with all of the lines on the ground for the different games. Tennis players also like having their own separate — and quiet — space to play, he said, since pickleball players and their fans tend to be a bit noisy.

"The improvements have spurred a very robust pickleball activity schedule, with dozens of players involved on a daily basis during the high season," Wright said.

Far left: The Springs at Borrego RV Resort in California offers eight dedicated pickleball courts. Left: Amenities at Florida's Bay Bayou RV Resort include a large, heated pool and Tiki Hut — plus a renovated bathhouse.



FUN IN THE SUN

Right: Willcox/Cochise KOA Holiday is currently undergoing a \$1 million renovation, including 30-50 amp service, cable TV and high-speed fiber-optic Wi-Fi. Far right: Caravan Oasis recently renovated all activity areas, including those for shuffleboard, pickleball and bocce ball.

Several parks in Arizona have also been making improvements. These include:

Caravan Oasis RV Resort in Yuma:

New owners have invested more than \$250,000 in new landscaping, new gravel and other improvements to this 510-site park since December 2017, repainting the swimming pool area and remodeling all of the activity areas for pickleball, bocce ball and shuffleboard as well as the park's 9-hole putting green and recreation room, said Manager Michelle Agrillo. She said the improvements were significant enough to prompt representatives from the "Good Sam RV Travel & Savings Guide" to elevate the park from a 9 to a 10 during the park's latest inspection. The park also brought in 15 new park models, which it plans to rent and sell, and created a new lounging area with hammocks.

The Gila Bend KOA Journey in Gila Bend:

This 130-site park, which won this year's Medium Size Park of the Year Award from the Arizona Associa-



tion of RV Parks and Campgrounds as well as KOA's 2018 Rising Star Award, has just added three, 150-foot-long pull-through sites, two of which have their own fenced dog runs. "It's been a big hit," park co-owner Scott Swanson said of the private dog runs, which are designed for overnight travelers.

Leaf Verde RV Resort in Buckeye:

This 377-site park installed a new exercise room with two treadmills and a step climber and made numerous cosmetic improvements, such as re-landscaping the park entrance and erecting wooden gates to hide the park's dumpsters.

Monte Vista Village RV Resort in

Mesa: This 950-site park, which won this year's Mega Park of the Year Award from the Arizona Association of RV Parks and Campgrounds, is being expanded by Chicago-based Equity LifeStyle Properties (ELS), which owns

the resort. While an additional 237 sites are being developed, ELS has built a brand-new welcome center as well as a recreation area with a swimming pool, hot tub, cabanas, fire pits and barbecue grills. The park has also created a fresh woodshop area to complement its popular silversmith and ceramics stations.

Paradise RV Resort in Sun City: This 949-site park, which is owned by ELS, was completely redoing its swimming pool, spa and deck areas, and planned to have the improvements completed by the time you read this, according to Scott Mathews, the park's general manager.

Willcox/Cochise KOA Holiday in

Willcox: This 60-site park is investing more than \$1 million in improvements, equipping every site with 30-50 amp electrical service, 48-channel cable TV and fiber-optic Wi-Fi, according to park co-owner Dennis Crull of Timberline Development Corp. in Pagosa Springs, Colorado. "We have 500 megabits per second coming into our park," he said. "We have both 2G and 5G Wi-Fi." Other improvements include new ADA-compliant restrooms, a remodeled laundry facility with new equipment, two new deluxe cabins, three deluxe RV sites, and a renovated store and check-in area. The park also remodeled a maintenance building into a clubhouse with a commercial kitchen. At the time of this writing, the park was building a new gunite swimming pool and spa.

In Texas, Sun Belt parks making improvements include Lake Conroe RV and Camping Resort in Willis, another ELS park, which now has an upgraded marina and boat ramp, and a recently opened, tree-lined RV section with pull-

"THE IMPROVEMENTS WERE SIGNIFICANT ENOUGH TO PROMPT REPRESENTATIVES FROM THE 'GOOD SAM RV TRAVEL & SAVINGS GUIDE' TO ELEVATE THE PARK FROM A 9 TO A 10 DURING THE PARK'S LATEST INSPECTION."

Water volleyball is a popular activity at snowbird resorts, offering a nice aerobic workout while cooling off.



through sites as well 67 new concrete slabs, 50-amp hookups, a creekside walking trail, a picturesque park and a revitalized dog run with obstacles.

The Jellystone Park in Kerrville is also renovating its River Rock Pub & Pizzeria and installing 13 new cabins, while the Jellystone Park in Canyon Lake has added new "Red Carpet RV sites" with 30/50 amp electric and cable TV service, and extra-large concrete pads, according to Tessa Wiles, director of marketing for Grand Rapids, Michigan-based Northgate Resorts, which owns both parks.

In Florida, RV resorts making improvements include the 300-site Bay Bayou RV Resort in Tampa, which expanded 53 of its sites to as much as 100 feet in length with 100-amp electrical connections, according to Darla Sinnard, the park's manager.

"These expanded sites have been extremely popular," she said. "If I had 50 more sites like that, I'd sell them tomorrow."

Last year, Bay Bayou upgraded its bathroom with granite countertops, all-new fixtures and a special nonslip floor tile that has a rough surface to provide excellent traction even when it's wet. "We're very safety conscious here," Sinnard said.

Other Florida parks making improvements include ELS's Tropical

Palms RV Resort in Kissimmee, which is 4 miles from Walt Disney World Resort. The park's 100 cottage rental units have been recently upgraded. The cottages include full kitchens, flat-screen TVs and private decks, and come in a variety of floorplans to accommodate any size group. Pet-friendly cottages are also available.

For More Information

4 Lakes Campground

904-601-2267, www.4lakescampground.com

Bay Bayou RV Resort

888-692-2968, www.baybayou.com

Caravan Oasis RV Resort

928-342-1480, www.caravanoasisresort.com

Jellystone Park in Kerrville

830-460-3262, <https://jellystoneguadalupe.com>

Jennings KOA Holiday campground

386-938-3321

Lake Conroe RV & Camping Resort

877-570-2267, www.thousandtrails.com/texas/lake-conroe-rv-camping-resort/?utm_source=Camping_blog

Leaf Verde RV Resort

623-386-3132, www.leafverde.com

Monte Vista RV Resort

800-435-7128, <http://montevistaresort.com>

Paradise RV Resort

877-570-2267, <https://rvonthego.com/arizona/paradise-rv-resort>

Sonora Lake RV Resort

<http://sonoralakervresort.com>

The Springs at Borrego RV Resort

760-767-0004, www.springsatborrego.com

Tropical Palms RV Resort

877-570-2267, <https://rvonthego.com/florida/tropical-palms-rv-resort>

Willcox/Cochise KOA Holiday

520-384-3212, <https://koa.com/campgrounds/willcox>

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Distant Drums RV Resort

877-577-5507, www.ddrvresort.com

Mission View RV Resort

800-444-8439, www.missionviewrv.com

Phoenix Metro RV Park

623-582-0390, www.phoenixmetrorvpark.com

Pleasant Harbor Marina & RV Resort

800-475-3272, <https://pleasantharbor.com>

Quail Run RV Park

928-927-8810, www.quailrv.com

Rincon Country West RV Resort

520-294-5608, www.rinconcountry.com

CALIFORNIA

Bakersfield River Run RV Park

661-377-3600, www.riverrunrvpark.com

Cava Robles RV Resort

844-641-5093, www.suncommunities.com/community/cava-robles-rv-resort

Chula Vista RV Resort

800-741-6878, www.chulavistarv.com

Fountain of Youth Spa RV Resort

888-800-0772, www.foyspa.com

Indian Waters RV Resort

760-342-8100, www.indianwatersrvresort.com

Mission Bay RV Resort

877-219-6900, <https://missionbayrvresort.com>

Newport Dunes Waterfront Resort

800-765-7661, www.newportdunes.com

Olive Ave RV Resort

877-633-3557, www.oliveavervresort.com

Pala RV Resort

844-472-5278, www.palacasino.com/resort/rv-resort

Rio Bend Golf & RV Resort

800-545-6481, www.riobendrvresort.com

FLORIDA

Big Cypress RV Resort & Campground

863-983-1330, www.bigcypressrvresort.com

Boyd's Key West Campground

305-294-1465, www.boydscampground.com

Craig's RV Park

863-494-1820, www.craigsvrpark.com

TOP 10 SNOWBIRD TIPS

For the past eight years, we have been escaping our cold northeastern winters, joining snowbirds heading south in our motorhome. We alternate Florida and the southeast with Arizona and the Southwest, always looking for great places to stay warm and continue our outdoor lifestyle. Here are our top 10 tips that we have learned to help maximize the RV snowbird experience.

1. Choose Destination(s) to Match Your Lifestyle

Do you like the hot, dry weather of the Southwestern desert, or do you prefer the beaches of Florida or Southern California? Review the activities you want to enjoy while snowbirding, such as hiking, biking, swimming and golfing. Check out local spectator sports, the museums, theaters and concerts. And don't forget about the shopping possibilities.

2. Planning, Planning, Planning

As the baby boom generation retires and takes to the road, a record number of RVs are being sold and used. Where you could once plan where you're camping the night before, then arrive to your pick of the many available campsites, this is no longer the case. Many public campgrounds, including some terrific state parks, require reservations for January through March. Typically, it's 11 months in advance for Florida, 12 months ahead for Arizona and six months prior for all National Parks, National Forest and Bureau of Land Management (BLM) campsites.

Reservations for private campgrounds are also required. There is more latitude in many of these parks, but again, the more-popular campgrounds are often booked up to a year in advance.

Of course, there is always the option of camping at one of the numerous BLM "free" boondocking sites, but these cannot be reserved in advance and generally have limited — or no — amenities.

3. On-site Transportation

If you plan to camp in one location for weeks at a time,

you'll need a method of transportation to head into town to purchase groceries and supplies. We've occasionally been at campgrounds where resupply is within a walk or a short bike ride. For the most part, shopping trips will be accomplished using a dinghy vehicle, a rental car or using Uber/Lyft. We have found that renting a car (usually from Enterprise, which has many local sites) is a cost-effective method, with weekly rentals ranging from \$150 to \$225 per week. Don't forget to check public transportation. Occasionally, the local bus service will meet your needs. (Explore this option with Google Maps under the bus/public transportation icon.)

4. Hold the Mail

The U.S. Postal Service (USPS) will hold your mail for up to 30 days. For most snowbirds, that isn't sufficient for the winter season. You can forward your mail to one of your children's/friend's homes by temporarily changing your address through the USPS (www.usps.com/manage/forward.htm). We came up with an easy solution: Since we have postal delivery to our house (not rural delivery), we were able to add a mail slot in our front door. It's always fun when we get home, since we almost can't push the front door open due to mail after months on the road.

The internet has made snowbirding much easier than before. We have converted all our billing statements to allow online access/payments. Occasionally, we arrive home to discover a piece of non-junk mail that we didn't plan for, but that is the rare exception. One time we got back home to discover we had missed jury duty. Fortunately, our town's judicial office was very understanding.

Cypress Trail RV Resort

239-333-3246, www.cypresstrailrv.com

Florida Grande Motor Coach Resort

352-569-1169, www.floridagrande.com

Little Willies RV Resort

863-494-2717, www.littlewilliesrvresort.com

Naples Motorcoach Resort

888-323-4985,
www.naplesmotorcoachresort.com

Nature's Resort

800-301-7880, <http://naturesresortfla.com>

RiverBend Class A Motorcoach Resort

866-787-4837, www.riverbendflorida.com

Whisper Creek RV Resort

863-675-6888,
<http://whispercreekrvresort.com>

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Creekfire Motor Ranch

912-897-2855, www.creekfirerv.com

Crossing Creeks RV Resort & Spa

706-835-1111,
www.crossingcreeksrvresort.com

Crossroads Travel Park

478-987-3141, www.crossroadstravelpark.com

Eagles Roost Resort

229-559-5192, www.eaglesroostresort.com

Lake Pines RV Park and Campground

706-561-9675, www.lakepines.net

Pine Mountain RV Resort

706-663-4329, www.rvcoutdoors.com/pine-mountain

Red Gate Campground and RV Park

912-272-8028, www.redgatecampground.com

River's End Campground

800-786-1016, www.riversendcampground.com

Scenic Mountain RV Park & Campground

478-454-1013, www.scenicmountainrv.com

Sugar Mill Creek RV Resort

706-947-0162, www.sugarmillcreek.com

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Alsatian RV Resort

830-931-9190, www.alsatianresort.com

Ancient Oaks RV Park

361-729-5051, www.ancientoaksvpark.com

Buckhorn Lake Resort

830-895-0007, www.buckhornlake.com

Colonia Del Rey RV Park

800-580-2435, www.ccrvresorts.com

Colorado Landing RV Park

979-968-9465, www.coloradolanding.com

Galveston Island RV Resort

409-200-2745, www.galvestonrv.com

Gulf Waters Beach Front RV Resort

361-749-4978, <http://gulfwatersrvresorttx.com>

Pecan Park Riverside RV Park

512-396-0070, www.pecanpark.com

Stone Creek RV Park

830-609-7759, www.stonecreekrvpark.com

The Vineyards Campground & Cabins

888-329-8993, www.vineyardscampground.com

5. Healthcare Needs

Based on your needs, know how to access healthcare in your chosen location(s). Be sure to check your insurance for coverage during your travels. This is a simple but not-to-be-forgotten checklist item.

6. Economics

The expense of snowbirding can be the same as staying home, or it can be quite extravagant. Based on your resources and needs, there are many options, from no-cost boondocking to negotiated monthly rates at private campgrounds to short-term stays at private and public campgrounds.

7. Communications and Electronics

When planning your itinerary, determine your needs for telephone and internet service. There are several websites and apps that will help you determine connectivity. The one we use is www.cellreception.com. You can also contact your phone-service carrier for coverage information.

Many smartphones have the capability to turn into a Wi-Fi hotspot to connect other devices (including laptops and tablets), which uses quite a bit of data quickly, so check your mobile phone carrier's plan.

For television, if you've chosen private campgrounds, there should be cable TV with some breadth and quality. Plus, there's always satellite TV from DISH or DirecTV. Or use the motorhome's over-the-air antenna and refer to one of the many websites/apps to determine station availability. Our favorite is the TV Towers USA app.

8. Social Connections


Some of the fun of snowbirding is sharing your experiences with friends and family. Be sure to invite loved ones

to visit. You know that you've picked a great place if they're all clamoring to join you. If you do have visitors, there's also the opportunity to resolve local transportation issues using their car.

9. Take a Break

There's no reason to cancel your preplanned escape from the cold if you have a commitment at home during the snowbird season. If you must leave for a few days, first try to negotiate with your current campground. They can be quite accommodating at times. For absences of a couple of weeks or longer, we suggest a secure RV storage location (U-Haul is a good place to check). We like to head out in the fall before the weather turns too cold, so we make plans to fly home for the holidays. We park our motorhome at an RV storage location near a regional airport, grab a ride to the airport and fly home. Our motorhome is waiting for us upon our return. Two of our favorite gateway cities are Tampa, Florida, and Las Vegas, Nevada, both of which offer many flights and convenient storage options.

10. RV Maintenance

Surprisingly, maintenance can be more convenient to complete on the road than at home. In addition to the well-located Camping Worlds and other RV service facilities that cluster in many of the snowbird locations, there is usually some mobile maintenance offered in the private campgrounds (and even some public ones). Technicians at these locations can perform maintenance ranging from a simple oil change to a more complex repair. Many of these are also authorized for warranty service, but always check with the manufacturer for pre-authorization or approval. — *Morey and Ruth Edelman* 

HOME AWAY FROM HOME

WHETHER FOR SNOWBIRDING OR SIMPLY ENJOYING EXTENDED TIME ON THE ROAD, THESE MOTORHOMES FOCUS ON RESIDENTIAL COMFORT

For many of us, the RV lifestyle began on family camping trips, with only a thin layer of a canvas tent between you and the hard ground below. The accommodations may have been primitive, but the potential for something so much more — plus the ability to reconnect with loved ones and Mother Nature herself — was ignited within. Over the years, that allure may have led to the purchase of a pickup camper, pop-up or travel trailer, or perhaps even a

fifth-wheel. But it's no secret that when it comes to comfort and convenience, nothing beats a motorhome, as it allows for maximum space and amenities in a highly mobile package. So once the evolution to proud motorhome owner is complete, you're likely on the lookout for a platform that is not only easy to drive and operate, but (and perhaps most importantly) also includes the latest residential and chassis technologies.

And, once long-term RVing

becomes a reality, fine-tuning one's particular needs becomes a bigger priority. Longer stays mean even more comfort is required, whether in the form of upgraded furniture, larger holding tanks or even solar power.

For those looking forward to the next snowbirding season in a new motorhome, the handful of Class A's and Class C's featured here have been designed for extended living. These motorhomes are in it for the long haul, in terms of durability, on-the-road comfort and especially livability. With all the latest bells and whistles, they make snowbirding and long-term RVing easier and more enjoyable than ever. At the very least, they will make those weekend-warrior tenters and trailer owners green with envy.

Snowbirding allows motorhome owners to enjoy the sunshine year-round, even while the snow falls back home.



COACH HOUSE PLATINUM 272XL FR

Coach House understands that the destination is part of the journey, even if the stay will by far exceed the drive time. With the Class C Platinum 272XL FR (Front Recliner), the company has both sides covered: the comfort of a large luxury motorhome in a more compact, easy-to-drive package. On the road, the 6.8-liter V-10 and Ford F-450 chassis provide power and stability to keep up with highway traffic, and the heavy-duty hitch receiver allows owners to tow a trailer or dinghy vehicle to the next place in the sun. Once parked (and with the dual hydraulic slideouts extended), snowbirds will find a spacious living space suitable for a comfortable stay of any duration. The rear slideout houses a queen bed, which is situated out of the way and private. Forward of the bedroom is the bathroom, featuring a full stand-up shower with a glass door, as well as a porcelain toilet and a sink. Opposite the bath is a well-equipped galley with a three-burner stove, microwave-convection oven, 6-cubic-foot three-way refrigerator/freezer, spacious pull-out pantry, and a stainless-steel range hood and sink. The floorplan is highlighted by side-by-side dual power recliners, each with a swivel tray table, where owners can dine in comfort and also view the swivel-mount 32-inch HDTV with Blu-ray player. The on-demand LP-gas water heater, 4-kW Onan generator and two auxiliary house batteries enhance residential comfort, while an external LP-gas connection allows for grilling in the sunshine.



Chassis	Ford E-450 Super Duty	Exterior height with A/C	10' 5"
Engine	Triton 6.8L V-10	Wheelbase	176"
Fuel cap	55 gal	Freshwater cap	37 gal
GVWR	14,500 lbs	Black-/gray-water cap	25 gal/ 27 gal
Exterior length	26' 10"	LP-gas cap	15 gal
Exterior width	8'	Base MSRP	\$174,408

Coach House RV, 800-235-0984, www.coachhousesrv.com



ENTEGRA REATTA 37MB

The Reatta marks the newest addition to Entegra's luxury diesel lineup. Its Spartan K1 raised-rail chassis allows for plenty of space to pack along snowbird necessities, while the independent front suspension, Bilstein shocks and 10,000-pound-rated hitch receiver mean your travels — with or without a dinghy vehicle in tow — will be smooth and enjoyable. The Reatta is outfitted with the latest in technology, from all-LED lighting to touch-pad system control to a 2,000-watt pure sine wave inverter to an Onan 8,000-watt diesel AC generator with auto start (should you venture away from resort shorepower).

The quad-slide 37MB offers a rear bedroom retreat, with a comfortable king bed, large rear wardrobe, space for a washer and dryer, hanging shirt closets and a 32-inch LED TV with Blu-ray player. The residential refrigerator in the galley features an icemaker and water dispenser, while the induction cooktop, 1.5-cubic-foot microwave convection and spacious pantry help snowbirds stay well fed for the duration. The floor is hand-polished tile, the counters are all solid-surface and the interior lighting is recessed, adding to the luxurious feel of this nest. Additional entertainment from home theater components — including a 50-inch LED TV with soundbar in the living room and 39-inch exterior TV — is all top-notch. Entegra offers one-year 24/7 Coach-Net protection, in addition to a two-year limited warranty.

Chassis	Spartan K1	Exterior height with A/C	12' 10"
Engine	Cummins B Series	Wheelbase	236"
Fuel cap	100 gal	Freshwater cap	110 gal
GVWR	32,000 lbs	Black-/gray-water cap	41 gal/ 62 gal
Exterior length	37' 10"	LP-gas cap	16.5 gal
Exterior width	8' 5"	Base MSRP	\$291,893

Entegra Coach, 800-517-9137, www.entegracoach.com



FORETRAVEL IH-45

The Foretravel ih-45 is a custom-built coach with no standard floorplan, which makes it a great choice for just about any lifestyle — including snowbirding. Some of the more popular floorplans include a two-bathroom bunkhouse and a variety of bath-and-a-half floorplans, including a desk/TV lift with booth dinette; a computer desk; an L-shape lounge sofa; and a breakfast bench. All ih-45 motorhomes feature air bags to soften the ride, independent suspension up front and on the tag axle, and a hitch receiver rated for 20,000 pounds. Appliances and electronics are all top-shelf, while electronic gizmos

can be controlled with a tablet and SilverLeaf software. Snowbirds will appreciate residential flourishes such as a porcelain toilet in the bathrooms, heated flooring, natural quartz countertops, built-in vacuum system, hand-crafted hardwood cabinetry and a water-filtration system for the drinking water and icemaker. Aqua-Hot hydronic

heating helps keep things cozy, and a 12.5-kW AC generator with auto start keeps the power going when you're away from 50-amp connections. Options are essentially endless, and include such long-term niceties as a dishwasher, a wine cooler, washer/dryer, solar panels, LP-gas package and driver's-side patio awnings.

Chassis	Spartan TravelRide III	Exterior height with A/C	13' 2"
Engine	Cummins X15	Wheelbase	318.5"
Fuel cap	200 gal	Freshwater cap	135 gal
GVWR	54,000 lbs	Black-/gray-water cap	145 gal (combined)
Exterior length	45'	LP-gas cap	Optional
Exterior width	8' 6"	Base MSRP	\$1,450,000

Foretravel Motorcoach, 800-955-6226, www.foretravel.com



JAYCO PRECEPT PRESTIGE 36U

Any discussion on any Jayco motorhome begins with one thing: the company's JRide Plus Package. That's because the heavy-duty stabilizer bars, computer-balanced driveshaft, jounce bumpers and beefed up shocks help soften the ride and make your journey to the resort more enjoyable than ever. The new Prestige 36U also ups the livability ante, with a drop-down bunk up front, dinette and expandable sofa in the living area, offering plenty of room for the entire family (and visitors) to enjoy the snowbird season. And, occupants won't feel cramped with the 7-foot ceiling height and free-flowing bath-and-a-

half, dual-slide floorplan that's set up for lounging or entertaining. Hardwood cabinets, recessed LED lighting, 21-cubic-foot residential refrigerator (and 1,000-watt inverter) and solid-surface countertops make the Precept Prestige a nice place to spend extended time. Or, snowbirds can soak up the sun outside

while enjoying the exterior entertainment center with LED TV mounted on a swivel bracket and a DVD player/FM stereo, beneath the electric awning with integrated LED lighting. And with a 5,000-pound tow rating, there's plenty of power to bring along the dinghy vehicle for day-to-day activities.

Chassis	Ford F-53	Exterior height with A/C	12' 7"
Engine	Triton 6.8L V-10	Wheelbase	252"
Fuel cap	80 gal	Freshwater cap	72 gal
GVWR	24,000 lbs	Black-/gray-water cap	31 gal & 41 gal/ 50 gal
Exterior length	38' 2"	LP-gas cap	17 gal
Exterior width	8' 5"	Base MSRP	\$121,500

Jayco Inc., 574-825-5861, www.jayco.com



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NEWMAR KING AIRE 4553

Space is at a premium when in a motorhome, let alone while staying for the entire snowbird season. Newmar's King Aire 4553 keeps the walls from closing in thanks to its full-wall-slide, bath-and-a-half floorplan. The front living area provides an 87-inch chaise lounge across from a 68-inch sofa. The bedroom is outfitted with a king bed, and the master features a washer/dryer, linen cabinet, double-sink vanity and a 40-by-72-inch residential shower. All of this in Newmar's flagship diesel, outfitted to the nines with the most luxurious appointments. The redesigned digital dash up front allows for at-a-glance viewing, including a Mobileye lane-monitoring feature. The King Aire offers the ultimate in convenience: a tablet controls audiovisual equipment, keyless entry and the SilverLeaf application, the latter of which controls lights, window shades, air conditioning and more at the touch of a button.

Cabinetry is all hardwood, and the countertops are all polished for a high-end look and feel. Ultraleather furniture and cockpit seats raise the comfort quotient, while residential appliances and upgraded entertainment components — including the available 43-inch LED TV and soundbar outside — rival some of the best available. All lighting is LED, and a standard solar panel keeps the battery charged. Additional solar panels are available.

Chassis	Spartan K3
Engine	Cummins X15
Fuel cap	200 gal
GVWR	54,000 lbs
Exterior length	44' 11"
Exterior width	8' 5.5"
Exterior height with A/C	13' 4"
Wheelbase	292" + tag
Freshwater cap	105 gal
Black-/gray-water cap	60 gal/ 80 gal
LP-gas cap	N/A (all electric)
Base MSRP	\$916,921

Newmar Corp., 800-731-8300, www.newmarcorp.com



NEXUS EVOQUE 37E

NeXus RV claims that its motorhomes are the only models in the industry utilizing high-strength, low-alloy (HSLA) construction, with composite materials in the roof, wall and slideouts. No wood whatsoever is used in the framing, which leads to increased longevity and durability. The brand-new EvoQue 37E offers buyers three slides — two in the bedroom and one in the living area — to help open up the areas snowbirds will likely be roosting in the majority of the time. Plus, the full bathroom runs the entire width in the rear of the motorhome, providing plenty of elbowroom for primping and preening (a half bath is located amidships). Standards include fiberglass side walls, Azdel substrate, power awning with lights, solid hardwood cabinets, Beauflor flooring and solid-surface countertops throughout. NeXus offers buyers a variety of options, so customization is easy and includes upgraded furniture, electronics and residential appliances.



Chassis	Freightliner
Engine	Cummins B
Fuel cap	100 gal (dual fill)
GVWR	29,500 lbs
Exterior length	38' 10"
Exterior width	8' 5"
Exterior height with A/C	12' 9"
Wheelbase	266"
Freshwater cap	100 gal
Black-/gray-water cap	86 gal
LP-gas cap	20.3 gal
Base MSRP	\$ 225,000

NeXus RV, 855-786-3987, www.nexusrv.com

RENEGADE XL X45QS

Looking to spread your wings?

Renegade's quad-slide XL X45QS provides snowbirds and full-timers maximum livability, storage and comfort with its two large opposing slides in the main living area, as well as large opposing bedroom slides and a king bed plus full-height wardrobe on the rear bedroom wall. The spacious amidships (split) bath has a double-vanity sink with drawer storage, a separate linen cabinet and a large shower. In the main living area, the XL offers opposing ultraleather Flexsteel sofas, while the galley boasts solid maple hardwood cabinetry, soft-close drawer slides and upgraded hardware. Appliances include a microwave convection oven, an 18-cubic-foot residential refrigerator with icemaker and a recessed three-burner (or optional two-burner electric induction) cooktop. Of particular note to snowbirds are increased tank capacities, plenty of interior and exterior storage and a whopping 30,000 pounds of towing capacity. Standard

features include porcelain tile flooring, three 15,000-Btu roof air conditioners with heat pumps, fully automatic four-point leveling system, multiplex electrical system, Samsung smart LED TVs, Blu-ray and soundbar home theater system and outside entertainment center. All, of course, on the robust Freightliner premium commercial-duty Cascadia chassis powered by the Detroit Diesel DD16 engine rated at 600 hp and 1,850 lb-ft of torque.

Chassis	Freightliner Cascadia
Engine	Detroit Diesel DD16
Fuel cap	120 gal
GVWR	58,000 lbs
Exterior length	45'
Exterior width	8' 4.25"
Exterior height with A/C	12' 10"
Wheelbase	340"
Freshwater cap	150 gal
Black-/gray-water cap	75 gal/ 75 gal
LP-gas cap	38 gal
Base MSRP	\$516,348

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THOR VENETIAN J40

Thor's Venetian diesel motorhomes appeal to snowbirds by using a combination of cutting-edge technology and sophisticated style. Technology comes in the form of the Aqua-Hot hydronic heating and hot water system, Winegard Connect Wi-Fi antenna, multiplex wiring with a 7-inch tablet and four LED TVs, including a retractable 55-incher in the living area. Style marks include high-gloss glazed cabinetry, leatherette furniture, full-body paint with gelcoat side walls, polished-porcelain tile flooring and electric fireplace with remote control. The J40 comes standard with a 66-inch sofa bed and buffet-style dinette, across from the 68-inch reclining theater seating. Options include a large Dream Dinette or Euro-style recliner with workspace, perfect for bookkeeping while at the RV resort. The half-bath amidsthips is great for visitors and younger snowbirds, while the full-bath spanning the rear of the motorhome features a 42-by-30-inch shower with granite-texture enclosure, dual medicine pull-outs and a stackable washer and dryer. The main bedroom is a welcome retreat with the Tilt-a-View king bed opposing the 32-inch LED TV on top of the dresser, flanked by dual wardrobes. For additional sleeping versatility, a power drop-down over-cab hideaway bunk features a plush Cotton Cloud mattress. A 100-watt solar charging system, 21-cubic-foot residential refrigerator and dual 15,000-Btu roof air conditioners are all standard.

Chassis	Freightliner XC-R	Exterior height with A/C	12' 10"
Engine	Cummins ISL	Wheelbase	272"
Fuel cap	150 gal	Freshwater cap	91 gal
GVWR	38,320 lbs	Black-/gray-water cap	51 gal/ 70 gal
Exterior length	41'	LP-gas cap	N/A (all electric)
Exterior width	8' 5"	Base MSRP	\$366,225

Thor Motor Coach, 877-855-2867, www.thormotorcoach.com



WINNEBAGO NAVION 24D

At a bit more than 25½ feet long, Winnebago's Navion 24D is the shortest motorhome in our roundup. But, what it lacks in size, it more than makes up for in innovation, utilizing a walkaround queen-size Murphy-plus bed — meaning that the daytime usable space inside rivals that of many larger motorhomes. Up front, the cab seats swivel to add to seating options in the lounge and dining areas, which offer a nice view of the 28-inch HDTV. The galley is outfitted with a microwave convection oven, two-burner range/cooktop, dual-basin sink and a cold-water filtration system. The rear bath is surprisingly spacious, spanning the entire width and offering a large wardrobe and 23-by-34-inch shower enclosure. Standard are a Truma AquaGo instant water heater, 3,600-watt Cummins Onan LP-gas generator, 1,000-watt pure sine wave inverter and 100-watt solar panel/battery charger with controller. Cab conveniences include a radio/rearview monitor system (DVD player and satellite radio receiver), optional 9-inch screen Infotainment center with Rand McNally GPS and fully adjustable seating. The cabover bunk adds a full 49-by-75-inch sleeping space for kids or adventurous adults. Outside, automatic steps, an LED porch light and powered awning all help with patio enjoyment, as do the exterior speakers. An optional bike rack is also available. The Navion is built on the fuel-conscious Mercedes-Benz Sprinter chassis, which helps increase the range of your annual flight south for the winter.

Chassis	Mercedes-Benz Sprinter	Exterior height with A/C	11' 1"
Engine	3.0L V-6 turbodiesel	Wheelbase	170"
Fuel cap	26.4 gal	Freshwater cap	30 gal
GVWR	11,030 lbs	Black-/gray-water cap	40 gal/ 34 gal
Exterior length	25' 8"	LP-gas cap	13 gal
Exterior width	7' 6"	Base MSRP	\$134,763

Winnebago Industries, 641-585-3535, www.winnebagoind.com



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Running with the Dog

Coachmen's well-equipped 2019 Freelander 26RS Class C offers more bang for less bucks **By Chris Dougherty**

“I want to pay more for motorhome travel,” said no one, ever.

Coachmen, a classic brand in the RV industry, was founded in 1964 by the Corson brothers in Middlebury, Indiana, and is now a division of Forest River. Coachmen continues to provide RVs to price-conscious consumers and the fully featured Freelander Class C is a good example of the company's commitment to producing value-added motorhomes.

The company has recently turned up the heat on the competition by not only endeavoring to meet the most competitive price with the most features, but has also made its units much more resistant to water damage by replacing traditional luan in side wall construction with Azdel (see sidebar on page 46).

Class C's are very popular with owners who like to travel with their families because of the sleeping accommodations, plus the fact that they're easy to drive, park and get

serviced. Also, Class C's tend to be on the lower end of the price spectrum, though there are more luxurious models available with more expensive amenities for those who prefer to travel in upgraded comfort. The Freelander series is aimed at folks who want a comfortable, reasonably well-equipped rig at a modest price.

The Inside Scoop

The Freelander has remarkably good bones and nice features for the price. The 26RS is a single (bedroom)

slide, rear corner-bath model, built on a Chevrolet 4500 or a Ford E-450 cutaway, gas-powered chassis. The test coach was built on the Chevy.

Entering the side door, the interior is tastefully appointed in the Bronzite décor, with chestnut cabinetry, one-piece vinyl flooring and brown vinyl seating. The front L-shape lounge is comfortable and has a solid, single-post table that can be used safely by passengers during a road trip since the seats are fitted with three integrated seat belts and a child safety seat tether — features rarely found in a motorhome. Across from the dinette, a basic but comfortable vinyl-clad jackknife sofa complements the interior seating. There's no armrest on this type of sofa, as is normally the case, but along with the lounge and the cabover bunk, it increases the sleeping

ABOVE: The Coachmen Freelander 26RS is a suitable chariot for adventures, like here at Brunelle's Marina, South Hadley, Massachusetts.



accommodations to a total of up to eight.

While the cab is basic Chevrolet-issue with two non-rotating van seats, an optional swiveling passenger-side seat is available in the 26RS floorplan. Coachmen replaces the standard GM radio with a Jensen JRV9000R touch screen AM/FM/navigation/Bluetooth touch-screen stereo, which is connected only to two front door speakers. The sound was reminiscent of a 1970s Chevrolet Blazer and could have benefited from better speakers, which could be added later. The stereo includes CD, USB and Bluetooth capabilities; however, we were unable to test the Bluetooth functionality as the radio wouldn't connect to our iPhone 7 Plus, and plugging it into the USB made the stereo freeze — hopefully an isolated incident. Power ports and a 120-volt AC inverter outlet on the dash are standard.

The 95-by-57-inch cabover bunk is the largest in the industry, according to Coachmen, with ample headroom and an LED bed light by the window for settling in or nighttime reading. The foam bed cushions were comfortable, and a child safety net and ladder that attach to the ceiling and bed to keep youngsters from rolling out of the loft are included. Unfortunately, no curtain is provided to separate the cabover bed from the living space and, for that

Clockwise, from above right: The dinette and couch fold down into additional sleeping space, along with the large cabover bed. The steel pull-out and fold-down table is convenient for camping or tailgating. The queen master bed folds down after the slide is extended, with USB charging on one side. The Chevrolet cab offers decent space and is functional.

Above, left: The dining area and couch are roomy, comfortable and full of storage, and have seat belts and a child safety seat tether for passengers. Above, right: The functional galley features a large double-bowl sink and the drawers are concealed behind a door next to the range.

matter, there's not one for the cockpit or the master bed. A windshield curtain does come with the swivel seat option, and a plain curtain will be provided to customers upon request, free of charge, from the factory.

An optional 32-inch Furrion LED TV (\$1,013) is mounted to a large swing-away bracket in the cabover. It secures nicely with two thumbscrews for travel, and is easily viewed from the couch and the forward-facing dinette seat. The optional DVD player (included with the TV) is mounted on a metal shelf, which hangs from the forward door-side cabinet. Again, basic and workable.

The galley is nicely sized for a small motorhome and is outfitted with a 16-inch Dometic range, microwave

and double-bowl stainless sink. The cabinet layout is well done, and most drawers are contained inside the cabinets. Across from the kitchen, the 6-cubic-foot refrigerator/freezer is primed to take all the vittles along needed for most trips.

Interior and exterior storage is abundant in the 26RS and, with a 3,180-pound realistic occupant and cargo carrying capacity (ROCCC), you can bring along quite a bit of gear. Closet space is also ample, located between the refrigerator and the corner bathroom.

The corner bathroom is a bit of a misstep for this floorplan. To maximize floor space in the bedroom, the bathroom door and wall angle in to connect with the closet face. Since the



toilet is directly behind the bathroom door, sitting on the throne isn't easy for any but the smallest of adults, which is reminiscent of a Class B motorhome. In fact, the toilet paper must be removed from the holder before a 6-footer, with legs pressed tightly together, can sit, and even then the door will barely close. The bathroom features a step-in shower on the back wall, which is, again, small in comparison with other Class C's; the stall, with its glass sliding doors, doesn't allow enough shoulder room for standing in front of the shower head. Floor space to dry off and to use the sink is tight as well. This might be a good size for those smaller in stature, but we always remind folks to simulate using all the

RV's facilities before buying an RV.

The master bed is part of a small driver's-side slideout, which is comfortable and made more so by the window, overhead Fan-Tastic Vent fan and ample lighting. In travel mode, with the slideout stowed, the lower half of the mattress folds up over the top half due to limited clearance with the bathroom wall. After deploying the slideout the mattress is laid flat for use. A USB and 12-volt DC receptacle along with a 120-volt AC outlet are on the right side of the bed just below a small bedside table. There's no table on the left side of the bed, but there is a convenient corner cabinet at the end of the bed near the TV connections where a device could be plugged in.

Azdel Construction

If you've been around RVs for a while you've no doubt seen the effects of water intrusion. Motorhomes put up with hurricane- and earthquake-like forces every time they travel down the road, and this shaking and twisting causes sealants to fatigue. If a motorhome owner isn't diligent about sealant maintenance, leaks can occur. Once water penetrates the wall structure (which usually has lauan as a backer for the fiberglass panel), rot and delamination set in. A laminated side wall is a complete structural unit; all the laminated components of a side wall (aluminum frame, lauan, Styrofoam, fiberglass and adhesive) give it strength. Once delamination and rot set in, and the lauan fails, the structure is weakened.

In technical terms, "Azdel SuperLite SLRVXA.1DF027 is a 2.7mm-thick, thermoplastic composite sheet comprised of a low-density polypropylene and chopped glass-fiber core, combined with a PET [polyethylene fabric] scrim attached to both surfaces." In layman's terms, it replaces the lauan backer and interior panel, and makes the wall as rot- and delamination-proof as possible. All Coachmen RVs are built with Azdel, as are those from a growing list of manufacturers. For more info, visit www.azdelonboard.com

WHAT'S HOT

Large overhead bunk, feature set, storage space, ROCCC, Azdel side wall construction

WHAT'S NOT

Bathroom size, tank heaters, black-tank piping, no outside compartment lighting



The Outer Limits

The Freelander exterior is simple but attractive, with tan fiberglass sides adorned with brown swooshes and stripes. The Chevy cab is standard white with matching vinyl appliques. Like most RVs, Class C's have been known to be subject to leaks, especially on the cabover section, and the use of Azdel — along with the aluminum framing — should help keep this motorhome together for many years. If a leak does occur, it can be caught and fixed with minimal or no long-lasting damage. Azdel won't stop the leaks from happening, but it should help reduce the effects of those leaks.

Exterior compartments have adequate space, especially the one in the rear driver's-side corner. This cavernous double-door compartment has two ABS bins with drains, plus space for items at floor level around the side and back.

All the exterior lighting on the body is LED, including a light strip mounted under the awning in place of a standard porch lamp. A 19-foot Dometic electric awning is a nice touch and is easily controlled from the door. Outside awning coverage is always a big plus, and this motorhome has plenty. Under the awning, the forward-most compartment is set up for an owner-installed small flat-screen TV, with a little storage cubby beneath for convenient access to lounging necessities.

Our driving experience with the Freelander 26RS on the Chevy 4500 chassis was unremarkable, although



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Specifications

Chassis

Manufacturer	Chevrolet
Model	Express 4500 Cutaway
Engine	GM Vortec 6.0L V-8
SAE Hp	341 @ 5,400 rpm
Torque	373 lb-ft @ 4,200 rpm
Transmission	HD 6-speed automatic
Axle Ratio	4.10:1
Tires	LT225/75R16E
Wheelbase	159"
Brakes	Disc
Suspension	Front coil spring/rear leaf spring
Fuel Capacity	57 gal
Fuel Economy	7.5 mpg
Warranty	36 months/36,000 miles

Coach

Exterior Length	27' 6"
Exterior Width	8' 4"
Exterior Height with A/C	10' 11"
Interior Width	8' 1"
Interior Height	6' 10.5"
Construction	Aluminum framed, vacuum bonded, Azdel backed Lamilux fiberglass; laminated steel floor; crowned and laminated TPO roof
Freshwater Capacity	50 gal
Black-water Capacity	31 gal
Gray-water Capacity	31 gal
Water-heater Capacity	6 gal
LP-gas Capacity	16 gal
Air Conditioner	13,500 Btu
Furnace	30,000 Btu
Refrigerator	6 cubic-foot
Converter	55 amp
Batteries	(1) 12-volt chassis, (1) 12-volt house
AC Generator	4 kW
MSRP	\$81,410
MSRP as Tested	\$86,801
Warranty	12 months/12,000 miles

Wet Weight

(Water and water heater, fuel, LP-gas tanks full; no supplies or passengers)

Front Axle	3,800 lbs
Rear Axle	7,220 lbs
Total	11,020 lbs

Chassis Ratings

GAWR, F/R	4,600/9,600 lbs
GVWR/GCWR	14,200/20,000 lbs
ROCCC	3,180 lbs (deduct weight of passengers for net cargo capacity)

GAWR	Gross Axle Weight Rating
GVWR	Gross Vehicle Weight Rating
GCWR	Gross Combination Weight Rating
ROCCC	Realistic Occupant and Cargo Carrying Capacity (full water, no passengers)

enough to build confidence while on the road. The 6.0-liter Vortec V-8 rated for 341 hp @ 5,400 rpm isn't going to light the road on fire, but those ponies will get this wagon where it needs to go and, after all, it's a motorhome, not a Camaro. Handling is fairly responsive considering the high profile. Heavy crosswinds could be felt during the test drive, but not enough to take us off the road. The ride was smooth and the cockpit comfortable enough for hours of driving.

Exterior connections were generally handy, with a portable solar receptacle by the entry door, and water, sewer, black-tank flush and cable TV in the usual places. The optional holding tank heating pads (\$216) are not an ideal add-on as configured because the tanks are uninsulated, and the drain pipes are unheated and completely exposed. That said, pipe heaters and a tank wrap would work wonders, and can easily be added using aftermarket products. The black tank is on the passenger side, and the discharge pipe extends down under the motorhome to a valve on the passenger side; a 3-inch pipe crosses to another standard termination valve on the driver's side. Various manufacturers are playing with different ways of accommodating a passenger-side bath in a lower-profile motorhome, and this setup is functional.

The Final Word

The Freelander 26RS is an entry-level, family-friendly motorhome for buyers on a budget, and overall, we liked it.



The bathroom in the 26RS is compact; always simulate using the facilities before purchase to ensure you are comfortable with the space. Also verify the storage space is what you need.

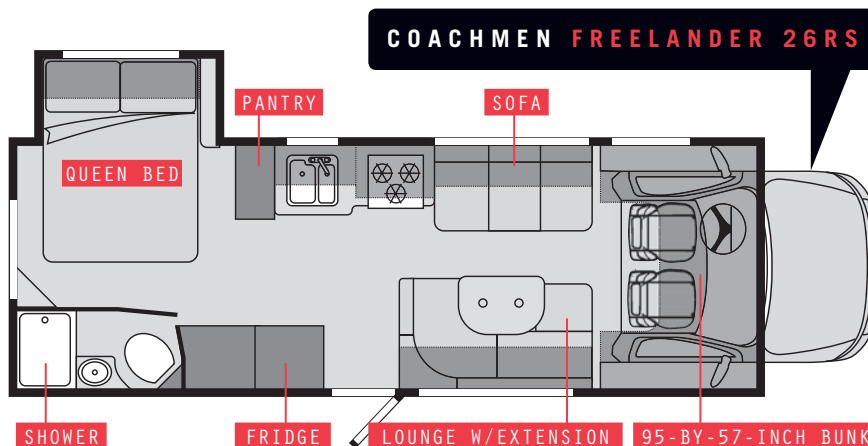
The bones are good, it has a bunch of neat features you might not expect at this price point, and its design makes it easy to customize down the road. As noted, the bathroom's small footprint allows for maximized bedroom floor space, but is better suited for smaller folks, or for RVers who prefer to use campground facilities and rely on the onboard bathroom when there are no other choices. **M**

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HOLIDAY ROAD

VINTAGE LINES, A SPACIOUS FLOORPLAN AND LOW MILEAGE ON A 1984 HOLIDAY RAMBLER IMPERIAL LEAD A TRAILERING COUPLE TO CONVERT TO THE MOTORHOME LIFESTYLE

As far as campers go, Michael and Lauri Klauss have always considered themselves fairly low maintenance. Their first RV was a 5-foot-wide, 10-foot-long teardrop trailer, a wedding gift from Lauri's parents. They towed it all over the Rockies and Tetons, and perhaps it was a mark of their youth, but they were convinced it was as big a unit as they'd ever need.

It is no secret that certain creature comforts don't fit in 50 square feet of living space, no matter how inventive your packing skills; not to mention that as we get older, highway rest stops and late-night trips to campground bathhouses tend to lose their appeal. Lauri admits that it was really a desire for a "toilet on wheels" that led the couple to go bigger, eventually buying and restoring a larger vintage travel trailer. But the couple soon realized

that for their traveling needs, a travel trailer, no matter how well-equipped, had limited usefulness while they were on the road. What Michael and Lauri really wanted was a motorhome — but not just any motorhome. Both dedicated fans of period cars, they were looking for a classic motorhome, something with character.

They found that and more in "Eddie," a 1984 Holiday Rambler. Michael admits he had always

"liked the look" of vintage Holiday Ramblers. Founded in the 1950s, the company's first products were travel trailers that owner Richard Klingler constructed from parts built in his Wakarusa, Indiana, chicken coop. From those humble beginnings, Holiday Rambler grew into a leader in RV innovation. When the company moved into motorhome production, its mid- and high-end models became known for their superior workmanship and distinctive appearance. After researching older motorhomes from a variety of manufacturers, Michael and Lauri decided that the Holiday Rambler was the closest fit to what they had in mind. They started their



Michael and Lauri Klauss fell in love with the Holiday Rambler's classic lines.

Photos: Michael Klauss

search on Craigslist in April 2017, and within a week they discovered Eddie.

An Imperial 33, Eddie is named after its original owner as well as the infamous Cousin Eddie (played by Randy Quaid) from the “National Lampoon’s Vacation” movies. Fortunately, unlike its movie namesake’s motorhome (he famously piloted a beat-up 1972 Condor II in the first holiday installment), this Eddie was far from derelict. Kept inside all of its 33-year life, the exterior looked brand new. Even better, the interior was in excellent condition. The galley appliances were all in working order, including the Norcold refrigerator, four-burner stove/oven and even the original Magic Chef microwave. The upholstery was a mix of pale blue and a neutral retro geometric print. As vintage buffs, Lauri and Michael liked the fact that this Holiday Rambler looked very much the same as it did when it was first driven off the showroom lot. Perhaps most important, the



Furnishings, upholstery, cabinets, counters and appliances are all 1984 original equipment.

odometer had a mere 24,000 miles on its 454 Chevy engine, a rarity even on a motorhome half its age, and the owner had recently put \$3,000 in repairs to get it ready to sell.

It isn’t often that you can buy a 33-foot motorhome in turnkey condition for less than \$10,000, though some buyers might think twice about an RV that is more than three decades old.

“I didn’t hesitate,” Michael says with a smile. “I did my homework. I knew the quality of the product.”

There was a lot to love about Eddie. According to Lauri, the layout felt more “central” and spacious than others they had seen. The couple notes they were also impressed by the interior attention to detail, especially the craftsmanship of the

lavish cabinetry, observing that newer units “just don’t seem as precise.” As a bonus, the Holiday Rambler included extras that would have certainly been considered luxuries at the time of its manufacture, including an icemaker, cedar-lined closets and a roomy tub/shower combination.

This is not to say there haven’t been some bumps along the road. The electrical system needed an upgrade, and the furnace was replaced. The couple also experienced a few breakdowns, including one requiring a carburetor rebuild and a new fuel pump. And then there was a reoccurring vapor lock, which Michael eventually traced to incorrectly sized fuel lines. Lauri credits her husband’s ability to work on their RV as key to successfully navigating



A queen-size bed is tucked into the rear bedroom. Flip-up shelving is one of the few additions to Eddie’s interior. The drink holder/table between seats atop the doghouse in the cockpit gives function to an oft-overlooked space — and a perch for a pelican sculpture.

The Classic Ride

the ups and downs of owning a vintage motorhome, observing that “Michael’s a genius with mechanical stuff.”

In addition to those repairs and regular maintenance, Michael also added a new intake manifold, headers and muffler, hoping to improve fuel economy and to increase performance while towing the couple’s Jeep. Michael is happy with the improved power from those modifications.

“I kind of turned it into a hot rod,” he jokes.

Of course, those are all improvements you can’t see. The couple also replaced the full-size mattress with a queen bed, added flip-up shelving in the bedroom, and replaced the old TV with a flat-screen TV. Still, the most striking aspect of the Holiday Rambler’s interior is Lauri’s decorating scheme, which draws on



IMPERIAL MARCH

At the time it was built, a 1984 Holiday Rambler Imperial 33 had a base price of \$70,448, about the median price of a residential home. It was available with center- and rear-bathroom configurations. While you can pick up an Imperial 33 today for as little as \$3,000, it’s rare to see a 1984 Holiday Rambler in Eddie’s condition on the used market. If you are fortunate enough to find one, expect to pay \$10,500 or more.



THE BEST CAMPING STORY CONTEST

In commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the Minneapolis/St. Paul RV, Vacation & Camping Show, GS Events is excited to present “The Best Camping Story” Contest. Each short story must be typed and between 250 and 500 words in length.

Categories (Entrants may submit an Entry in one of the following three Categories)

- Humorous
- Nostalgic
- Children’s (Entrants must be ages 8-12)

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- One (1) Grand Prize for each Category, for a total of three (3) Grand Prizes: \$500 Gander Outdoors gift card.
- Two (2) tickets to the Minneapolis/St. Paul RV, Vacation & Camping Show, February 7-10, 2019, at the Minneapolis Convention Center, 1301 Second Avenue South, Minneapolis, MN 55403. Approximate retail value of the two (2) tickets is \$24.



To enter please visit:

www.msprvshow.com/contest

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the pale blue colors of the upholstery and the sea-going feel of the couple’s Michigan home. It’s no wonder that the Klausses’ Holiday Rambler was recently awarded Best in Show for Mobile Mansions and Best Interior at the Tin Can Tourists 21st Annual Gathering’s Concours d’Elegance competition. Given the Holiday Rambler’s appearance inside and out, it is also no surprise that Eddie is the subject of conversation wherever they travel.

“Everyone who walks by our coach always stops, and then they want to know all about it,” Michael smiles.

For anyone thinking about buying a classic coach, he offers this advice: “Do your research; find a brand you like, find out how they’re made, and what kinds of problems they have.”

And find a community that can offer support. “I know a couple of guys at Tin Can Tourists. I run stuff by and they make suggestions about what to do and not to do,” Michael explains.

Lauri agrees. “Everyone doesn’t own a vintage motorhome, but those who do are free with information.”

It is a favor the Klausses enjoy returning. The couple frequently spends weekends at rallies with other antique RV enthusiasts, and they look forward to longer journeys, including a planned trip to Utah. Along the way, they know they will have plenty of opportunities to share the story of their classic ride. After all, as Lauri notes, “Everybody loves Eddie!” **M**

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More Coffee?

My husband and I have come up with a suggestion for venting the sewer gas held in the black tank when our motorhome is not being used. We have lots of critters where we live (bugs, mice, dirt daubers, etc.) and if we leave the valve open and the motorhome's sewer cap off, the critters would find a way into the open tank. Therefore, we use a reusable coffee filter — the kind that you can get at most super stores — and put a bungee cord around the filter to hold it in place. This allows for the sewer tank to vent when the black-water cap is off. Of course, we remove the filter when on the road and while the motorhome is in use.

R.A. Mitchell | Fruitvale, Texas



Bug Insulation

I was always worried about bugs getting into the back of my motorhome's refrigerator through the exterior vent when the motorhome was in storage. To put my mind at ease, I bought some inexpensive pipe insulation and cut strips to length, and pressed them into the cover vents. Now I don't worry about the bugs — but I do have to remember to remove them before turning on the fridge.

Dan Knight | Boyd, Wisconsin



Stay Straight

The seal on the side of my motorhome's slideout kept curling when I moved the slide in or out, so I purchased a roll of self-adhesive chrome trim from a local auto parts store. I cut short strips and attached them to the side of the slideout. Now when the slide is extended, the seal flattens and keeps the elements outside.

Larry Black | Seymour, Tennessee



Sink Cover Strainer

I purchased a cutting board with a collapsible strainer but found it too large to store in my kitchen at home — much less in the galley on our Class B motorhome. When I was de-winterizing the motorhome I looked at the sink cover and realized we could trim the cutting board for the motorhome sink using the existing cover as a template. Now I have an extra cutting board and a strainer, and when we are traveling and want to fill a water bottle (or other tall vessel), I just pop out the strainer and have access to the full height of the sink. An added bonus is that this new plastic cover/cutting board does not rattle as much as the older hard cover did when traveling.

Rhonda van Heyst | Via email



Have an Idea?

Quick Tips is looking for submissions. Please send your ideas to: *MotorHome* Quick Tips, 2750 Park View Ct., Ste. 240, Oxnard, CA 93036, or email letters@motorhomemagazine.com. Photos must be high-resolution, at a minimum of 1,400 by 1,400 pixels. If your tip is published, you will receive \$35. All payments require an FEIN or SSN.

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Thanks for Nothing?

Upset that an authorized service facility was unable to communicate with his motorhome's engine control module (ECM), a reader asked Hot Line to intervene. He wrote:



“ This letter is to inform Hot Line of the circumstances I ran into at the Cummins Service Facility in Cleveland, Ohio. They could not locate a connection point to the coach's ECM. I was charged \$304.83, which I reluctantly paid.

Later, Young Truck Sales, a Freightliner Service Facility in Canton, Ohio, was able to communicate with the ECM, detecting the engine fault codes. This (motorhome-friendly) facility worked on the RV, and I am back on the road again.

Rodger Haddock | Geneva, Ohio

For some background on this case, below is a copy of Haddock's letter to Cummins.

“ I was extremely disappointed with the non-results from the diagnostic evaluation performed on our motorhome. The service department said they were unable to communicate with the coach's ECM, which was ridiculous. I was handed an estimate, that [I was told] might fix the motorhome's problem. I then paid a bill of \$304.83 for nothing.

I will not recommend this Cummins facility to other RVers, [as I don't think it is] motorhome-friendly. A three-pin connection close to the ECM did allow the computer to acknowledge and print the fault codes, which Cummins failed to locate. I am asking for reimbursement of \$304.83.

R.H.

We can understand Haddock's frustration, as he was charged for a service he didn't feel was provided. It is important that when selecting a service facility for any component, you make sure the technicians are familiar with your vehicle, especially in the case of a motorhome. We

forwarded Haddock's complaint to Cummins, and heard back from Haddock a short time later.

“ I have just received word from Cummins that it will compensate me for the diagnostic charge on our motorhome, totaling \$304.83. I was also informed that Cummins has Coach Care motorhome service centers that are more readily equipped to deal with motorhome problems. I will be checking on that.

R.H.

Motorhome Recalls

The following recalls have been issued by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA):

Newmar Corp. is recalling certain 2018-2019 Newmar Mountain Aire, London Aire, Essex and King Aire motorhomes. These vehicles are

equipped with windshield wipers that may have an incorrect bend, possibly preventing the wiper arms from properly contacting the windshield. As such, these vehicles fail to comply with the requirements of Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standard (FMVSS) #104, "Windshield Wiping and Washing Systems." Newmar will notify owners, and dealers will replace the wiper arms, free of charge. The recall began on August 8, 2018. Owners may contact Newmar customer service at 800-731-8300.

Thor Motor Coach (TMC) is recalling certain 2016-2018 Thor Gemini and Compass recreational vehicles built on a Ford chassis and equipped with a trailer tow module. Water can enter the tow modules and corrode the wiring, causing issues such as rapidly flashing turn signals, loss of instrument panel display, an electrical short and possibly the deployment of seat belt pretensioner. An electrical short can increase the risk of a fire. Turn signal, instrument cluster or seat belt pretensioner problems can increase the risk of a crash. Ford has notified owners, and Ford dealers will add a drainage hole in the driver's door stepwell and incorporate a fuse into the vehicle's wiring harness, free of charge. The recall began on June 19, 2018. Owners may contact TMC customer service at 877-855-2867. TMC's number for this recall is RC000154.

Owners of the above vehicles may also contact the NHTSA Safety Hotline at 888-327-4236 (TTY 800-424-9153), or go to www.safercar.gov. **M**

Take Action

Contact Hot Line for Help

Hot Line assists in mediating conflicts between consumers and RV dealers and manufacturers, accessories suppliers and service providers. After exhausting all other resources, send typed letters to *MotorHome* Hot Line, 2750 Park View Court, Suite 240, Oxnard, CA 93036 and enclose copies of appropriate bills and correspondence, plus a self-addressed, stamped envelope. Selected letters will be edited and published unless otherwise requested.

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NOW \$599 ~~\$799~~

Customer Rating ★★★★★

COMPARE TO \$125.68 **SAVE \$65**

ITEM 68053/62160 62496/62516 60569 shown

MODEL: KT163994

LIMIT 3 - Coupon valid through 1/13/19*

U.S. GENERAL **SUPER COUPON**

30" BULK STORAGE TECH CART

- 4847 cu. in. of storage
- 355 lb. capacity

NOW \$799 ~~\$899~~

NEW Side tray sold separately.

Customer Rating ★★★★★

COMPARE TO \$395 **SAVE \$315**

ITEM 64002

MODEL: KBCRCLTFC

LIMIT 4 - Coupon valid through 1/13/19*

SUPER COUPON

FREE WITH ANY PURCHASE

CENTECH **7 FUNCTION DIGITAL MULTIMETER**

COMPARE TO PROSKIT \$1672 MODEL: MT-1210

- 3.5" LCD Display
- Battery Included

ITEM 63604/63758 98025/69096/63759/90899 shown

MODEL: MT-1210

37985704

Cannot be used with other discounts or prior purchases. Original coupon must be presented. Valid through 1/13/19 while supplies last. Limit 1 FREE GIFT per customer per day.

SUPER COUPON

20% OFF ANY SINGLE ITEM*

37983702

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HARDY **SUPER COUPON**

MECHANIC'S GLOVES

Customer Rating ★★★★★

NOW \$399 ~~\$599~~

COMPARE TO \$1102 **SAVE 63%**

ITEM 62434, 62426, 62433, 64178, 64179, 62432, 62429, 62428 shown

MODEL: 25521

LIMIT 9 - Coupon valid through 1/13/19*

CENTRAL PNEUMATIC **SUPER COUPON**

3 GALLON, 100 PSI OIL-FREE AIR COMPRESSORS

A. HOT DOG ITEM 69269/97080 shown
B. PANCAKE ITEM 60637/61615 95275 shown

Customer Rating ★★★★★

Air delivery: 0.6 CFM @ 90 PSI 1 CFM @ 40 PSI

YOUR CHOICE \$399 ~~\$549~~

COMPARE TO \$9862 **SAVE 59%**

ITEM 69269/97080 60637/61615 95275 shown

MODEL: PCFP02003

LIMIT 5 - Coupon valid through 1/13/19*

SUPER COUPON

Customer Rating ★★★★★

7 FT. 4" x 9 FT. 6" ALL PURPOSE/WEATHER RESISTANT TARP

NOW \$299 ~~\$499~~

COMPARE TO \$998 **SAVE 70%**

ITEM 69249/69115/69137/69129/69121/877 shown

MODEL: B68X10-Y

LIMIT 9 - Coupon valid through 1/13/19*

BADLAND **Battle Tested** **SUPER COUPON**

2500 LB. ELECTRIC WINCH WITH WIRELESS REMOTE CONTROL

Customer Rating ★★★★★

• Weighs 14.3 lbs.

• 11-1/8" L x 4-1/2" H

Voted Best Winches

NOW \$499 ~~\$699~~

COMPARE TO \$1899 **SAVE \$140**

ITEM 61840/61297/63476/61258 shown

MODEL: 2500

LIMIT 4 - Coupon valid through 1/13/19*

COVER PRO **SUPER COUPON**

10 FT. x 10 FT. PORTABLE SHED

Customer Rating ★★★★★

NOW \$1399 ~~\$1599~~

COMPARE TO \$23689 **SAVE \$96**

ITEM 63297

MODEL: 70333

LIMIT 9 - Coupon valid through 1/13/19*

CHICAGO **ELECTRIC** **SUPER COUPON**

12" DOUBLE-BEVEL SLIDING COMPOUND MITER SAW

Customer Rating ★★★★★

- Laser guide

NOW \$1299 ~~\$1799~~

COMPARE TO \$249 **SAVE \$119**

ITEM 61970/61969 shown

MODEL: TSS120L

Blade sold separately.

LIMIT 5 - Coupon valid through 1/13/19*

WARRIOR **SUPER COUPON**

29 PIECE TITANIUM DRILL BIT SET

Customer Rating ★★★★★

NOW \$99 ~~\$179~~

COMPARE TO \$6499 **SAVE 84%**

ITEM 62281 61637 shown

MODEL: DW1369

LIMIT 9 - Coupon valid through 1/13/19*

drillmaster **SUPER COUPON**

80 PIECE ROTARY TOOL KIT

Customer Rating ★★★★★

NOW \$69 ~~\$99~~

COMPARE TO \$2635 **SAVE 73%**

ITEM 63292/63235/68986/97626 shown

MODEL: 51932

LIMIT 7 - Coupon valid through 1/13/19*

drillmaster **SUPER COUPON**

Customer Rating ★★★★★

1500 WATT DUAL TEMPERATURE HEAT GUN (572"/1112")

NOW \$899 ~~\$1499~~

COMPARE TO \$2806 **SAVE 67%**

ITEM 62340/62546 63104/96289 shown

MODEL: H61300

LIMIT 9 - Coupon valid through 1/13/19*

PITTSBURGH **SUPER COUPON**

CLICK-TYPE TORQUE WRENCHES

Customer Rating ★★★★★

- Reversible

LIFETIME WARRANTY

DRIVE	ITEM
1/4"	2696/61277/63881
3/8"	807/61276/63880
1/2"	62431/239/63882

YOUR CHOICE \$99 ~~\$199~~

COMPARE TO \$8497 **SAVE 88%**

ITEM 62340/62546 63104/96289 shown

MODEL: H20TWA

LIMIT 7 - Coupon valid through 1/13/19*

HaulMaster **SUPER COUPON**

• 1000 lb. capacity

18" x 12" MOVER'S DOLLY

Customer Rating ★★★★★

NOW \$799 ~~\$1099~~

COMPARE TO \$1765 **SAVE 54%**

ITEM 61899/63095/63096 63098/63097/93888 shown

MODEL: HFDOLLY

LIMIT 9 - Coupon valid through 1/13/19*

CENTECH **SUPER COUPON**

Customer Rating ★★★★★

2/10/50 AMP, 12 VOLT BATTERY CHARGER/ENGINE STARTER

NOW \$299 ~~\$449~~

COMPARE TO \$599 **SAVE 50%**

ITEM 60581 60653 shown

MODEL: SE-1250

LIMIT 7 - Coupon valid through 1/13/19*

PREDATOR **SUPER COUPON**

6.5 HP (212 CC) OHV HORIZONTAL SHAFT GAS ENGINE

Customer Rating ★★★★★

NOW \$999 ~~\$1199~~

COMPARE TO \$3299 **SAVE \$230**

ITEM 60363/69730 69727 shown CALIFORNIA ONLY

MODEL: G1220UT20X2

LIMIT 9 - Coupon valid through 1/13/19*

SUPER COUPON

SOLAR ROPE LIGHT

Customer Rating ★★★★★

- Great outdoor accent lighting
- Super bright light

NOW \$899 ~~\$1299~~

COMPARE TO \$2997 **SAVE 70%**

ITEM 62533/63941/64625/68535 shown

MODEL: 62056-055SR

LIMIT 8 - Coupon valid through 1/13/19*

EARTHQUAKE **SUPER COUPON**

1/2" HEAVY DUTY COMPOSITE PRO AIR IMPACT WRENCH

Customer Rating ★★★★★

- Weighs 5 lbs.

NOW \$899 ~~\$1149~~

COMPARE TO \$2499 **SAVE \$160**

ITEM 62835

MODEL: G97749

LIMIT 4 - Coupon valid through 1/13/19*

CENTRAL MACHINERY **SUPER COUPON**

Customer Rating ★★★★★

4" x 36" BELT/6" DISC SANDER

NOW \$599 ~~\$749~~

COMPARE TO \$121 **SAVE \$61**

ITEM 62502/97181 shown

MODEL: B07004

LIMIT 5 - Coupon valid through 1/13/19*

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By Ken Freund

Battery Connections

Q I have a 32-foot Class A Itasca Sunrise with two 6-volt house batteries and one 12-volt chassis battery located under the entrance steps.

Attached underneath the step is a sticker that states "Warning: disconnect batteries before connecting external charging equipment." In order to use an external charger, i.e., BatteryMINDER, I assume I will have to first disconnect the negative cable to the house battery bank prior to connecting the external charger. Will I have to follow the same to charge the chassis battery? If I add solar panels, what kind of connections do I have to make?

Mal MacKinnon | Ventura, California

A Some external charging equipment can be quite harsh, such as the jumper packs used on tow trucks and those big chargers on wheels used at shops and dealerships. The warning is aimed at such devices. Their voltage spikes and surges can take out delicate electron-



ics boards, etc., which are common on motorhomes. A low-amperage battery maintenance charger shouldn't send any significant spikes into the electrical system, which makes it OK for use on all batteries. I verified this with Winnebago/Itasca's technical services. Solar panels are usually connected through a charge controller to the house batteries, not the engine-starting batteries. Some motorhomes have built-in devices that transfer some power to the engine battery(ies) to keep them charged during periods of inactivity. Owners can also add such devices if their motorhome is not so equipped.

Genset Quits — Tip

This is in regard to the "Genset Quits" letter in the August issue. I had the same problem with the Onan 8000 genset in our 2004 Country Coach; it ran fine for a while and then shut down. Error codes were not helpful. I took it to a Cummins shop and had a couple of service calls. They replaced filters and a few sensors, and cleaned the injectors, but nothing fixed the problem. Finally, during the second or third service call, I figured out why the genset was stopping — the Xantrex inverter was shutting it down.

One night, while dry camping during a snowstorm, I put the Xantrex system into a mode where it would autostart the genset when the house batteries were depleted and stop it when they were fully charged. That let us run the Aqua-Hot system all night and we stayed nice and warm. The next day I forgot to switch the Xantrex back to manual mode. From then on, the generator would run fine

during regular testing; the batteries would be down enough. But prolonged use would fully charge the batteries and the Xantrex, working as it had been set to do, would shut the genset down. It was a frustrating and expensive lapse of memory on my part.

Glenn Sirkis | Marana, Arizona

Thanks for sharing your experience with the generator and Xantrex system; it could help others. The same thing goes for certain Magnum inverter chargers, and motorhomes equipped with Onan Energy Command.

Thermostat Troubles

This letter is in response to Craig Post's "Thermostat Mystery" letter in the June issue. I am the owner of a 2003 Fleetwood Providence motorhome, nearly the same as Post's 2005 Fleetwood. I also have had trouble with the Coleman Comfort II thermostat. If it locks up, there isn't any heat or air conditioning. Mine went to "00" the

first time about four years ago. I was in Florida and our cat was in the bus by himself. We came in to find it very hot. I went into a panic. I realized that this basically was a programmable logic controller (PLC), so instead of turning off the battery, I just pulled the power fuse. It reset and worked for a couple more days before it locked up again.

When I got home, I went through all the stuff that Post did. I moved the fluorescent light near the thermostat and put it in the front. That did not make much difference. I then bought a new fluorescent light and replaced the one closest to the thermostat. Again, that did not help much, as it would still lock up on occasion. I then bought an LED light from Camping World and replaced one more old fluorescent light. That seemed to fix it for a while, but it locked up again a year later when we were in Arizona. This time, I just ordered and installed a new thermostat.

I programmed the new thermostat according to the instructions. I thought surely the thermostat was the

problem. Nope! It locked up right away. I then replaced one more of the fluorescent lights and moved the only one that was still installed (a new one from the first sign of trouble) to the front.

Once again, when I got home I got back on the web. This time I ordered the choke from Coleman. (I had to pay for mine). I also did another modification. I made a metal plate, the same size as the thermostat and drilled a hole in it so the connecting wires could pass through. I then drilled and tapped the plate so I could run a wire from the plate down to the ground system on the RV. I hoped that this plate would ground any stray RF coming from the front of the RV and take it to the ground system. I don't know if this helped or not.

I suspect your answer to Post is correct. My RV has a large 2,000-watt inverter. I suspect that since it is old, the AC current it makes has too much "square wave." I have wiped out two electric blanket controls and one motor for my cat's fountain that were both plugged into outlets fed by the inverter. I have tried to buy an oscilloscope to check the sine wave, but so far all the ones I found were too expensive. Post might be able to install another large choke on his DC system such as the audio buffs use for their high-amperage amplifiers. I guess that will be the next step for me. I am not really prepared to replace the inverter as it works fine and keeps all the batteries charged.

One more thing: I bought my RV used. It came equipped with a radio/CD player in the bedroom, right across from the thermostat. I had no information on the radio and when I first bought the coach, the radio was also locked up and would not work. I unplugged it and it reset, but still didn't work very well. Sometime during the period I was having trouble with the thermostat, I noticed the radio turned itself on and off. I did not have a remote control, so I suspect it originally had one. When the radio started to act up, the thermostat would instantly lock up. I did not put the two together until I was in the bedroom during one of these performances. Since it did not work

very well, I unplugged the radio. I have not had any more problems with the thermostat since then. Maybe there is some problem with the radio and it is putting out an RF signal that is locking the thermostat.

At one time, I considered replacing the entire system. (I am an engineer and worked with large electronic control systems most of my working life). I would have to use two thermostats as well as add several relays to my A/C units. Since the signal to the A/C units is digital, you cannot just wire up a switch to work. That could be done for the furnaces as the thermostat simply closes a relay to run either of them. I have not ordered a new interface board for the A/C units, but probably should because the majority of the electronic equipment in my RV is out of date.

Bob Doughty | Via email

That's quite an interesting saga that must have been extremely frustrating. You really stayed on task. Good thing you have an electronic engineering background. I picked up an oscilloscope at a garage sale years ago for a pittance; sometimes they're essential for troubleshooting electronics. Radio frequency interference (RFI) is insidious; you can't detect it with your senses yet it can have a profound effect on some electronics.

Mind in the Gutters

In the "Rain Gutters" letter in the June issue, Charlie Bryant was concerned about the lack of gutters on his motorhome, and was worried about the water from his two air conditioners. My solution would be to route a drain hose from the front unit to the rear unit and then dump the water over the back. I don't know if it is feasible or advised, but you might be able to run it down the gray-water vent. Some manufacturers run the hose in front of the rear cap and let it drain on the ground. I think putting on gutters would end up looking like you put on your own gutters, which of course you did.

Peter Phelps | Portland, Oregon

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My concern with connecting the front and rear units by hose is if the motorhome is parked slightly downhill to the front, water will back up and possibly run into the motorhome. Any time you run drain hoses through a sealed roof fixture and into the motorhome you run the risk of introducing a water leakage path. There are small aftermarket RV gutters

available, like the EZE RV Gutter System available at Camping World, which don't look obtrusive and not only direct condensation moisture from air conditioners, but also help prevent black streaks along the side walls.

rubber spring shackles, which can help take some of the road impacts out of the ride, without heavily modifying the suspension. An upgraded sway bar, like those from Blue Ox, Hellwig or Roadmaster, may help also. If the motorhome is in great shape, you might consider a LiquidSpring system, which we have installed and tested (<http://www.motorhome.com/motorhomes/motorhome-gear/suspension-transformation/>). This is more on the expensive side, but if you're keeping the rig for a while, the added cost may be justified.

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Ride Improvement

Q We have a 2004 Winnebago Sightseer 30B on a Ford F-53 chassis [18,000-pound gross vehicle weight rating] with 50,000 miles, and the ride and handling needs improvement. There are air bags on the rear and SumoSprings on the front, and there's little improvement. I have read articles and advertisements claiming significant improvements for the F-53 and, of course, with a cost sometimes significant. What, if any, of the aftermarket products give the best bang for the buck for either ride or handling?

Bruce Bila | Placerville, California

A There are a number of products out there, but for the best bang for your buck, here are some of my picks. First and foremost: tire pressure settings. Weigh your motorhome on a truck scale when the coach is fully loaded with passengers, fuel and cargo for travel. Using the axle weights divided by the number of tires per axle, refer to the tire manufacturer's load/inflation tables. Set tire pressures accordingly. After that, consider installing premium shock absorbers, such as those from Bilstein or Koni. Next, consider MORryde RS

Engine Warning Light

Q While driving my 2014 Fleetwood Southwind, the parking brake light illuminated. I immediately slowed and pulled on the brake release. Nothing changed, so I pulled over and, with the transmission in PARK, pulled on the brake release several times. No change. I shut off the engine, went outside for a visual inspection and to smell for hot brakes. Nothing seemed unusual, so I started down the road again. After awhile the brake light illuminated again. After several stops and a lot of looking I realized the brake light was illuminating only after I turned on the headlights. I tested this theory several times over the course of a couple hundred miles. Sure enough, if headlights are off the brake light stays off. Any thoughts?

Jim Underwood | Via email

A From your description, the symptoms should have nothing to do with the actual brake and are likely caused by a faulty ground connection at the instrument cluster, which is causing power to feed back into the lamp when it is seeking a ground route. You'll need to remove the cluster and check ground connections. Something may be corroded, loose or disconnected. Try temporarily connecting small jumper wires with alligator clips to a clean, known good ground and then to various ground points on the cluster. I suggest referring to a factory wiring diagram.

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Chirping Sound — Tip

I love reading your articles and I would like to throw my proverbial two cents in to the diagnostics for the “Chirping Sound” letter in the May issue. I had a similar incident when I was working on cars full time. On acceleration, the driver would hear a chirping/squeaking sound upon take off and it seemed to increase as the speed increased. However, if you put the transmission in NEUTRAL and coasted, the sound went away. I eventually chased it down to dried out universal joints (inside bearings) on the driveshaft and once I replaced them, the sound went away. I suggest the individual with the issue take a look at his and see if it has grease fittings and if so, maybe a squirt of grease will correct the problem.

Jim Carlton | Via email

Thanks for writing and sharing your experience. Yes, this could certainly happen and is worth checking because many universal joints get overlooked and neglected until they fail. The sound would vary with vehicle speed but probably wouldn't change much based on the gear selected (except with NEUTRAL as mentioned). An observer standing alongside the road as you drive by slowly should be able to locate the area the sound is coming from.

Replacement Decals

Q I purchased a used 2008 Coachmen Freelander in great condition but that was in need of replacement decals. They are about 6 feet long and what looks like a Nike Swoosh in blue and gray. The manufacturer does not carry replacement decals due to the motorhome being 10 years old. How do I remove the old sun-bleached worn decals, where can I get new decals and are they difficult to install?

Chris Eastman | Hampton, Virginia

A This is a subject that comes up frequently. Our sister publication, *Trailer Life*, ran an article in its March 2018 issue detailing the process (<http://www.trailerlife.com/>

rv-gear/changing-an-rvs-stripes]. The graphics can be removed with a heat source, 3M automotive adhesive remover and a non-marring scraping tool, but should not be done by those who are not experienced. You can find some good videos on how to do this online; Google “How to remove and install RV decals.” You should be able to find other suppliers by searching for “RV decals.” Some suppliers include: Graphics RV - Performance Graphics, 574-674-4156, <http://graphicsrv.com>; Graphix Unlimited, 574-546-3770, www.graphixunlimited.com; RV Decal, 928-273-3723; and V.I.P. Enterprises, 909-376-0395, www.rvstripes.com.

Auxiliary Fan Source

Q I have a 2008 Winnebago Sightseer on a Workhorse chassis. The auxiliary fan that is mounted in front of the air conditioner condenser and engine radiator assembly has failed, but Workhorse no longer stocks it. Can you suggest a supplier or aftermarket alternative?

Jim Brossard | Bellevue, Washington

A I assume you have tested the fan motor by supplying 12 volts DC directly to it, bypassing its circuit? To find a replacement, remove the auxiliary fan and measure its dimensions. You can try a local auto parts store or speed shop and see what they can match up, or check with an RV surplus or salvage yard. If you prefer online, try suppliers such as Flex-a-Lite (www.flex-a-lite.com/electric-fans/12-volt-electric-fans.html), JEGS (www.jegs.com) or Speedway Motors (www.speedwaymotors.com). **M**

Have a Tech Question?

Contact our experts:

Email tech@motorhomemagazine.com or write to *MotorHome*, 2750 Park View Court, Suite 240, Oxnard, CA 93036 (please include your name, city and state). Selected letters will be answered in the magazine, but time does not permit individual replies.

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Here There Be Pirates!

North Carolina's Outer Banks offers a chance to live the swashbuckling life you've always dreamed of

By Alan Rider

As I sit here writing this, I realize I'm late. About three centuries too late. You see, ever since I visited North Carolina's Outer Banks a few years back, I've been borderline obsessed with the life and times of Edward Teach, better known by his swashbuckling moniker Blackbeard.

Historians debate whether his given name was Teach or Thatch (or something else entirely). There's no question, though, that Blackbeard's *nom de guerre* struck fear into the hearts of merchant captains off this Atlantic coast and throughout the Caribbean 300 years ago.

Much of this had to do with the fearsome appearance Blackbeard cultivated, sometimes tying slow-burning fuses into his beard to create a look that was described as "more frightful than a fury from Hell." The wreath of smoke that surrounded his countenance caused Spanish sailors to dub him "The Great Devil."

In reality, the historical record indicates Blackbeard used actual violence only sparingly. Equally surprising are the stories of the egalitarian approach he fostered among his crews — which included many would-be slaves liberated from the holds of slave-trading ships — where every man had a vote as to who would be captain and an equal share of the plunder they accumulated.

In the process, Blackbeard's exploits made him a target for

Virginia's Colonial governor Alexander Spotswood, who sent two ships to surprise him and his men as they were anchored in North Carolina's Ocracoke Inlet. The pirate met his untimely demise there on November 22, 1718, after being shot five times and suffering 25 sword wounds. His severed head was tied to the bowsprit of the victor's ship as a grim trophy.

Today the Outer Banks (www.outerbanks.org) where Blackbeard sought refuge is significantly more peaceful, with miles of deserted beaches (now part of Cape Hatteras National Seashore) creating a landscape that looks to have changed little since the infamous pirate's heyday. Part of the reason for this anachronistic feel is that Ocracoke is an island reachable only by boat or the motorhome-friendly ferry service (www.ncdot.gov/ferry).

From the moment you roll off the

ferry you'll enjoy a slower pace in the town of Ocracoke (www.visitocracoke.nc.com), located at the island's southern tip. While there you can enjoy a number of leisurely pursuits, including long walks on the beaches, which are perennially ranked as among the best in the nation for seashell stalkers. Other don't-miss attractions include a visit to Springer's Point Preserve, where a sandy nature trail will lead to views of one of Blackbeard's favorite hangouts, an anchorage known as Teach's Hole.

To really let your inner pirate loose, plan your visit for October 25-28, when you can partake in the event known as Blackbeard's Pirate Jamboree (www.facebook.com/BlackbeardsPirateJamboree). Wear your swashbuckling finest as you join other buccaneer types wandering through a historically accurate pirate encampment complete with sword fighting demos and a Scallywag School for kids. The happening also includes a re-enactment of Blackbeard's final battle, with re-creations of the three ships that took part in that fight coming about with cannons blazing.

Whether you choose to attend this 300th anniversary celebration or just explore Blackbeard's old stomping grounds on your own, I'd encourage you to indulge your pirate fantasies with a visit to Ocracoke Island. If my experience there is any guide, I think it will prove that it's never too late to set sail for adventure along The Road Ahead. **M**

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A Pirate's Life ☺

Visitors to Blackbeard's Pirate Jamboree are greeted by a merry band of pirates. Festivities also include re-creations of the ships involved in Blackbeard's ill-fated final stand.



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