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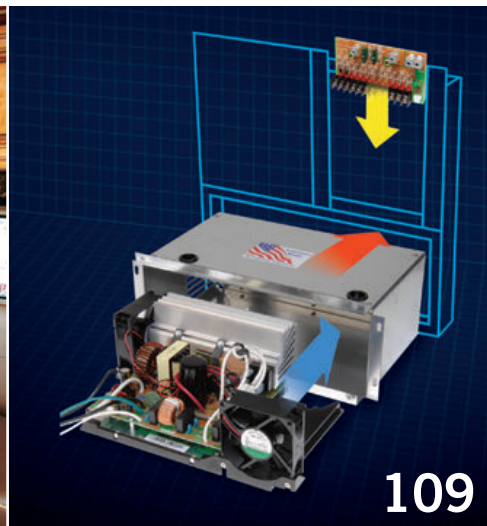


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On The Cover: The Thor Tuscany 45AT cruises in to the Ocean Mesa Campground at El Capitan in Santa Barbara, California (see test on page 74). Photo by Scott Hirko.

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THE ESSENTIAL GADGETEER

A big part of personalizing a coach is accessorizing. No matter how carefully we wade through standard and optional features before and during the purchase process, there are always items that need to be added to make any motorhome feel more like home.

If you're a gadget hound like me, finding accessories will become an obsession. Searching the Internet is one way to find new products; I also spend hours poring through the Camping World Master Catalog, and materials from other suppliers, looking for things to add to my rig.

I put accessories into three categories: essential, convenience and fun. An essential addition is one that is necessary to make the motorhome work better. Examples are upgraded toilets, water filters, surge protectors, window awnings, tire covers, window sunshades, backup cameras and GPS navigational aids.

Included on my list of convenience items are patio rugs, comfortable chairs, a portable table, LED-strip light under the awning, a good barbecue, electric dump valves, macerators, washer/dryer, a small ceramic heater and even a catalytic heater for winter trips. My convenience list would be incomplete without new faucets for the kitchen and bathroom sinks and a better shower head, and of course, window coverings that work without struggling. Might as well add a comfy recliner, like a Euro chair, to that list, although it leans toward the fun category.

The fun items are the most enjoyable in my opinion. These include satellite TV and radio systems, a stereo system with rich-sounding speakers and Bluetooth capability, a wine cooler and wall decorations. I suppose a fireplace should be in this category, but it's actually functional as a small heater, so it crosses the line as a convenience item.

Straddling the fence between essential and convenience items are LED interior lighting, Fan-Tastic Vents with



remote control, window awnings and coach covers. A roundup of all the covers suitable for motorhomes can be found on page 80.

Every once in a while a new product hits the market that can be included in all three of my personal categories. The 2WayAir system featured on page 98 is such a product.

When owners are surveyed, tires surface as the most important subject when it comes to maintenance and safety. And failure to follow proper inflation protocol creates more serious problems on the road than any other aspect of motorhome travel. A friend traveled almost 1,000 miles on an inside dual that was drastically underinflated. Luckily, he made it to the park unscathed, but the damage was done, and even though he inflated the tire to its proper pressure upon discovery, it blew out before getting home.

Dragging around a long air hose and bending over at least six tires on a frequent basis is not my friend's idea of having fun. But it's essential; not only because of the safety aspect, but because tires are expensive to replace and when they blow, collateral damage compounds repair costs.

The finely crafted 2WayAir system takes the hassle out of inflating tires, which makes it essential and convenient; using the system is also fun. Once you use it, you'll actually enjoy inflating tires — and that's a big statement. I've been using this product for a while and added an onboard pump to the system so I only have to hook up the whips and flip a switch.

In the motorhome world, being hooked on gadgets and accessories is a good thing. ♦

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DO YOU TRAVEL WITH A FIREARM? IF SO, ARE YOU WELL-VERSED IN THE WEAPONS LAWS FOR YOUR STATE AND THE STATES YOU VISIT?

That's the question we asked in our June issue, and here are some of the replies we received.

CHECK THE WEB

In the June edition, there was a question posed by Gary Lewis about carrying a gun in a motorhome. A motorhome is a vehicle, NOT a home. It travels on roadways, therefore it cannot be a house. Lewis could end up in jail, or at the very least, on the wrong side of a very expensive lawsuit if he is carrying a loaded gun in a vehicle in some states.

While carrying a loaded gun is acceptable in some states, other states are adamant the gun must be locked in a case unloaded, and the ammunition has to be in a separate compartment or case from the gun. There are also restrictions on magazine capacity in some states for semi-automatic pistols — New York, New Jersey, Connecticut, Colorado and California are examples of this requirement.

Gun transport in a vehicle varies on a state-by-state basis. The best reference I have found is the Hand Gun Law website, www.handgunlaw.us. It is updated with the latest changes in gun laws for each state. All you have to do is click on the state and a synopsis of the state gun laws with concealed carry reciprocity information will be displayed.

Lewis needs to consult this website prior to traveling through a state as noncompliance with state gun laws can end with him in jail. The latest example is in Washington, D.C., where a person who didn't own a gun was convicted of violating local gun laws for having black powder, muzzle-loading lead bullets. In fact, in Washington, D.C., you can be arrested for having empty brass cases in your vehicle.

STEVE SWINEHART | ALBUQUERQUE, NEW MEXICO

DON'T LEAVE HOME WITHOUT THE BOOK

I always travel with a loaded firearm in the motorhome. I have a concealed carry license for Texas and that does make a difference in travel laws. When the motorhome is on the road, it is not considered a home, but a passenger vehicle. The best suggestion I can make is to purchase the Traveler's Guide to the Firearm Laws of the Fifty States by J. Scott Kappas. It is revised the first of every year and sells for \$13.95. I never leave home without it.

ALAN SCHILLER | VIA EMAIL

THERE'S AN APP FOR THAT

I live in Colorado, and both my wife and I have a concealed carry permit (CCP). When traveling, we always have a firearm on us or in our motorhome. To make sure we're legal in each state we travel through, I have an app on my iPhone called "Legal Heat." It's free and is updated constantly on the concealed carry laws of each state and the reciprocal agreements between states having concealed carry laws.

RICHARD WALKER | WOODLAND PARK, COLORADO

WHEN IS IT A HOME, WHEN IS IT A VEHICLE?

I also carry a concealed weapon when traveling in our motorhome. Unlike Gary Lewis, I have my weapon at arm's reach from the driver's seat when driving. I took a class to obtain a concealed pistol license (CPL), which all but about five states reciprocate with Michigan's concealed weapons laws. Having the CPL eliminates the concern over when a motorhome is a home or vehicle.

FRED HOMMES | SHELBY TOWNSHIP, MICHIGAN

CALIFORNIA'S GUN LAWS ARE TOUGH

First of all, laws governing transporting a firearm in a motorhome are completely different from "concealed carry" laws.

I live in California where gun laws are some of the toughest in the country, so I believe that if I comply with these laws, I am pretty safe in the rest of the country. In California, and in most states, it is unlawful to transport a loaded firearm in a motor vehicle, and the unloaded firearm must be kept locked in a compartment (not your glove box).

Your motorhome, when on the road, is a motor vehicle, so I store my unloaded handgun in a locked cupboard. When you are in a campsite, the motorhome is now your home and you can keep a loaded firearm anywhere. Keep in mind that there are laws in most states that will prosecute if a child accesses your firearm and causes injury.

My advice to Gary Lewis is to either buy a speed loader for his revolver, or a semi-automatic handgun so he can quickly load the magazine.

KEN HIGAKI | VIA EMAIL



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IT'S CONSIDERED A SECOND HOME

Yes, I travel with a loaded firearm. I have been RVing for more than 50 years. No, I am not well-versed in the weapon laws of my state and others that I travel through. My position on the matter is quite simple: The IRS considers a motorhome a second home and no one will ever prevent me from protecting myself, my loved ones and my property while I am in my place of residence. When/if some law enforcement officer chooses to search my house, I will be going to jail if an attempt is made to confiscate my weapon.

DAVE ROSS | EDGEWATER, FLORIDA

A COMPLICATED ISSUE

My answer to the June question is that traveling with a loaded firearm in an RV falls under the topic of "concealed carry," which is what I would like to discuss.

Carrying a concealed weapon is more than just purchasing a gun from the local sporting goods store and having it in an RV. Along with this comes the importance of understanding your responsibilities

under the law and the potential serious consequences resulting from your actions. Personally, I believe in gun ownership and self-defense. However, before I put the two together (carrying a loaded handgun in my RV and traveling with it), I wanted to learn as much as I could.

First, a disclaimer: I'm no expert on the topic of concealed carry or self-defense; I'm just sharing what I have learned. Next, this is not meant to be a debate about guns in society or a debate on Second Amendment rights; owning firearms is a personal decision and a lot of folks have strong viewpoints on the topic. I am also going to assume that if you own a firearm, particularly a handgun, you are proficient with its operating characteristics. Finally, I am not endorsing any products, services, associations, or websites that I mention. I have found them helpful, and you may find other resources that are just as good.

Once I made the decision to bring along my handgun when traveling, I started out by applying for a CCP in my home state of North Dakota. I went to the State

Attorney General's website to learn about eligibility requirements for application. This process took some time and fees, as it required processing paperwork through the Sheriff's Department, photographs, fingerprinting, then classroom testing and range firing with a certified instructor. When that was done, I waited the 30 to 60 days for the state to process my paperwork, and eventually my North Dakota permit came in the mail.

Next, I wanted to see if my North Dakota permit would be recognized by the states I planned to travel through. This meant learning about "reciprocity agreements," which means that not all states would recognize my home state's permit. After talking with other permit holders, they said it is best to have more than one CCP (another from a different state) to cover the states that do not recognize my home state permit. That's when I learned that Utah is popular among multiple-permit holders. Thus began another application process that included more paperwork, fees, finding a certified testing

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instructor that Utah would recognize, etc. After yet another 30 to 60 days, I received my Utah permit. Now with both permits, I can legally carry a concealed weapon in almost every state in the U.S.

But my learning didn't stop with having permits. I still needed to review the concealed carry laws in each state, as they are not all the same. This was done by visiting websites and reading books on the topic. To learn about reciprocity, a good website is the U.S. Concealed Carry Association (www.usconcealedcarry.com). I entered the states of my permits and it showed me a map of the states that will recognize my permits and the ones that won't. I printed out this map and keep it in my RV.

There are also laws for each state on how to respond to a police officer during a routine traffic stop if you have a handgun in the vehicle. I have spoken to several law enforcement friends and learned that the last thing you want to do is to "surprise" a police officer. Again, there is no simple, standard answer to traffic stops.

Another thing I learned is that if you

are going to carry a concealed weapon, you need to understand your rights in a self-defense situation. It goes without saying our first priority will be to protect our loved ones when faced with a violent encounter. That said, we need to be committed to take action when the time comes, which may result in actually shooting someone, possibly fatally. If that happens, we need to understand and be prepared for the aftermath of a self-defense shooting (again, laws differ by states). One helpful resource on self-defense I came across was the Armed Citizens' Legal Defense Network (www.armedcitizensnetwork.org).

Back to the RV. Like many folks, I am a grandparent and when the kids visit, either at home or in the RV, you never know what they will get into. To counter that, I bought a small gun vault. It holds one handgun and I have access through a keypad or a key. I purchased one for my bedroom and one for the RV. With practice, it just takes me a few seconds to use the keypad, to access my loaded handgun. They are small enough to keep in the

nightstand, and I feel good knowing the kids can't get into it.

I hope I have shown that carrying a loaded handgun in an RV (and using it for self-defense) is a complicated issue and there's a lot to learn about concealed carry laws, rights, responsibilities and consequences. It's not the same as owning firearms for hunting or sport shooting. The good news is that there are a lot of resources available to keep you informed and help keep you legal. Unfortunately, we live in dangerous times and our motorhomes can sometimes make us a target to those up to no good. I'll also admit to feeling a scary sense of vulnerability when I'm traveling on the open road. That said, we always need to be aware of our surroundings, and make sure we are taking steps to keep out of harm's way. But as a last resort, when we reach for that weapon, the time for practice and preparation is over; we need to be ready to act. Let's hope we never have to face that experience.

TONY TRIMARCO
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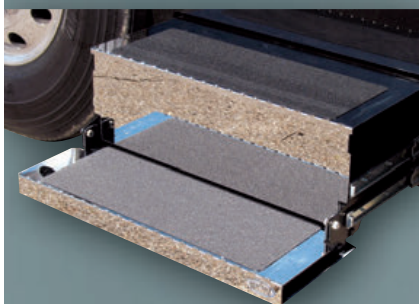
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INCONSISTENT CARRY LAWS

As the old saying goes, "I never leave home without it." I hold a CCP in my home state and Utah. This gives me carry ability in more than 75 percent of the continental U.S. If a state does not recognize my right to carry, I simply don't have them on my list of places to spend my money. I have never had occasion to need my weapon, but when traveling in unknown areas with breakdowns always a possibility, I prefer to be prepared. Normally, I leave the weapon in the RV for home defense because of the inconsistent carry laws from state to state. What we need is for states to get their act together and adopt common laws.

JERRY FERGUSON | VIA EMAIL

GET THE FACTS FROM THE NRA

Assuming that one has made a decision to either legally transport a firearm or alternatively carry it concealed on one's person within a state in which one has a valid CCP, then the only remaining question is how to comply with the applicable statutes.

I highly recommend acquiring one of the handbooks on concealed carry and firearm transportation laws, my favorite of which is available through the National Rifle Association (NRA) and other sources. The publication is called *Gun Laws by State - 2014 Edition*, by Bryan L. Ciyou. One does not need to be an NRA member to order it, but if you want to be a part of supporting the wide array of safety and proficiency training and other programs available through the NRA, and be a part of supporting our right to keep and bear arms for personal defense, membership in the NRA can be a rewarding investment.

What do I do? Like other law-abiding citizens, I avoid the temptation to make my own interpretations, and I comply with the letter of the law of the states I travel in, even if in my opinion they are unduly restrictive. This necessitates that I not travel to jurisdictions that prohibit the possession of items that are legal in my state (magazine-capacity limitations come to mind here, not to mention outright ban of certain firearms).

Alternatively, I must first consider what firearm I can legally transport in my motorhome before I travel to a particular state. Sadly, I am not likely to contribute any significant amount of tourism dol-

lars to the California wine country, all of wonderfully scenic Canada and many of the very beautiful states having restrictive laws in the northeastern U.S.

When considering means of security for legal transportation, keep in mind that many, if not most, transportation statutes are obviously intended — at least in part — to limit or slow down access to the firearm by the vehicle operator or other occupants, in consideration for the safety of law enforcement officers making a traffic stop. Some of these do not actually do much to enhance theft prevention. For example, carrying the locked gun case in a slide tray underneath might comply with the transportation requirements, but not offer as much theft protection as a small gun safe bolted down in the rear of a motorhome might. However, it's entirely conceivable that the small safe may not meet a particular law enforcement officer's interpretation of a requirement to transport "in a secured case in the trunk of the vehicle."

In the opinion of many RVers, when the levelers of a motorhome are extended, the slides are out and the RV is hooked up to utilities in a rented space in a privately owned campground, that RV becomes a home, and temporarily is not regarded (at least not by the owner) as a vehicle. One would think that similar logic applies to other types of RVs.

**H. ALLEN WRIGLEY
MEDFORD, NEW JERSEY**

THE KEY FACTOR IS TO BE SAFE

Mr. Lewis' concerns about concealed carry while in his motorhome are very valid, and he is correct in stating that every state has different laws regarding concealed carry. While I am new to traveling in a motorhome, I travel extensively throughout the country as a long-haul trucker. Like Lewis, I carry a firearm with me all the time, even when I'm in my 18-wheeler. While driving, I keep the weapon back in the sleeper berth area where I cannot readily reach for it without stopping. I keep a full clip in the gun, but do not chamber a round. (This is the way I was taught when in the military.) I have spoken with local and state police in many of the states I travel through, and they do not seem overly concerned that I have a weapon in the truck, especially when I let



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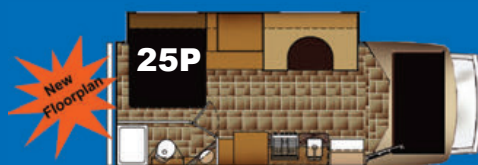
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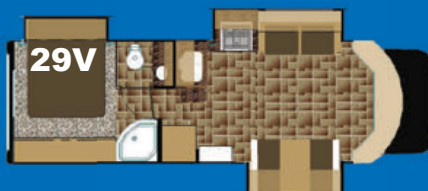
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them know where it is stored. It also helps that I have my CCP from my state of residence. When we travel in our motorhome, I generally keep a loaded pistol in the bedroom area, in the living room area and one on my hip. When we travel through a state that does not recognize my state's CCP, I put the pistol in the driver's door pocket.

One can always fall back on the federal guidelines for transporting a firearm. But to me, having the weapon locked in a secure storage area, separate from the ammo, defeats the purpose of carrying a weapon in the first place.

Whether or not someone decides to carry a weapon or not is a matter of personal choice. If one does decide to carry a weapon, I suggest they obtain a CCP from their state of residence. This goes a long way toward alleviating a police officer's concerns, since one must undergo an extensive background check in order to obtain a CCP.

My personal preference in carrying a weapon is to carry a pistol rather than a revolver. With a pistol, you can keep the clip full, then when you feel the need to use the weapon, you just "jack" the slide and a round is chambered. In some states, even with a full clip in the gun, not having a round chambered is considered to be carrying an unloaded gun. Basically, it comes down to knowing the laws of the states you will be traveling in and doing what you can to comply with these laws. Above all else, the key factor in carrying a weapon is to be safe.

BILL KESNER
DAMMERON VALLEY, UTAH

A POLICE OFFICER'S POINT OF VIEW

My wife and I are police officers and we bought our first RV last year. We have been on a few 2,000-plus-mile trips since purchasing the RV and have carried firearms on every trip. Since we are police officers, we are protected by H.R. 218 "Law Enforcement Officers Safety Act," which gives us the right to carry nationwide. For those RVers who aren't police officers or otherwise covered by something like H.R. 218, carrying a weapon can be a "gray" area. It really comes down to how the state or local jurisdiction interprets its local laws, many of which mirror the federal law for interstate transportation of firearms:

According to the Code of Federal Regulations, Title 18 - Part I - Chapter 44 - § 926a (Interstate Transportation of Firearms; release date 2005-08-03), "Notwithstanding any other provision of any law or any rule or regulation of a state or any political subdivision thereof, any person who is not otherwise prohibited by this chapter from transporting, shipping or receiving a firearm shall be entitled to transport a firearm for any lawful purpose from any place where he may lawfully possess and carry such firearm to any other place where he may lawfully possess and carry such firearm if, during such transportation the firearm is unloaded, and neither the firearm nor any ammunition being transported is readily accessible or is directly accessible from the passenger compartment of such transporting vehicle. Provided that in the case of a vehicle without a compartment separate from the driver's compartment the firearm or ammunition shall be contained in a locked container other than the glove compartment or console."

In most states, including Ohio (where I reside), you must exit the vehicle in order to load the weapon. So, in other words, if you are in a car you can carry the firearm in the trunk unloaded or the ammunition in a different place requiring the driver to exit the vehicle in order to load it. In Lewis' case, he would theoretically be in violation of Ohio law if he had a loaded firearm in his RV while driving down the road, since it is accessible in the "passenger compartment." Yes, the state may see the inside of your RV as a passenger compartment due to the fact that your dinette and even your couch probably have seat belts for passenger use.

Now when is your RV a vehicle and when is it your home? The way I see it as a police officer is if you are driving down a public road and you are subject to seat belt, operating a vehicle impaired and licensing laws, etc., then your RV is a vehicle and subject to local carrying-a-concealed-weapon (CCW) laws. Now, when you are parked, keys out of the ignition, shades closed and utilizing your RV as your "home," then it is not a vehicle and the Castle Doctrine could be used as an affirmative defense if someone is trying to gain access to your RV and you have nowhere else to retreat to. Castle laws



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are different from state to state, but most require the homeowner to retreat to their home before using deadly force. There are things you can do that will help your case if you ever find yourself in a situation such as a burglary of your RV. A few that I can think of are having your jacks down, the generator on, a slide out or anything that would require a substantial action in order to pull away and use your RV as a vehicle.

What actions can an RV owner take in order to legally carry a weapon while driving? The first is to obtain a CCW permit, if it is available through the state that you live in. Second would be to familiarize yourself with reciprocating states that honor your CCW permit and know which states along your route that you can carry in. If your state does not have a concealed carry law or it is limited, you can look into getting a permit from Utah, which will give you the right to carry in no less than 32 states. Utah's permit does not require that you live in the state, it only requires a background check, fingerprinting and proof of completion for a firearms safety course that meets the state requirements.

Unfortunately there is no concrete answer for this topic due to the broad nature, though there are a few things mentioned above that will help if someone finds themselves in a situation. The best practice would be to transport the firearm unloaded until you get to your destination where your RV could be considered a "home" and not a mode of transportation. If a person has a need to keep a loaded firearm on their person or readily available, then obtaining a proper CCW permit would be the best practice. My firearms are usually ready at hand while driving or concealed on my person while fueling, walking the dogs at truck/rest stops, etc.

When it comes down to it, you might be surprised to find that many local law enforcement and courts probably don't have a concrete answer for you and it would have to be something that would be heard in court. Stay safe out there.

JARED WILT | WESTERVILLE, OHIO

A CCP MAKES IT EASIER TO COMPLY

I do carry my handguns in my motorhome when I travel. My wife and I have Tennessee CCPs and this takes the worry out of whether we are breaking any laws in

most states that we travel to. If we travel through a state that does not recognize Tennessee carry permits, then I unload them and lock them up according to a federal law that allows us to transport guns through any state (except New York City). I have even talked to the state police in other states trying to determine if I can keep a gun for protection even though that state doesn't allow concealed carry. Some will. Lewis could likely get a Wisconsin CCP now as that state recently changed its carry laws. A CCP makes it easier to comply with the laws, at least in some states.

**BILL GOODMAN
FAIRFIELD GLADE, TENNESSEE**

OFF-SEASON EMERGENCY

We want to thank the Goodiers for their story on Yellowstone National Park ("Yellowstone Your Way: A First-Timer's Tool Kit," June). The photos and recommendations were great. We visited Yellowstone in May through June 2013, and it was our third trip to this wonderful park. We highly recommend it to your RV readers.

One thing we want to point out is that the park's hospital facilities are not open until early June. We found this out when my wife had an altitude and allergy attack one morning and had to be emergency shuttled to Cody, Wyoming, about 85 miles east of the park. The park's fire department and emergency personnel were terrific in their response to our needs.

**BOB AND LINDA ELLENBURG
PLACENTIA, CALIFORNIA**

THE TRUE COST OF RV OWNERSHIP

Sometimes you include letters that describe the true cost of RV ownership. For 25 years I have owned four types of RVs: a pop-up camper, a travel trailer, a Class C and a Class A motorhome. My family has traveled more than 110,000 miles in those RVs to 36 states and Canada. We have had many memorable trips that have kept my family close and educated to different geography and cultures. It has added much value to our lives. Now to the cost. I added up the following expenses for those 25 years: RV payments, fuel, camping fees, insurance, licenses and maintenance. I arrived at a figure of \$150,000, which amounts to \$500 per month or \$1.50 per mile. That's quite a

bargain for a family of five. It is worth it!
JOHN KOSCO | BROWNSBURG, INDIANA

QUESTION:

Is it important to measure the costs versus benefits of owning a motorhome, or is it worth it at any price?

Send your comments to *MotorHome*, 2750 Park View Court, Suite 240, Oxnard, CA 93036; or email letters@motorhomemagazine.com. ♦

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escapes

edited by EILEEN HUBBARD

ROAD FOODIE | WHEELS & GEAR | NOTEWORTHY | CROSSROADS

CANYONLANDS NATIONAL PARK CELEBRATES 50 YEARS

LOCATED IN SOUTHEAST UTAH'S HIGH DESERT
COUNTRY, THIS PARK IS FILLED WITH COLORFUL
CANYONS, ARCHES AND SPIRES

President Lyndon B. Johnson signed legislation on Sept. 12, 1964, that created Utah's Canyonlands National Park, a paradise for RVers who love to explore America's wilderness. The Green and Colorado rivers divide the high-desert mesas, buttes and spires of Canyonlands into four regions: the Island in the Sky, the Needles, the Maze and the rivers themselves. Camp inside the park at Willow Flat or Squaw Flat (all sites are first

come, first served) or outside in the full-service town of Moab.

Events planned all year will culminate this month with music and film festivals, art and museum exhibits, and a Dutch-oven cookoff. All are welcome at a commemorative ceremony Friday, Sept. 12, at 4 p.m. followed by a free catered cowboy dinner and campfire. For more information, call 435-719-2313, or visit www.canyonlands50.org. — *Christine Goodier*

PHOTO: NATIONAL PARK SERVICE BY NEAL HERBERT

TAMALES: THE PERFECT PORTABLE FOOD

While I love to cook in my motorhome, sometimes I just run out of gas (so to speak) and want delicious comfort food without the hassle. The perfect solution: tamales. They're inexpensive, freeze well and make a tasty meal in a snap.

For those unfamiliar with this Meso-american favorite, tamales is a traditional dish from Mexico and Central/South America made from masa, a starchy corn-based dough mixed with lard or vegetable shortening and steamed or boiled in a leaf or husk wrapper (discarded before eating).

Tamales have a long and colorful history. Scientists believe tamales originated in Mexico/Central America as early as 8000 to 5000 B.C. Ancient Maya people ate tamales, which they called *utah*, as early as 1200 to 250 B.C. Like modern RV travelers, Aztec and Maya civilizations, as well as the Olmeca and Tolteca before them, used tamales as portable food when traveling or for soldiers during wartime. Inca natives ate tamales long before the Spanish visited the New World.

Tamales are filled with meats, cheeses, fruits, vegetables, and/or chilies (there's also a fillingless tamale called *tamales sordos*, which is served with refried beans or coffee). Most often, tamales are filled with pork and chicken in red or green salsa or mole, complex chili-based sauces popular in Mexico. Another traditional variation is to add pink-colored sugar to the masa and fill the dough with raisins or other dried fruit for a sweet *tamal de dulce*.

In tropical parts of Mexico like Oaxaca, Chiapas, Veracruz and the Yucatán Peninsula, tamales are square and big, often 15 inches or larger. And instead of being steamed in a corn husk, they use a banana leaf or sometimes chard or avocado leaves.

Today, the popularity of tamales has spread beyond Mexico and South America and people have put their

The tamale wrapped in banana leaf is a Veracruz-style tamale. The others are traditional Mexican tamales wrapped in corn husks.



Albuquerque's landmark El Pinto Restaurant roasts chilies in small batches and hand-peels them.



Corn husks are soaked in water to make them pliable before wrapping them around masa, which keeps the tamales moist and intact during cooking.



Casa de Tamales makes savory sweet corn tamales topped with green tomatillo sauce.

own spin on this treat. In states around the Mississippi Delta, African-Americans developed a spicy tamale made from cornmeal instead of masa, which is boiled (rather than steamed) in corn husks. In Louisiana, they like cornmeal tamales made with a combination of beef and pork mixed with cornmeal. In Chicago, even Chicago-style hot dog stands sell their own version of tamales made from machine-extruded cornmeal wrapped in paper!

While you can make your own tamales and freeze them for your next road trip, they're a lot of work. That's why families often gather around the holidays and work together to make dozens and dozens of tamales.

There are a number of great places that sell tamales. These are some of my faves.

El Pinto, Albuquerque, New Mexico This sprawling, hacienda-style restaurant serves traditional Mexican dishes, including tamales, to as many as 4,000 people per day. Why so popular? They make everything from scratch, including roasting and hand-peeling their chilies.

Mitzi Loncheria, Oregon City, Oregon A small, family-owned restaurant serving authentic Mexican food, Mitzi gets honors for the lightest, fluffiest tamales I've ever eaten. Luz, the owner, sells pork, chicken and chile, and pineapple tamales by the piece or the dozen.

Rivera, Los Angeles, California If you want something a little different, try clam tamales in downtown Los Angeles' Rivera restaurant. The restaurant makes clam tamales steamed in clamshells that "marries sea and earth." Rivera's masa is moist, fluffy and buttery and it received L.A. Weekly's No. 1 rating in the "10 Best Tamales in Los Angeles."

Casa de Tamales and Canby Asparagus Farm, Canby, Oregon Another winner in the Pacific Northwest is Casa de Tamales, part of a local asparagus farm. It sells its handmade tamales around the Northwest at farmers markets.

Got a favorite tamale haunt? Let Bobbie know by sending an email to bobbie@realfoodtraveler.com with "Road Foodie" in the subject line.





COVER YOUR COVER

Patio awnings protect us from the sun — and now you can return the favor with an Awning Pro-Tech awning cover. The 20-foot patio awning kit contains five pieces to fit awnings from 16 to 20 feet, and is made with a UV-resistant polymer so it will never get brittle and won't discolor, according to the company. The product is designed to be flexible enough for easy installation in just minutes, and is said to greatly extend the life of the awning fabric. The Awning Pro-Tech is stain resistant and easy to clean, and is covered by a lifetime warranty as well as a 60-day money-back guaranty. MSRP for the 20-foot kit is \$119.99.

Awning Pro-Tech, 855-782-6837, www.awningpro-tech.com

ELITE LED

M4 LED Products Elite Series LEDs take RV lighting to the next level. Utilizing Samsung 5630 SMD LEDs that produce more light per diode, the Elite Series lights are designed specifically for RV use with robust electronic circuits to handle the power fluctuations found in RVs. The Elite Series LEDs are 50 percent brighter yet use a fraction of the power required for incandescent lighting. Elite Series LEDs are available in Warm White (3200k) to replicate incandescent light, Cool White (5500k) for a sterile white light, or Natural White (4500k), which is brighter but still retains some warmth. M4 LED Products website catalogs more than 150 different RV LED lights ranging from the Economy Series with standard-size overhead LEDs starting at \$6.49, to the Elite Series starting at \$10.99.

M4 LED Products, 818-717-8840, www.m4led.com

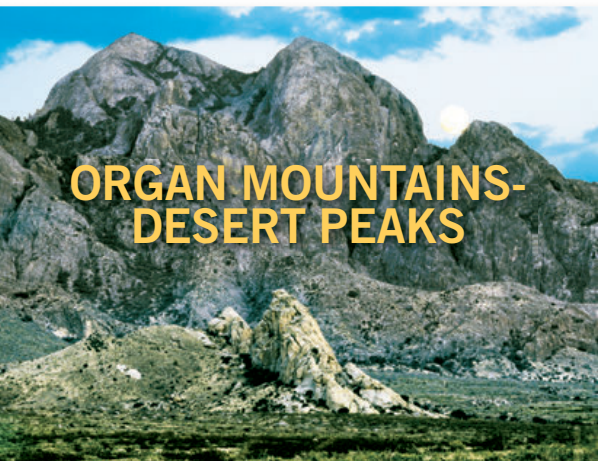


RAYZAR SHARP

Winegard's new Rayzar Air HD Antenna is a sleek and powerful multidirectional amplified broadcast antenna that provides front and rear reception for maximum channel coverage. Optimized for North American digital TV frequencies, the Rayzar Air is designed to eliminate interference from other non-TV frequencies (like radio) to maximize signal reception. With nearly Blu-ray quality, according to the company, and no monthly programming fees, users can enjoy live regional news, weather and sports anywhere in the United States from major broadcast networks. The Rayzar Air is available as a retrofit for existing Winegard lift hardware or as a complete kit. MSRP is \$49.99 for retrofit antenna, \$129 for the complete kit.

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ORGAN MOUNTAINS- DESERT PEAKS

On May 21, President Barack Obama signed a proclamation to establish the Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks National Monument in south-central New Mexico. The 496,330-acre monument was established to protect significant

prehistoric, historic, and geologic resources and is managed by the Bureau of Land Management.

Hundreds of archaeologically and culturally significant sites are located within the new monument, including some limited Paleo-Indian artifacts, extensive rock-art sites and the ruins of a 10-room pueblo, among other ancient dwellings. More recent history is memorialized with Geronimo's Cave, Billy the Kid's Outlaw Rock and sites related to early Spanish explorers.

Aguirre Spring Campground is the only campground in the monument and has a \$7-per-site fee. Dispersed camping is available in the areas of Desert Peaks and Potrillo Mountains and does not require a permit or fee.

RV SHOWS

SEPT. 5-7
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Hazelwood, Missouri, 618-288-9952

SEPT. 10-14
America's Largest RV Show - Hershey
Hershey, Pennsylvania, 888-303-2887

SEPT. 11-14
Portland Fall RV & Van Show
Portland, Oregon, 503-246-8291

SEPT. 11-14
Southwest RV SuperShow
Dallas, Texas, 512-327-4514

SEPT. 11-14
Fall Maryland RV Super Sale
Timonium, Maryland, 410-561-7323

SEPT. 12-14
Greater Iowa RV & Boat Show
Des Moines, Iowa, 515-249-7622

SEPT. 19-21
The Great MN RV Fair
Prior Lake, Minnesota, 847-229-6730

SEPT. 26-28
Austin RV Expo
Round Rock, Texas, 512-366-7135

SEPT. 26-28
Northeast RV Show's Fall RV Marketplace
Suffern, New York, 845-343-2772

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News Briefs

The new **2015 Ford Transit** goes on sale at U.S. and Canadian dealerships this summer, eventually replacing America's best-selling van for 35 years, the E-Series, first sold in 1961 as Ford Econoline. According to a news release, the Ford Transit delivers as much as 46 percent better fuel mileage than the E-Series. Transit comes standard with a 3.7-liter V-6 engine, and a 3.5-liter EcoBoost or 3.2-liter Power Stroke diesel is available. A compressed natural gas and liquefied petroleum gas prep package is available on Transit when equipped with the 3.7-liter V-6 engine.

Newmar Corp. is reintroducing its London Aire for 2015. The coachbuilder last marketed the London Aire brand in 2007 when it was the company's top-end line. The new London Aire 45-foot Class A diesel pusher is built on a Freightliner SLR chassis equipped with a 600-horsepower Cummins 15-liter ISX engine — the largest available to production-type motorhome builders. The coach is also equipped with a tag-axle, independent front suspension and Comfort Drive steering. Interior features include a full-wall slide bath-and-a-half floorplan, elegant dark maple-accented cabinetry, polished solid-surface countertops, porcelain floor tile and a ceiling that masks the air-conditioning vents. MSRP is \$619,820.

The **Arizona Association of RV Parks and Campgrounds** has named Voyager RV Resort & Hotel the 2014 Mega Park of the Year. The full-service luxury resort located in Tucson, Arizona, offers 1,576 RV sites, park-model and casita rentals, and a newly renovated hotel. Some of the property amenities that were recognized as superior include Voyager's three swimming pools, tennis courts, 24-hour state-of-the-art fitness center, day spa and full-time recreational staff.

Spartan Chassis Inc., a subsidiary of Spartan Motors Inc., has introduced its new Passive Steer Tag Axle for motorhomes that results in a 7 percent reduction in curb-to-curb turning radius, according to the company. "Spartan's Passive Steer Tag Axle has been designed, engineered and purpose-built for motorhomes in the RV industry," said Timothy Hamm, vice president, sales and business development of the specialty vehicles business unit, in a press release. "We take great pride in the competencies of the technical staff at Spartan and the ground-up approach they bring to chassis engineering. This passive tag is not an adaptation of an existing design." When a motorhome equipped with the Spartan Passive Steer Tag Axle is shifted into reverse, the alignment mechanism automatically straightens the tires to reduce tire wear. The Passive Steer Tag Axle is standard equipment on 2015 Newmar Essex and King Aire motorhomes built on a Spartan Chassis platform.

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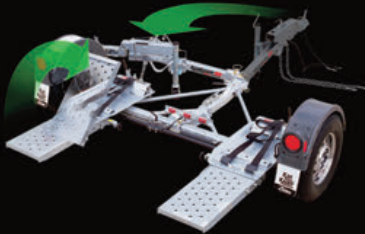
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THE NEWEST NATIONAL PARK



Pinnacles National Park, located in central California, was first designated as a national monument in 1908, and redesignated as a national park Jan. 10, 2013. Formed by an ancient volcanic field rising out of the Gabilan Range, this park has awesome rock formations. It is also home to the California condor, which can be seen riding the thermals among the pinnacles.

Enter through the east gate of the park (the west gate is not suitable for large RVs) and stop first at the visitor center. Here, pick up a listing of hiking trails, which vary from a .5-mile walk to the 5.3-mile High Peaks trail that climbs 1,350 feet through the pinnacles, on steps and railings built by the Civilian Conservation Corps in the 1930s.

Another great hike is the Balconies Cave trail through a talus cave. The trail goes through a narrow canyon where large boulders have fallen across the top, creating a cave. Be sure to bring a flashlight, as this cave is dark!

Pinnacles has a campground, which is only accessible from the east side of the park. The majority of sites are dry camping, but 37 are available with electric hook-ups. Restrooms have flush toilets and showers, and potable water is available. There's even an outdoor swimming pool for the hot summer season.

For more information, call 831-389-4485, or visit www.nps.gov/pinn. — *Morey Edelman*

PENDLETON ROUND-UP

The time to visit Pendleton, Oregon, is the second full week in September. That's when 50,000 people attend the big Pendleton Round-Up. The rodeo has been going strong since its inception in 1910, and is now one of the 10 largest rodeos in the world. Round-Up week starts with the Dress Up Parade on the Saturday before the rodeo. On Monday and Tuesday admission is free to watch the highly competitive "slack" competitions held for those events with an overflow of contestants. Cowboys (and barrel-racing cowgirls) posting the best times from slacks will move on to the Round-Up, which opens on Wednesday. Bareback riding, steer roping and saddle-bronc riding are three of the 10 events that draw competitors from all over the United States and Canada.



A popular event is the Happy Canyon Indian Pageant, which runs from Wednesday through Saturday nights. The colorful show tells the history of the early Native Americans and the arrival of white men, including Lewis and Clark.

This year's event runs Sept. 10-13. Make your RV reservations early. Pendleton KOA is only 2 miles from the Round-Up grounds.

For more information, call 800-457-6336, or visit www.pendletonroundup.com.

— *Mary Zalmanek* ♦

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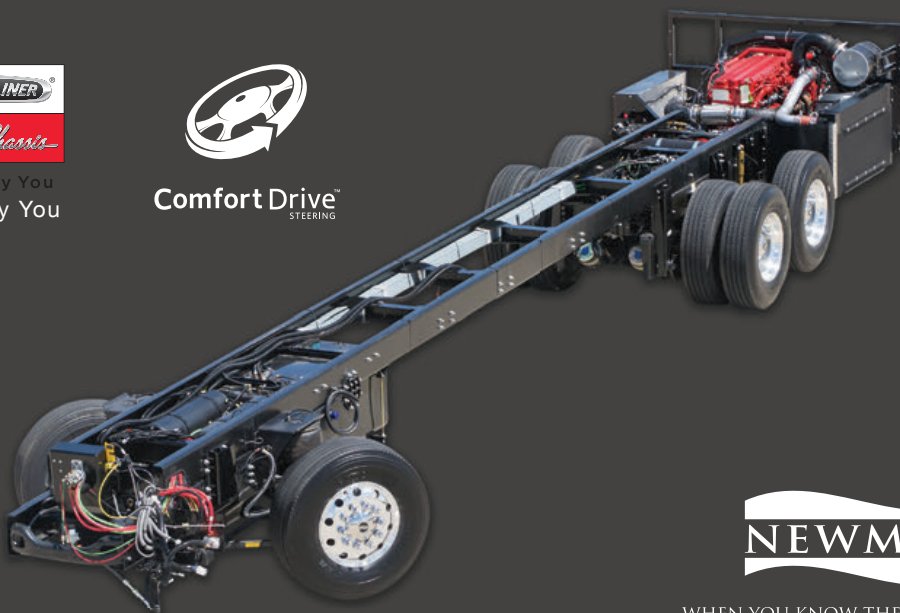
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WILMINGTON, NORTH CAROLINA



The undeveloped beach at Fort Fisher State Recreation Area has miles of white sand for sunning, swimming and fishing.

Tucked between the Atlantic Ocean and Cape Fear River, Wilmington, North Carolina, began as a trading post with the arrival of European settlers in the 1730s. Years later, during the Civil War, it served as one of the busiest ports and supply lines of the Confederacy until the fall of nearby Fort Fisher in January 1865. Union forces captured Wilmington shortly afterward and within months the Civil War was over.

FORT FISHER HISTORIC SITE

The Fort Fisher State Historic Site at Kure Beach helps visitors get a clearer picture of those events and how Confederate troops fought hard to defend Wilmington from an assault from the sea. In the end, Federal ships were successful in shelling the fort, then getting close enough to land and drop off troops. Frequent visitor Ken Lavern explained

FULL OF WARMTH
AND HOSPITALITY, THIS
TOWN WELCOMES
VISITORS WITH NEARBY
ISLAND BEACHES,
A RICH LOOK AT A
VIBRANT PORT CITY'S
ROLE DURING CRITICAL
TIMES IN AMERICA'S
HISTORY AND EVEN
SOME HOLLYWOOD-TYPE
EXCITEMENT



Above left: The USS North Carolina, moored in Wilmington and open for self-guided tours, participated in every major naval offensive in the Pacific during World War II. Above right: Bellamy Mansion, located in Wilmington's historic downtown, is one of North Carolina's most spectacular examples of antebellum architecture and has been featured in numerous films.



Above: Exhibits at Fort Fisher State Historic Site trace the history of the fort during the Civil War. Below: The North Carolina Aquarium at Fort Fisher showcases the aquatic environments and wildlife in the Atlantic Ocean and Cape Fear River.



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WILMINGTON

that soon after the troops hit the ground, it was over.

"Ten thousand soldiers landed at Kure Beach, overran the fort and pushed the remaining (Confederate troops) all the way to the end down there," said Lavern.

You'll see a monument marking the final battle, a reconstructed gun placement and an interpretive history trail. There's also a small museum on the site, as well as a gift shop.

NORTH CAROLINA AQUARIUM AT FORT FISHER

After touring the grounds and while still at the park, you can switch gears a little bit and get an up-close look at the many varieties of aquatic life that live in the

Atlantic Ocean and Cape Fear River. The North Carolina Aquarium at Fort Fisher has exhibits featuring sea horses, sharks, jellyfish, stingrays and even alligators.

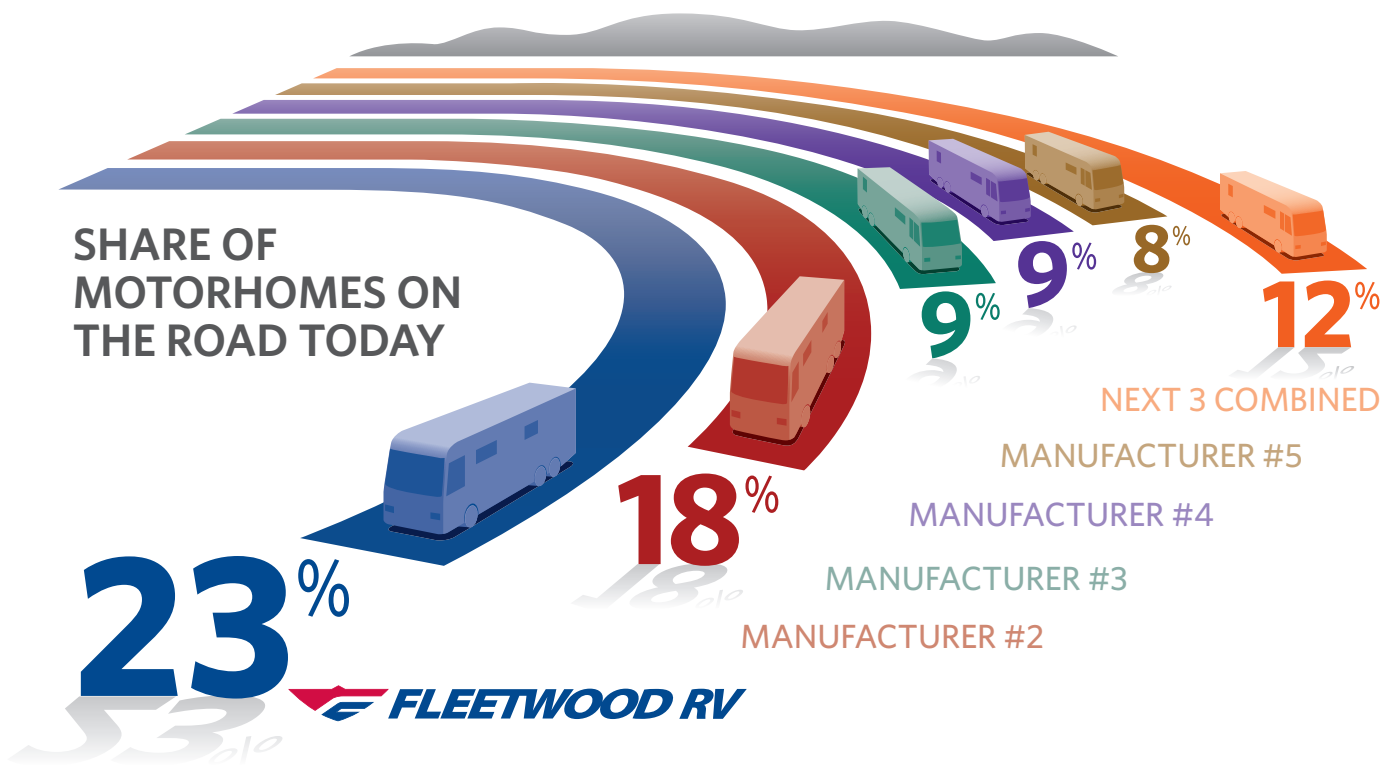
HISTORIC DOWNTOWN WILMINGTON

Downtown Wilmington boasts one of the largest historic districts in the United States, stretching more than 230 city blocks. A variety of tours will take you over cobblestone streets, and alongside antebellum homes, notable buildings and the scenic river walk. Don Scrimgeour leads one of the popular horse-drawn-carriage tours and tells entertaining stories, points out historic sites and oddities, and shares the background behind many of the city's more unique homes, many built in the

Right: Horse-drawn carriage tours of historic downtown Wilmington are led by a costumed driver who takes visitors along the riverfront and past stately mansions.



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Above left: Autograph Wall in the City Market highlights a few of the names of famous people who have visited Wilmington. Above right: These similar homes, called sister houses, were built by a father for his identical twin daughters.

mid- to late-1800s.

"Next, on your right, there are two houses coming up that are identical," Scrimé noted at one point during the tour. "They're called sister houses, built by their father for identical twin daughters."

Other highlights included a home with a "Widow's Watch" where women

would wait for returning ships to see if their husbands were on deck, indicating they'd made it back alive, to a set of homes built in the early 1900s with kits sold by Sears, Roebuck and Co.

Scrimé also listed some of the more famous people born in Wilmington such as basketball's Michael Jordan, boxer

Sugar Ray Leonard and country music legend Charlie Daniels, just to name a few.

HOLLYWOOD EAST

If famous names excite you, you'll want to take the Hollywood Walking Tour to hear more about some of the 500 movies and TV shows that have been shot here. Tour

The advertisement features a timeline at the top with markers for 1994, 2001, 2010, 2011, and Present. Below the timeline are silhouettes of four different brake pedal designs, showing a progression from a simple rectangular pedal to a more complex, ergonomic design. The text "Yeah...it was time for a change." is prominently displayed in the center. At the bottom, a large image shows the RV brake 2 pedal installed in a vehicle's footwell, with red lines indicating its connection to the vehicle's braking system. A small inset shows a tire pressure sensor. The RV brake 2 pedal is labeled "RV brake 2" and "RV". The background of the advertisement shows a white RV and a blue car parked in a field with mountains in the distance. The bottom of the advertisement features the RV brake logo with the tagline "where PASSION meets INNOVATION", the phone number 1.800.815.2159, the website rvibrake.com, and a small fish icon.

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WILMINGTON, NORTH CAROLINA FROM PAGE 30



Wilmington resident David Raines enjoys dry camping with his family at 761-acre Carolina Beach State Park.

guide Mike Hartle, who also likes to refer to himself as Spiel Stevenburg, sports a stereotypical film-director jacket and carries a megaphone for effect. He can tell you just about any and everything about the many Hollywood productions shot here since 1983.

"This is Hollywood East," Hartle explained. "We're the third largest entertainment revenue city in America after Los Angeles and New York. Our studio's the largest outside of L.A."

He went on to add, "And talking about some of the names that have come through this town over the years, Katharine Hepburn, Paul Newman, it's amazing. 'Matlock,' 'Dawson's Creek,' 'One Tree Hill' and Nicholas Sparks' movies have all been shot here."

Some of the more recent films shot in Wilmington include "Iron Man 3," "We're the Millers" and "Tammy."

An autograph wall in the City Market highlights a few more of the names that have come through town, like John Travolta, James Earl Jones, Henry Winkler and more.

And if one of Wilmington's antebellum homes looks familiar to you, there's good reason. The Bellamy Mansion, which bears a resemblance to Tara in "Gone with the Wind," has been featured in films more than once.

"It was used in the TV movie starring Shannen Doherty called 'A Burning Passion: The Margaret Mitchell Story,' Hartle said. "But most notably, Katharine Hepburn held court in the parlors of the Bellamy Mansion for her last film, Truman Capote's 'One Christmas.'"

USS NORTH CAROLINA

If you're standing downtown close to the water, you can't help but notice the massive USS North Carolina on the other side of the Cape Fear River. One of the most highly decorated ships of World War II, the North Carolina is permanently moored here and open to the public. Visitors can explore parts of the ship's nine decks, climb up and down the narrow staircases, and even see the crew's tiny living and sleeping quarters.

"It was fantastic to see how the Navy guys lived in World War II," commented Frank Cason of Chuckey, Tennessee. "I don't think I could live that way. But we know those guys were good. They lived, they survived, they were dedicated and they performed."

Cason is a member of an RV group in Wilmington for a rally. Fellow RVer Bill Humphrey added that as military veterans, they make a point of visiting battleships and carriers during their travels.

"This was great. Every place we've traveled, if we find one of these ships we go to it. I've been to Mobile (home to the USS Alabama)," he explained. "Then saw the sub and carrier in Charleston over the years. Also stayed in Mayport, Florida, outside Jacksonville two years ago and saw the USS New York come in on its maiden voyage."

Cason, Humphrey and another RVer, Bob Angus, camped at the Wilmington KOA, which they described as big-rig friendly. "It's an outstanding park. We're off the main drag," said Angus. "With these pull-through sites, just leave the car hooked up and drive right in."

AREA CAMPGROUNDS

Of the four campgrounds in the area, the Wilmington KOA is perhaps the closest to downtown — just 9 miles away. Others, like Carolina Beach State Park, may be just a little bit farther out by a few miles, but closer to the beach. Park Superintendent Chris Helms notes that while his campground doesn't currently offer hookups — they hope to add some soon — they do have dedicated campsites in a fully wooded park, with a marina, as well as fishing and biking.

"Carolina Beach is really good for bicycling. RVers who have bikes can park their motorhomes in the campground, then ride to really nice restaurants and the beach is only 1.5 miles away," said Helms.

The park also offers something Wilmington is uniquely known for, something you can see growing in the wild that only grows naturally in this part of the country.

"We have carnivorous plants. Folks come from miles away to see our Venus flytraps that grow here and nowhere else in the world," noted Helms. "Those 'Little Shop of Horrors'-type plants grow here in the wild. They're really not very large. The actual traps are the size of a kidney bean. They only grow within a 70-mile radius of Wilmington."

Carolina Beach State Park attracts locals and out-of-towners. Wilmington resident David Raines often brings his children out in his motorhome and stays a couple of nights just to enjoy nature.

"Yesterday, we spent about four hours just walking in the woods," he said. "We stopped and had a picnic on the river."

Other Wilmington area campgrounds include Carolina Beach Family Campground and Winner's RV Park.

If you're visiting Wilmington with the hopes of hitting the beach, there's Carolina Beach and Kure Beach in one direction, and Wrightsville Beach just 10 miles from downtown Wilmington in another direction. And as with all beachfront communities, rest assured there's plenty of great golfing, shopping and some amazing seafood restaurants in all directions. ♦



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

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10 HOBBIES FOR THE ROAD

EVEN MORE **PORTABLE PASTIMES** TO ENJOY WHILE TRAVELING

by MARY ZALMANEK

In 1930, British philosopher Bertrand Russell wrote, "Anything you're good at contributes to happiness." More than eight decades later, it's easy to see the wisdom in his words. I meet lots of happy people when I travel, many of them doing what they love, things they're good at.

Two years ago I started asking other RVers about their hobbies. *MotorHome* published the results in August 2012 ("Portable Pastimes") and October 2013 ("Home is Where the Art Is"). I continue to be amazed at the variety of ways these creative, intelligent and cheerful people spend their time. The activities enjoyed by this year's group of happy hobbyists include embracing new learning, creating arts and crafts, and playing musical instruments.



PLAYING THE DULCIMER

Last year's travels took Craig and Debbie Rice to Mountain View, Arkansas — the folk-music capital of the state — for the Ozark Folk Festival. A longtime music fan, Craig learned to play the guitar “back when he had black hair in high school.” Over the years he picked up the ukulele and mandolin. When he heard the authentic old-time sounds of the mountain dulcimer at the festival, he had to have one. He bought a McSpadden mountain dulcimer, handmade in Arkansas. While Debbie was busy quilting, Craig taught himself to play. They plan to return to Arkansas in July for the Mountain Dulcimer Workshop at the Ozark Folk Center State Park. It's evident that this region takes its music seriously; many of the RV parks and campgrounds provide air-conditioned picking sheds for jam sessions.

ONLINE LEARNING

Linda Myers loves to learn; she enriches her life by exercising her mind. Through Massive Open Online Courses or MOOCs, she has taken classes as diverse as chemistry, psychology, art and conflict resolution. Since Myers has no need or desire to earn another degree, she picks topics simply because they interest her. She appreciates the flexibility; she can take the classes any time, day or night, wherever her travels take her. In the four months since she heard about MOOCs, she's taken nine classes. An added bonus is that these courses are free. More than 40 providers offer courses on MOOC List (www.mooc-list.com). Linda has used Open2Study and Coursera. She found the four-week courses offered by Open2Study to be a comfortable pace and level for her. Partnering with top universities, Coursera courses are longer and more challenging.



SCROLL SAWING

John and Judy Wagner have been full-timers since 1999, dividing their time between Illinois and Arizona. While traveling from place to place, their bins are filled with an Excalibur scroll saw, 20 sizes of blades, a belt sander, a palm sander, a box of patterns, various acrylic paints and polyurethane, and cherry and walnut wood. When they arrive in Arizona, John sets up shop in their shed at the RV park where they work as hosts. After he applies a pattern to the wood with double-sided tape, he patiently cuts the wood. He makes crosses, puzzles and other works of art. If an item needs to be painted, Judy does that. He sells the items at craft fairs or gives them away as gifts. Military and religious items are most popular. His Noah's Ark puzzle raised \$200 for an Illinois Ronald McDonald House at auction.



QUILTING

When Debbie and Craig Rice became full-timers in 2005, they selected a motorhome that would allow Debbie to continue her longtime quilting hobby. A sitting room off their bedroom has enough counterspace to accommodate Debbie's two sewing machines: a Janome 11000 Special Edition for embroidery, quilting and sewing; and a New Home for sewing mittens and upholstery. She finds inspiration for new projects at quilt shows, from other quilters, in magazines and through their travels. Because the Rices have traveled extensively — 49 states, Canada, Mexico and Belize by RV — Debbie has plenty of inspiration. She usually has three or four projects going at once. Craig enjoys helping her select fabrics. Last Christmas she gave quilts to 14 family members. Debbie belongs to a quilting guild that donates pillowcases and “quillows,” quilts that fold into pillows, to various charities such as children's hospitals and organizations serving veterans and cancer patients.





MUSICAL DUO

For the 12 years Bill and Betty Lancaster have been RVing, they've been making beautiful music together. Betty plays a 1965 vintage Kay upright bass. Bill said, "She's fiddled with the bow a little bit, but she prefers to pull the strings." With Bill on a Martin guitar, they sing songs from the '50s and '60s, folk, bluegrass and gospel. They call their music "folkgrasspel." They've performed at RV rallies, fundraisers, assisted-living facilities, nursing homes and various venues throughout the year for the local Mental Health Association. One of their favorite gigs was playing at a Friendship Force International gathering, which Bill describes as "a student-exchange program for adults." They also have been known to host open jam sessions at rallies, welcoming beginning to advanced musicians. While on the road, they look for musical instruments they can sell on eBay. At home in Alabama, they are active members of the Huntsville Traditional Music Association.



ART GOURDS

Six years ago, Blanche Murrin attended a gourd art show in Indiana. She was instantly hooked. She took classes, read books on gourd art and unleashed her natural creativity on these simple objects. While gourds may be just hard-shelled, inedible fruits to some, to Murrin they are the starts of something beautiful: lampshades, bowls, luminarias, purses and jewelry. Many of her pieces are inspired by nature and include leaves and flowers; some are embellished with air-dried clay or wrapped with wire. Her tools include a MicroLux saw, wood burners, drills, pliers and files. At home in Indiana, she has even grown some of her own gourds, including her favorites, apple and warty gourds. Shortly after I met Blanche, she entered five items and won six ribbons — one gourd also earned a judge's choice award — in the Wuerz Farm Gourd Festival in Casa Grande, Arizona. She shares her love of gourd art by teaching classes.



WIND SPINNERS

At an informal RV gathering several years ago, a man was demonstrating how to make wind spinners out of beer and soda cans. John Schmaltz wasn't really interested, but when the teacher gave Schmaltz his tools, he decided to try it. He was surprised to find he enjoyed making them. When he announced to his two children that he was now a crafter, they both responded with the exact same words, "Dad, you don't have a crafting bone in your body." Now he finds it addictive. A series of three spinners, which requires six aluminum cans, takes about 90 minutes to make. He crafts them in the evening while watching TV. For the last three years, he's been selling about 100 wind spinners a year for \$10 each at craft shows. It's a low-cost hobby requiring simple handmade tools, scissors, pliers, a pattern, beads and wire. Several people who bought them for their decorative value reported that strategically placed spinners keep woodpeckers and other pesky birds from building destructive nests in their stationary homes.

The background of the advertisement is a scenic photograph of a two-lane asphalt road winding through a mountain valley. The road is flanked by steep, rocky cliffs covered in green vegetation. A white Thor motor coach is driving away from the viewer in the distance. The Thor Motor Coach logo, consisting of a stylized 'T' icon and the brand name, is overlaid in the upper left and center of the image.

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NANTUCKET BASKET WEAVING

During the 28 years Penny Burns owned American folk-art stores, she became an expert on Nantucket Lightship Baskets. After admiring them in her stores, she learned to make them 12 years ago. She considers it a perfect RV hobby; she weaves while her husband, Robert, drives. On a recent road trip from California to the Midwest, she made 27 baskets. Robert is also a big help. He adapts plastic containers to use as molds for the baskets and makes the wooden bottoms and handles. This is a big saving, as the molds can run hundreds of dollars. Other supplies include weaving cane and staves.

Eight years ago, Penny started teaching classes in Nantucket basket weaving in her home studio and at the RV resort when they spend the winter. Her recent five-week class filled to capacity with 13 students.

FELTED SOAPS

When my niece, Caley Coulson, gave everyone on her Christmas list hand-felted soaps last year, I knew I'd found a hobby I could do in our motorhome. She showed me how to make them using bar soap, wool roving (unspun wool) and hot water. Before we joined the snowbird migration, I packed what I had previously thought would be our lifetime supply of gift soaps. I bought six skeins of colorful roving. Once we settled in Arizona, I invited my friend Judy White over to give it a try. We watched a few YouTube videos on the subject. The process is simple: Wrap a bar of soap in several layers of thinned-out wool roving and tuck in the ends; use strips of roving in contrasting colors to make a design; dunk the soap in hot water; rub gently until the soap lathers and the wool felts (or contracts) around the soap. Most websites recommended using mesh fabric or nylons to help the felting process. We forged ahead, felting by hand alone, as my niece had done. The next time, I tucked the wrapped soap in knee-high hose before getting it wet. Both



WOOD CARVING

Robert Burns' hobby of woodworking extends beyond making handles for Penny's baskets. As a business owner with a high work ethic, Robert knew he'd need a hobby to keep himself busy when he retired. He enjoys working with wood and has made several pieces of fine furniture for the home he shares with Penny. He wanted something portable that he could do on the road. Santa figurines hand carved out of basswood became his specialty, but he's also been known to carve cowboys, angels and animals.

Robert is president of the Northern California RV Carvers, a chapter of the California Carvers Guild. With more than 20 members, the group meets for four or five days each month at various RV parks in Northern California. The carvers work on their projects in groups, while many of their spouses strike out on their own for basket weaving, quilting or other creative endeavors.

methods produced fine results. I had so much fun I even felted a heart-shaped rock I'd found on a beach.

While some of these happy hobbyists have spent years perfecting their crafts, I found something that I could do with an hour's training. The important thing is to do what makes you happy.

If you have a hobby you do in your motorhome that contributes to your happiness, and you would like to be considered for inclusion in next year's article, please send me an email at Mary@adventuresoftheheart.com. ♦



Mary and Jim Zalmanek enjoy traveling in their 2003 Safari Trek when they are not at home in Monument, Colorado. Mary is the author of *The Art of the Spark* (www.artofthespark.com).



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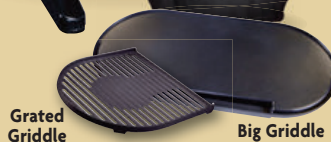
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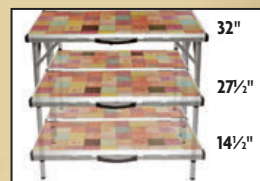


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NEW MEXICO'S CHACO CULTURE NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK IS RUGGED AND REMOTE, WITH CLEAR, DARK SKIES PERFECT FOR NIGHT-SKY VIEWING

by CHRISTINE GOODIER

What if you could drive your motorhome right into the center of a place as highly regarded as the Acropolis in Greece, England's Stonehenge or the Egyptian Pyramids, and stay the night alongside ancient stone dwellings? We did exactly that while touring northern New Mexico in our 22-foot Class B motorhome last September.

Sound far-fetched? Not at Chaco Culture National Historical Park, a site designated in 1987 to the prestigious World Heritage List of "places with outstanding universal value" created by UNESCO, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.

What's so exciting about this remote, high-desert canyon? The monumental remains of a culture that flourished in the Four Corners region from A.D. 850 to 1250, "the largest, best-preserved and most complex prehistoric architectural structures in North America," according to the National Park Service (NPS).

Inside Chaco Canyon are massive "great houses" built by ancestral Puebloan stonemasons more than 1,000 years ago. Chacoans carved stone stairways into and out of the canyon, and engineered some 400 miles of 30-foot-wide, prehistoric roads connecting to more than 150 "outlier" great houses. And without benefit of wheels or pack animals, they carried approximately 225,000 tree trunks from distant mountains back to Chaco for use as wooden beams.

Why did these people choose to build elaborate projects in such a place with long, cold winters, hot summers and meager rainfall? Did they purposely align the buildings to mark solar and lunar movements? And why did they abandon their valley, after using it as a hub of ceremony and trade for more than 300 years? Some researchers think drought or famine were factors, while others believe political or religious conflicts caused Puebloan people to migrate away during the 13th century.

Such mysteries continue to burnish Cha-

WAY OFF THE

PHOTO: NATIONAL PARK SERVICE



Left to right: Visitors must bend over to pass through Pueblo Bonito doorways, which may have been kept small for heat retention or defensive purposes. Gallo Campground can accommodate RVs up to 35 feet long. Chaco Culture National Historical Park is the high-desert home to some 60 elk.

PHOTOS: ROBERT GOODIER

BEATEN PATH



The heart of Chaco Canyon is Pueblo Bonito, planned and built between A.D. 850 and 1250 by ancestral Puebloans.



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PHOTO: NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

Above left: Atop Fajada Butte, a spiral petroglyph known as the “Sun Dagger Site” marked the equinoxes and the solstices. **Above right:** At Chaco’s observatory, star gazers can attend Night Sky programs several nights a week from April through October.

co’s mystique for travelers. But there’s no mystery about why so few people come here; it’s the park’s isolation and notorious access roads.

Would-be visitors discover they must drive on miles of dirt road to reach Chaco. There is no public transportation, and the closest lodgings are more than 60 miles away in Bloomfield, New Mexico. There are no fuel stations, restaurants or grocery stores in or near the park. At 6,200 feet, Chaco is a high-desert environment where temperatures can swing 50 degrees in a day.

So arriving in a motorhome with plenty of food, water, fuel, beds, furnace and an all-temperature wardrobe is an enviable solution. (The maximum RV size in the park’s campground is 35 feet, and dispersed camping is not permitted.)

How to get there? The NPS recommends that RVs avoid entering Chaco from the south via Route 9, an approach that involves either 20 or 33 miles on rough to impassable dirt roads complicated by missing signs and inaccurate GPS information.

There’s a more viable option: Turn off U.S. Highway 550 at County Road 7900 (located 3 miles southeast of Nageezi, New Mexico, or about 50 miles west of Cuba, New Mexico, at mile 112.5). This 21-mile route is well marked and includes 8 miles of paved road (County Road 7900) and “only” 13 miles of washboard dirt road (County Road 7950).

Plan to drive during daylight hours and don’t count on a cell signal. Avoid side ditches, watch out for farm animals and heed a sign posted near a stream bed: “Danger! Do not cross if wash is flowing.”

The road can be a jarring washboard of ruts, depending on when it was last scraped, so be alert especially during the last 5 miles before entering the park.

The NPS staff at Chaco suggest that drivers call to inquire about current road conditions before setting out (505-786-7014). Take them up on the offer, and pay attention to the weather forecast if you plan to arrive during the Southwest’s monsoon season of July, August and September. Driving will be more feasible when the road is dry.

“We’ve had people getting through today,” advised a cheerful ranger at the other end of our phone call last September after a few wet days. “Stay in the ruts and you’ll be all right.” Rain that morning had turned 7950 to mud as slippery as ice. We took it slow, arrived an hour after leaving

CHACO ALTERNATIVES

If you’d rather not take your motorhome into Chaco, consider driving your dinghy vehicle in or renting a car for a day. If you’re short on time, visit smaller, more easily reached northern New Mexico sites that archaeologists believe were part of the “Chaco World.”

Aztec Ruins National Monument, 75 miles north in Aztec, New Mexico, became a World Heritage Site as part of Chaco Culture. It has Chaco-style masonry, large rooms and a reconstructed great kiva that visitors can enter to visualize how these structures may have looked in ancient times.

South of Aztec, between Bloomfield and Farmington, New Mexico, the Salmon Ruins site owned by San Juan County has a Chaco-style tower kiva, similar to one at Chetro Ketl and a plaza with a great kiva.



Easily accessed Aztec Ruins National Monument’s reconstructed great kiva helps visitors visualize how these structures may have looked inside.

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WAY OFF THE BEATEN PATH

Highway 550 and selected a campsite.

Near the park entrance, the simple Gallo Campground at the base of a cliff was our first taste of the "Chaco Phenomenon." We walked a petroglyph trail, built a campfire, fell asleep by a stone alcove dwelling (circa A.D. 1150) and awakened to bright sunshine painting Fajada Butte with gold.

Gallo Campground has 49 dry camping sites, each with a picnic table and fire grate. Facilities include a dump station and flush toilets but no showers. Drinking water is available in the visitor center parking lot. Site fee is \$15 a night.

Atop the butte, a sacred place for Pueblo, Hopi and Navajo people, is the Sun Dagger site, evidence that Chacoans were ancient astronomers who tracked the sun's movements. Until 1989, when three stone slabs shifted slightly, sunlight that passed between them fell onto a spiral petroglyph and marked the equinoxes and the summer and winter solstices.

A mile from the campground is the recently rebuilt visitor center and bookstore where campers can pay for site and entrance fees, watch an introductory film and study a useful canyon wall map. Park rangers lead free, guided walks of the largest site, Pueblo Bonito, year-round, as well as other walks and programs from April through October.

The next morning, we drove past a small herd of elk that live in the park, and continued on the 9-mile, paved Canyon Loop Drive that led to six major places we could easily explore. (There are more than 3,000 historic sites in the park but not all are excavated or accessible.) We parked and walked along well-marked, self-guided

trails using free loaner guide pamphlets.

After having visited other National Park sites that were packed with hordes of people, we could hardly believe our good luck in picking a crisp, sunny day when we had this place almost entirely to ourselves. Later, we learned that fewer than 30,000 visitors came to Chaco Culture National Historical Park in all of 2013, an average of only about 82 per day.

In the solitary silence of the canyon's heart, we tried to imagine people using the D-shaped Pueblo Bonito great house 1,000 years ago, adding onto it over three centuries until it covered 3 acres, rose to four or five stories and had more than 600 rooms.

We bent over to fit through doorways into the rooms, and walked across two open plazas, where researchers believe that community gatherings and trading once took place. Evidence of trade goods, such as pottery, turquoise, seashells, scarlet macaws, copper bells and cacao (chocolate) from as far away as Mexico, have turned up during excavations.

We looked for ancient symbols and characters on the Petroglyph Trail near Pueblo Bonito's cliff. According to the trail guide, "Chaco is the only known place in the world where the techniques of pecking, incising, abrading and drilling were all combined in a single image," that of a bird. We spotted stick figures, animals and sun-like spirals, the canyon's most common image.

Our next stop was the canyon's second-largest building, Chetro Ketl, with a plaza elevated 12 feet above the valley floor. We peered into one of the largest of Chaco's many great kivas, round sunken chambers used for worship or other ceremonies.

We walked through the Pueblo Del Arroyo's D-shaped great house remnants, with flooring made of beams, sticks and mud, and continued on to a simple, wood-fenced graveyard. We were surprised to learn that explorer Richard Wetherill, who came to Chaco from Mesa Verde in 1896, was buried here with his wife. He excavated and homesteaded around Pueblo Bonito, operating a trading post until he was shot in 1910 by a Navajo neighbor.

From one canyon great house to the next, we admired stonework that often varied within the same structure. Skilled masons quarried rectangular blocks from the

FOR MORE INFORMATION

CHACO CULTURE NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK

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sandstone cliffs, fit them together closely with mud mortar and sometimes chinked them with small mosaic-like pieces. Finally, they covered the walls in plaster, which no longer remains. On a ranger-led hike from the visitor center, we walked up to the largely unexcavated Una Vida and learned that the rubble core and thin veneer masonry styles in the canyon changed over time, which has helped archaeologists estimate construction periods.

After visiting for just a day and two nights, we agreed with UNESCO: Chaco's ancient urban ceremonial center "is unlike anything constructed before or since." Next time, we'll hike beyond the paved roads farther into the canyon and climb to the Pueblo Alto complex for sweeping views from atop the cliffs.

Though Chaco seems timeless, there have been recent changes worth noting. The NPS announced a reservation system that began in January. "We will be using the www.recreation.gov website for the Gallo Campground reservations," reported Christine Czazasty, the park's chief of interpretation. Previously, a first-come, first-served system meant some campers had to turn around during busy times.

In August 2013, the International Dark-Sky Association certified Chaco Culture as an International Dark-Sky Park, only the fourth unit of the NPS to receive that designation. At Chaco's observatory next to the visitor center, stargazers can attend night-sky programs several nights a week from April through October, a bonus missed by day-trippers.

And as for County Road 7950? It's not likely to change. Late in 2012, after more than a dozen years of meetings and studies, San Juan County Commissioners gave up on a plan to pave the road due in part to opposition from environmental and Native American groups.

But that's OK. Making it into Chaco Canyon just adds to the campground camaraderie, and other RV travelers we talked to during our visit agreed. Reaching what the Hopi call "the place beyond the horizon" was worth the journey. ♦



Christine Goodier is a freelance writer and editor who lives on the North Carolina coast and travels with her husband, photographer Bob Goodier, in a Class B Sprinter motorhome.



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Even though my wife, Gayle, and I have traveled to this part of Northern California many times in our motorhome, there are still points of interest that we haven't seen and fun activities that we haven't yet experienced. To us, the area where California's Central Valley alluvial plain, the Sierra Nevada and the volcanic Cascade Mountains converge, seems like a giant playground with lots of attractions.

These are the counties of Butte, Nevada and Yuba. Here, you'll find a mild Mediterranean-type climate, interesting local history, a large and diverse population of wildlife, plenty of camping options for RVers and a wide variety of recreational opportunities. If you have a motorhome, and can get away for a visit, we promise that boredom and disappointment will not be part of the experience.

It was on our first visit that we learned about Lake of the Springs RV Resort, a 950-acre campground nestled in the foothills of the Sierra Nevada. This large resort has seven camping areas and offers a wide selection of surroundings and sites. Some campsites have sewer, but most are electric and

THE AREA BETWEEN GRASS VALLEY AND LAKE OROVILLE OFFERS A BOUNTY OF OUTDOOR ADVENTURES

by KEN REID



Houseboats are available to rent in Emerald Cove Marina, located on the beautiful New Bullards Bar Reservoir.

NORTHERN CALIFORNIA'S RV PLAYGROUND



Lake of the Springs RV Resort has a spacious beach that offers a wide range of recreational and people-watching opportunities.

NORTHERN CALIFORNIA'S RV PLAYGROUND



Clockwise from above: Sutter Buttes are known as “Spirit Mountain” by the Maidu Indians. Deer roam unafraid day and night through Lake of the Springs RV Resort. Lake Oroville offers boat rentals and excellent fishing for steelhead, salmon and bass.



water only. We had heard from other RVers that Lake of the Springs is an outstanding campground, with extensive amenities and activities, and after staying here three times, we agree. Because our motorhome is 35 feet long, and our dinghy is towed four wheels down, we like to make Lake of the Springs our home base and take day trips in our dinghy.

What's the big deal about this resort that causes RVers to return time after

time? To begin with, Lake of the Springs is humongous and has spacious campsites that are mostly set far apart. Deer and other wildlife roam right through the camping areas; one evening we counted 17 of them, including several fawns, lingering in and around our campsite. There is a large swimming pool, plus a 120-acre lake surrounded by pines, with wonderful beaches and trails. Fishing is generally good, as the resort does its own planting

of stock. Launch your own boat adjacent to the docks, or rent one on site.

Lake of the Springs hosts organized activities for young and old throughout the year. During the warmer months, additional events are held on the weekends for the kids, including paddleboat races, swim cruises on patio boats, and fishing derbies at a little pond below the lodge. A spacious beach at the lake beckons all ages for sunbathing, swimming, kayaking,



Aerial view of Bidwell Marina at Lake Oroville.

PHOTO: CA DEPT. OF WATER RESOURCES

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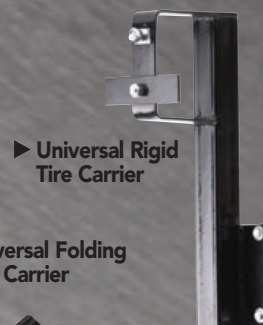


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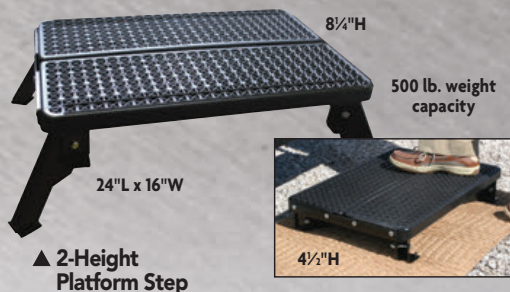
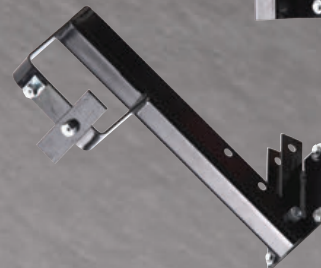


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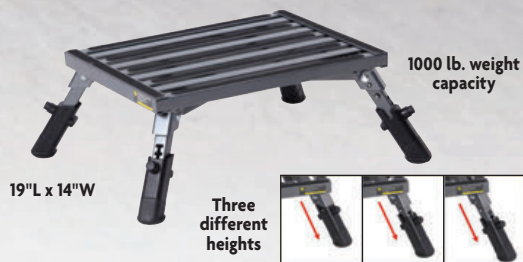
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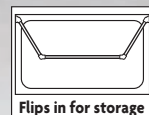
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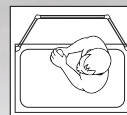
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tubing and people-watching. Four-legged family members will enjoy the dog beach, which is fenced in and located at a secluded part of the lake. It's a wonderful place for dogs and their owners to play. For those who want a change of pace, but still want to be close to the water, there's a large, well-maintained miniature golf course on the hill above the boat docks.

You'll find coffee and cookies most mornings in the resort's lodge, and during the weekends, the staff does an efficient job of serving tasty breakfasts and dinners. The lodge is also where you'll find year-round activities, such as line-dancing lessons, a variety of games and an arcade. Nearby is a well-stocked general store, which carries merchandise for most

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Above: Feather River affords white-water kayaking and rafting through spectacular canyons. Below: Most campsites at Lake of the Springs are huge and widely spaced.



camping and recreational needs, and hosts ice cream socials on the weekends.

When we travel, we look for three things: bodies of water for recreation; wilderness settings for hiking, biking and viewing wildlife; and areas that are rich in history. Our first clue that there were water-related recreational opportunities in the area (beyond those at Lake of the Springs), were the large fishing boats, ski boats and white-water kayaking equipment in the parking lot near the store. After asking around, we learned there are several nearby waterways.

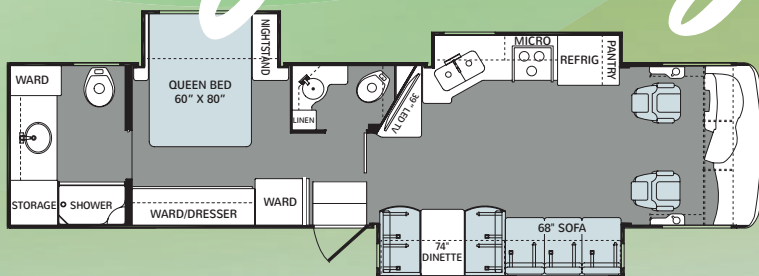
Only about 10 minutes away is 1,600-acre Collins Lake, which has 12 miles of shoreline and excellent fishing. It has the largest private fish-planting program north of Sacramento, with more than 50,000 trout planted each spring; there

are also plenty of bass, crappie, bluegill and catfish. Water-skiing is allowed, but no personal watercraft. There is a campground, a large beach, a playground for the children, a marina, beach volleyball, a shady picnic area and big ice cream cones.

This recreation area has two wonderful tracts of land that have been set aside by the Department of Fish & Game for protection of wildlife. Daugherty Hill (to the south of Collins Lake) and Donovan Hill (to the west of Collins Lake) provide an opportunity to get away from the often-crowded beach and lake. While enjoying the peace and solitude of hiking through these two areas, traversing varied terrain, there is an excellent chance you'll see deer, wild turkeys and quail. In addition, red-tailed hawks, bald eagles, osprey and black vultures patrol the skies. Occasion-



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NORTHERN CALIFORNIA'S RV PLAYGROUND



PHOTOS: CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF WATER RESOURCES

Lake Oroville State Recreation Area has a variety of campgrounds, including boat-in camps, floating campsites and two horse-camping areas.

ally foxes, skunks, bobcats, mountain lions and bears can be seen as well; just be aware that rattlesnakes and poison oak share the space.

Located about 13 miles from the RV resort is New Bullards Bar Reservoir. It is quite large, with a capacity of 969,600 acre-feet of water, and fed mostly by the North Fork of the Yuba River. Waterski magazine rated it as one of the best recreational lakes in the United States. About 16 miles in length, it offers more than 60 miles of scenic shoreline. Emerald Cove Marina offers services such as a general store, gasoline, boat moorings and rentals. Other options include hiking, fishing and swimming.

Only about a 40-minute drive from the resort is the huge Lake Oroville State Recreation Area. Fed by the North, Middle and South forks and the West Branch of the Feather River, and with more than 3.5 million acre-feet of water capacity, this is the second-largest reservoir in California (Shasta Lake is bigger). Those who like to fish can rent a patio boat or fishing boat and try catching some of the trophy salmon, steelhead and bass that lurk in the depths. Water-skiing, wakeboarding, sailing and swimming are just part of the activities. There's also horseback riding, horse camping, hiking and more. You can also rent houseboats, and what they refer to as floating campsites, or try boat-in-camping on islands. Bicycling enthusiasts will want to try out the wonderful trail along the river and across the dam,

which affords 41 miles of scenic riding. Aside from two steep grades, most of the distance is relatively flat.

I love white-water kayaking and rafting, so I'm always checking out potential runs. Just a bit north of Yuba City, there is a nice 5-mile stretch where the North Fork of the Feather River flows through a granite canyon, beginning below the Cresta Dam and ending at Poe Reservoir. County Line Falls, The Wave and Cave Rapid are rated Class IV white-water runs. Several rafting companies offer excursions there during the season. Situated between Poe Powerhouse and Lake Oroville is Big Bend Run, which includes an adrenaline-rush drop over the Big Bend Dam.

Lake Oroville State Recreation Area is also steeped in history. Native Americans known as Maidu inhabited the area long before gold was discovered there in 1848. The Southern Maidu (also known as Nisenan) occupied the Yuba River drainage. The Northeastern or Mountain Maidu (also known as Yamonee), made their home along the upper North and Middle forks of the Feather River. Konkow Maidu lived along another part of the North Fork and some of its tributaries. Their total population in 1770 was estimated at between 9,000 and 9,500. They gathered acorns and other nuts, wild grapes and blackberries; dug up tubers and bulbs; planted some crops; and hunted mostly small game. The Community Memorial Museum of Sutter County has exhibits that illustrate their history and culture.



Jet-skiing is popular on Lake Oroville.

A side benefit of looking into the history and culture of the Maidu, was learning more about a unique phenomenon known as the Sutter Buttes. These peaks rise up out of the valley floor in a most unlikely manner and place. They can easily be seen from far away. The Maidu call the buttes "Spirit Mountain." Often described (tongue in cheek) as the "World's Smallest Mountain Range," it affords a wonderful place to take photographs of the unusual landscape. Unfortunately, virtually the entire area is private property. You can drive around and over some parts, but hikes must be arranged through a land trust, overseen by the Middle Mountain Foundation. Visitors can learn about the Sutter Buttes, and arrange to join one of the many hiking excursions, by visiting the Community Memorial Museum of Sutter County (in Yuba City).

If you are looking for a museum that has the most exhibits and covers the most history about the area, it's worth the 45-minute drive to Grass Valley to visit the Nevada County Historical Society's Northstar Mine Powerhouse & Pelton Wheel Museum. From the early days of California's Gold Rush — where picks and shovels were primarily used — through the advent of hydraulic mining, and then deep quartz mining, this museum has it all.

Of course there are plenty of other interesting things to see and do beyond those that I've described, most just a day trip away. Maybe we'll see you there. Gayle and I are already planning our next sojourn. ♦



Ken Reid is a freelance writer and photographer who travels extensively with his wife, Gayle, in their Southwind motorhome. Ken is also a frequent contributor to various travel magazines.




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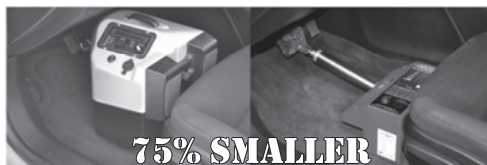


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North of Vancouver, British Columbia, there's a strip of waterfront called "the Sunshine Coast" filled with colorful art, great restaurants, thrilling nature-based activities and gorgeous water views. But "the Coast" as residents call it, should be called "the Secret Coast" for how few RVers know about its treasures. We took a few days to discover this paradise for ourselves.

The drive from Portland, Oregon, to Vancouver takes seven to eight hours and, as usual, we don't leave town until 7 p.m.

It's a three-day weekend so our late start enables us to skirt the traffic and we sail up Interstate 5 through Seattle, Washington. When we reach Bellingham, Washington, we're weary and glad we're booked at neat-as-a-pin Bellingham RV Park. Our full-hookup gravel site is blessedly level and surprisingly quiet, despite its freeway proximity.

We have ferry reservations so we're out early and can't enjoy the park's amenities. But we make a note to stop here on future sojourns.

BRITISH COLUMBIA'S 'SECRET' SUNSHINE COAST



We zip through the border in 30 minutes and, on Highway 99, take Exit 32 to the Richmond Country Farms stand. Veggie aren't allowed to cross the border so this is a great place to buy local blueberries, corn and tomatoes.

Northbound traffic cuts through downtown Vancouver. There's a bypass, but we miss it and get tangled in noon-time traffic. Our 25-foot Class C Greyhawk feels like a giant beast navigating congested city streets and it's an hour before we clear the city.

A FERRY RIDE AWAY

Fortunately, we've made a reservation with BC Ferries on the Horseshoe Bay-Langdale ferry and we cruise into line with time to spare. Traveling the province's waterways via ferry is easy and convenient for RVers — and the only way to reach the Sunshine Coast. BC Ferries routinely transports motorhomes and they're fast, on time and cruise through gorgeous waterways.

On the ferry, we snug up behind another RV and head upstairs where there's passenger seating, a cafeteria and a gift

shop. On the outer decks, we snap photos of forested islands and the emerald water.

Forty minutes later, we disembark and churn past the little town of Gibsons to Sechelt, one of the largest villages on the Coast. Sechelt is a walkable town filled with cafés, bakeries and one-of-a-kind shops. We stop at the visitors center to get our bearings and pick up maps.

Since our puppies have been on the road too long, we

EXTENDING 110 MILES ALONG THE STRAIT OF GEORGIA, FROM HOWE SOUND TO DESOLATION SOUND, **THIS CANADIAN WEST COAST WONDERLAND IS FILLED WITH COASTAL BAYS, UNCROWDED CAMPGROUNDS AND OLD-GROWTH FORESTS**

by BOBBIE HASSELBRING



Kayaking in Smuggler Cove is a fun and peaceful way to enjoy the Sunshine Coast. Opposite page, top to bottom: This cedar in Hidden Grove has been “culturally modified” by local First Nations people who take the bark strips (without harming the tree) to make baskets and other items. Visitors find a rich tribal presence on the Sunshine Coast, including totem poles carved by First Nations artists. Vistas seen from hiking trails along the Sunshine Coast can be spectacular.

BRITISH COLUMBIA'S 'SECRET' SUNSHINE COAST



A fiber artist working on a loom at FibreWorks Studio & Gallery.

Kayaking brings visitors near million-dollar homes along the Coast.

head east to Hidden Grove, a wonderful old-growth preserve that allows dogs. We step into this shady, green oasis of cedars and Douglas firs and road stresses melt. Our dogs romp beneath 500-year-old giants along gentle paths (including two wheelchair-accessible trails) and we all work off some energy.

Then we drive a couple of miles to Target Marine, a land-based sturgeon hatchery for Northern Divine, a caviar *Travel and Leisure* magazine calls some of the world's best. Sales manager Theresa Logan takes us on a brief tour where

200,000 small sturgeon (smolts) swim. In a larger tank, dozens of larger fish — up to 350 pounds or more — float lazily. These fish are raised for 10 to 15 years on organic feed before they're harvested and we watch workers process the shiny black eggs. We taste the soft, briny caviar and understand why this black gold is in high demand. We buy some caviar and a 5-pound chunk of sturgeon.

It's getting dark, so we head south to Roberts Creek Provincial Park located just off Highway 101. This park doesn't have hookups, but it has potable water,

pit toilets and a dump station, and the 21 sites are big and deeply forested with fire rings and picnic tables. The park also has hiking trails and, at \$18, it's a bargain.

SEA KAYAKING AND BOAT TOURS

The next day, we meet our guide from Halfmoon Sea Kayaks. The only way to really appreciate the Sunshine Coast is to get on the water and kayaking its bays and inlets allows you to really see its beauty. We don life jackets, snug into the skinny crafts and paddle out. The water is so clear we can see purple, yellow and or-



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ange sea stars pasted on the rocks below. We paddle by waterfront homes — some modest, others palatial — and stretches of undeveloped land sculpted with rugged granite and dotted with artful orange madrone (arbutus) trees.

We paddle for a few hours and then pull into Smuggler Cove, a protected inlet. We drag our boats onto shore and enjoy chicken sandwiches. On our return voyage, several harbor seals play peek-a-boo with our kayaks, their gray-and-white spotted heads and puppy-dog eyes peering soulfully at us just above the waves.

After kayaking, we follow a friend's suggestion and motor down a narrow road to the fishing village of Garden Bay on Pender Harbour. On the way, we stop at Flying Anvil Studio, an eclectic iron workshop selling giant garden gongs. The shop also offers glass, ceramic and wood artwork by local artists. There are many artists on the Sunshine Coast (a brochure lists more than 60) and, if an artist displays the special purple banner, it means "Come on in."

In Garden Bay, Fisherman's Resort and Marina offers only four gravel-topped RV sites, two full-service, two water and electric. Fisherman's has picnic tables, clean showers, laundry, and flat sites (maximum length 28 feet) and it's a perfect "secret" spot. The owner calls his friend, who operates the Slow Cat, and Captain Paul takes us on a leisurely hour-long tour of Pender Harbour complete with colorful tales of pirates and rum running.

By now we've worked up an appetite. Back in the motorhome, we cook up sturgeon steaks and sit under the awning listening to the water gently lap against boats in the marina.

ARTWORKS AND FOOD

The next morning we're eager to see the work of more Sunshine Coast artists. They aren't hard to find. Along Highway 101, there's a grouping of yurts connected by wooden decks housing FibreWorks Studio & Gallery, the largest fiber-art collection on the Coast. Owner Yvonne Stowell shows us the gallery and teaching space. In one



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At neat-as-a-pin Bellingham RV Park in Washington, the sites are level and it's quiet, despite the park's proximity to the freeway.



At the Horseshoe Bay-Langdale ferry terminal, BC Ferries whisks RVers and their rigs across the water to the Sunshine Coast.

yurt, the Wednesday Weavers, a group of would-be fiber artists, are learning the ins and outs of weaving from a master.

Just down the road in Madeira Park, we meet Cindy Cantelon, artist and owner of Copper Sky Gallery and Café. Cantelon has melded her love of food and passion for art into a thriving community meeting space. People come for freshly baked breads, scones, cookies, sandwiches, soups and salads and the artwork. The

café walls are festooned with paintings and photos from local artists and oversized metal works by her artist-husband. We enjoy toasted Reuben sandwiches, freshly brewed coffee, and gluten-free brownies and wander the gallery-gift shop's collection of glass, jewelry and Cantelon's metal animals in green-and-gold patinas.

We spend the rest of the afternoon looking for purple artist banners. We visit potters, painters, and glass artists and the

work leaves us dazzled. Unfortunately, some home studios are located down tiny, gravel lanes or driveways our Class C can't navigate so we pass them by.

NORTH TO POWELL RIVER/LUND

After another quiet night at Fisherman's Marina, we head north. The temperature is in the 70s, but forest maples show the first blush of fall. Past Madeira Park, the road narrows, angles inland and becomes

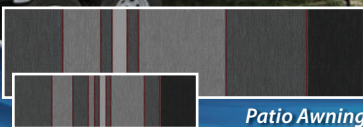
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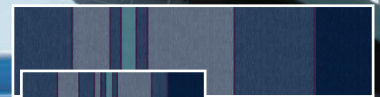
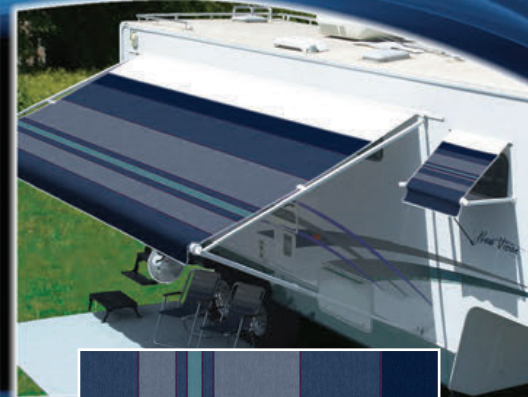
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twistier. We pass Ruby Lake, a long fresh-water lake where a lone water skier carves S's in the mirrored surface.

At the end of the highway, we hop a BC Ferry (Earls Cove-Saltrey Bay) to the farthest end of the Coast. After the 50-minute ferry ride, we check out Saltrey Bay Provincial Park, another forested campground perfect for RVs. We walk the dogs on a short hiking trail to Mermaid Cove, a popular dive site. We're tempted to camp here, but a mountain lion has recently been spotted nearby so we press on.

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The northern part of the Coast is wilder and less inhabited. Homes and businesses are few and the roadway hugs the water with spectacular views. We pull into Powell River, an amalgam of four small communities. Westview, the first and largest, is the new Powell River and its downtown is a gathering of older buildings and quaint shops. On the outskirts are grocery stores, gas stations and modern conveniences.

The heart of Westview is Willingdon Beach Park, a large green space with a bandstand, play area, waterpark and a rail bed converted to a walking path. Next door is Willingdon Beach Campsite, a big shady RV park. The Campsite offers large spaces with hookups. Sites on the beach, like ours, have electric only (no water), but great views. Tired from our travels, we walk the dogs and wander the beach.

Our next stop is Powell River Historic Townsite, the historic mill town that started Powell River. The big pulp mill still operates, its giant metal towers looming over downtown belching steam. A handful of entrepreneurs are breathing life back into

this historic place with a movie theater, a brewery, a restaurant and a hotel and café.

Late in the afternoon, we drive to Lund, the last town on the Coast and Mile 0 of Highway 101 stretching from Canada to Mexico. Lund is little more than a dock and marina surrounded by a scattering of businesses, including Nancy's Bakery where they make killer cinnamon buns, Pollen Sweaters where they knit "working sweaters" that last for years and Terracentric Coastal Adventures where we join outdoor educator Christine for a zodiac tour.

We snug on life vests and board a rigid-bottom pontoon boat. It's amazingly smooth and quiet as Captain Christine, an area native, motors onto the water. It's hard to take in all the beauty of Desolation Sound — forested islands, craggy with granite, green with fir and cedar, golden with madrone trees. The sky and water have turned pewter and I pull my fleece around me against the chill.

Christine knows the area's geology and flora and fauna. She points out a low, light-green mossy-like growth. "That's

reindeer lichen," she says. "Up close the branches look like reindeer antlers. With the recent rain, it's puffed up like a sponge."

We motor past a pile of Stellar sea lions lounging on a small rock island, their big bodies robed in reddish or tawny yellow fur. These marine creatures, which are threatened in the North Pacific, can weigh more than 2,000 pounds. As we pass, mothers bark to their pups.

Back on land, our stomachs sound like sea lions so we drive to Laughing Oyster, a favorite local eatery in Powell River. We'll camp tonight at Garnet Rock Oceanside Resort, a full-service RV park 45 minutes south of Lund, with commanding water views. But for now, we're enjoying sautéed halibut and shrimp with light-as-air Hollandaise as the sun sets over the water, toasting the Sunshine Coast, our secret place. ♦



Bobbie Hasselbring is a frequent contributor to *MotorHome* and editor of www.realfoodtraveler.com, which covers authentic food and travel. Bobbie owns a Class C Jayco Greyhawk SS.

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"One fish. Two fish. Red fish. Blue fish ... Say! What a lot of fish there are."

— Dr. Seuss

FLORIDA'S SPORT FISHING HOT SPOTS

THE SUNSHINE STATE LURES ANGLERS FROM AROUND THE WORLD TO ITS WATERS

by DAVE G. HOUSER



It could be that while pen-ning this imaginative phrase in his best-selling 1960 children's book, Dr. Seuss had Florida in mind. After all, the Sunshine State is literally swimming with fish — and with millions of anglers who choose to chase their finny prey on Florida's bountiful rivers, lakes and ocean waters.

A case could be made, in fact, that Florida reigns as the Fishing Capital of America. According to the latest statistics posted by the American Sportfishing Association, Florida ranked No. 1 among all states with 2.1 million visiting fishermen. The state also topped the list for most resident anglers — 3.1 million — far outdistancing

Top: Bass fishing on Lake Okeechobee isn't just for the guys. Melinda Renner of Charlo, New Brunswick, Canada, caught a half-dozen largemouth bass on her first outing with Capt. Mark Shepard. **Right:** The charter boat *Lo Que Sea*, captained by Glen Cameron, intercepted a school of dolphin fish (mahimahi) off Fort Pierce, Florida, and all lines were in the water as they prepared to haul in a catch of the colorful game fish.

PHOTOS: DAVE G. HOUSER





Ernie's Bass Pond, with its bald cypress island, offers free fishing to children at Highland Park Fish Camp near Deland, Florida.



Left: Highland Park Fish Camp offers guided bass trips, a campground and boat rentals. **Below:** Jordan Calpus, William Calpus and John Reed display their catch of hard-fighting, great-tasting dolphin fish (mahimahi), which were hooked during their offshore trip onboard the charter boat *Lo Que Sea*.



second-place Texas with 2.5 million.

The reason is simple: Florida anglers are blessed with 12,000 miles of fishable streams, rivers and waterways, more than 3 million acres of lakes, ponds and reservoirs, and 1,350 miles of ocean coastline. All that water provides habitat for 40 species of freshwater fish and more than 80 saltwater species — so Seuss wasn't just imagining all those fishes.

Statistics, however, simply don't speak to the pure joy of escaping the grind, getting out on the water and ultimately feeling the resounding strike of a big bass, tarpon or sailfish. Which serves to remind us of that popular old saying, "A bad day of fishing is always better than a good day at work."

Seeking out the best places to fish in my home state of Florida, I began musing over that familiar mantra, asking myself why couldn't a good day at work also be a good day of fishing? So I'm going to work here to pinpoint some of the Sunshine State's fishing hot spots. Problem is, there's so doggone many of them that it's hard to decide where to begin. But let's start at the top to get things rolling.

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FLORIDA'S SPORT FISHING HOT SPOTS



The hurricane gate at Clewiston Marina is among a number of such gates and an extensive dike/levee system built by the Corps of Engineers in the 1930s to help protect against the likes of the devastating storm of 1928 that took the lives of thousands and destroyed entire towns on Lake Okeechobee's southern shores.

as "The World's Luckiest Fishing Village." The waterfront here is chockablock with charter boats ready to take you into the Gulf of Mexico for an opportunity to catch game fish from a list that seems unending — blue marlin, white marlin, sailfish, swordfish, tuna, mahimahi, wahoo, snapper and grouper to name the most popular.

Unless you happen to own a boat capable of offshore cruising, equipped with the gear needed for big-game fishing — not to mention the knowledge necessary to find the fish — you'll be destined (no pun intended) to book a charter. A reputable source for such arrangements is VIP Fishing Charters (888-965-7390, www.vipfishingcharters.com). This Fort Lauderdale-based marketing/brokerage firm arranges charters statewide and handles bookings for a pair of Destin's most outstanding sportfishing vessels, the 57-foot, 11-passenger *Back Down II* and *S/F Relentless*, a 65-foot beauty that also accommodates up to 11 anglers. Before you balk at the cost of such an undertaking, which ranges for the aforementioned craft from \$840 for a half day to about \$1,600 for a full-day charter, there are a number of things you should consider.

Assemble a group, including family members or friends who might like to go along simply for the fun of it, and the cost per person drops accordingly — probably to no more than one would spend for a day of golf or an outing at Disney World. Consider too the ease and convenience of having everything taken care of for you — licenses, bait, tackle and equipment — plus the benefit of having a skilled and experienced captain who knows where to find those denizens of the deep. You'll also

come to appreciate the hard-working crew who keep you baited up, gaff and land your catch and later filet and pack your fish on ice. Add all this up and you'll see the value inherent in booking a charter.

FLORIDA KEYS

Let's head down south now to the Florida Keys, that 125-mile-long string of 800 sparkling islets extending from the mainland to Key West. Many piscatorial pundits will argue that the Keys offer Florida's, if not the world's, finest fishing.

The waters of the Atlantic and Gulf converge here in a warm swirl attracting huge numbers of game fish including marlin, sailfish, tuna, swordfish, kingfish, mahimahi, grouper and a variety of sharks for those who choose to target the toothy creatures.

Key West is homeport to a couple of excellent sportfishing vessels that also can be booked through VIP Fishing Charters. *Absolute* is a nimble 40-footer that welcomes up to six people and goes out fully equipped at \$650 for a half-day charter and \$950 for the full day. Then there's the *Garlington*, an ultra-luxurious 61-foot fishing yacht decked out in leather, teak and granite that commands considerably more dollars. Let's put it this way: If you have to ask, you probably can't afford it.

On another note, the Keys offers some of the best inshore fishing anywhere in the country, thanks to its myriad islets surrounded by shallow water flats dotted with stands of mangrove that provide ideal cover for bonefish, tarpon, permit and snook.

I can tell you from personal experience that this is one of the most exciting



Located just minutes from the Atlantic Ocean and nestled in a 38-acre natural Florida hammock with its own fishing lake, Road Runner Travel Resort is one of south Florida's finest RV campgrounds.

and demanding kinds of fishing you'll ever undertake. Standing barefoot on the bow of a miniscule 16-foot skiff and fly-casting for tarpon that you can see in the gin-clear water no more than 40 feet away is challenging enough, but when you hook one of these big monsters you hit the water and hang on for a long, hard fight that will leave you arm-weary and exhausted. I guarantee you it's a thrill of a lifetime. If you've a mind to try it, ask VIP to put you in touch with flats-fishing expert Yancy Perkins, a guide they describe simply as "awesome."

TARPON CAPITAL OF THE WORLD

A couple of guides I know tell me that Charlotte Harbor and the Boca Grande Pass, over on the Gulf side near Fort Myers, is another great place for inshore angling. It's often billed, in fact, as the "Tarpon Capital of the World." A reputable local guide is Roger Crafton (941-270-1528, or email bocafish@ewol.com).

FLORIDA'S ATLANTIC COAST

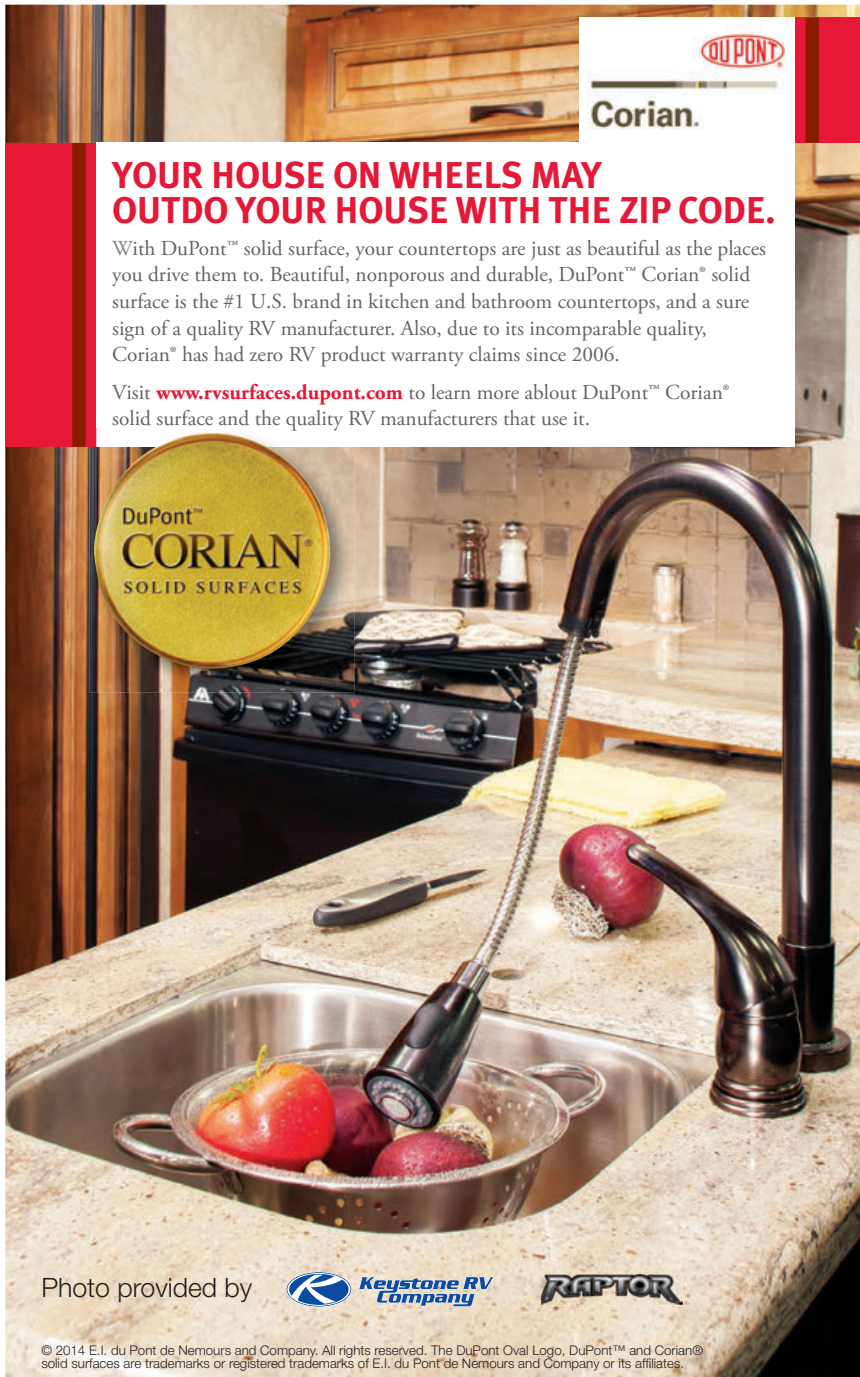
Florida's wave-swept 450-mile-long Atlantic coastline is rife with great angling possibilities. Due to space limitations, I just can't elaborate on them all, but I can share one Atlantic offshore experience of my own. Last March I was invited to join a group onboard the sportfisher *Lo Que Sea*. We were under the command of Captain Glen Cameron, a decorated skipper with a long list of pro tournament wins, for an offshore foray out of Fort Pierce Marina. Roiling seas made the 16-mile trip out to the fertile fringe of the Gulf Stream somewhat uncomfortable (Bonine to the rescue!) but thanks to Cameron's skillful read of the water, and some help from circling seabirds, we managed to tie into several

schools of mahimahi and extricated eight 25 pounders of the species, sometimes referred to as dolphin fish.

For all the excitement surrounding saltwater angling, I've always favored freshwater fishing — for bass in particular — and have found no better place than Florida to kindle my passion. So in saving the best for last, I'll take you to a pair of my favorite locations – Lake Okeechobee and the St. Johns River.

LAKE OKEECHOBEE

Measuring 730 square miles, "Big O" is the nation's largest lake contained within the boundaries of a single state and is second only to Lake Michigan overall. More to the point, it is one big bass factory. Searching for a guide, I contacted Todd Kersey at Bass Online (888-629-2277, www.bassonline.com), an organization like VIP that markets and coordinates fishing trips through a hand-picked network of





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the state's best bass guides. Kersey put me in touch with veteran guide and tournament pro Capt. Mark Shepard in Clewiston on the lake's southern shore.

I met Shepard at Jolly Roger Marina at zero dark 30 on an April morn in the company of my friend Melinda Renner, visiting from her home in New Brunswick, Canada. Melinda's a lawyer and not at all into fishing, but she seemed eager to give it a try. We dumped a couple dozen wriggling shiners — the live bait of choice here on the Big O — into the live well on Shepard's 20-foot Ranger bass boat and motored out onto the lake just as the sun was peeking up over the water. We'd hardly had time to marvel in the beauty of it when Shepard eased the boat to a halt next to a stand of Kissimmee grass, a spot he described as his favorite "honey hole."

Thus the stage was set for an action-packed fishing spree. In little more than two hours we'd netted and released 20 largemouth bass, most in the 3- to



South Bay RV Park, located at the southern tip of Lake Okeechobee, is an immaculate full-service campground (with an adjacent boat ramp), operated and maintained by Palm Beach County Parks & Recreation Department.

5-pound range (on 24 shiners!). Under Shepard's patient tutelage, Renner soon joined the fray, landing well more than her share of fish. Shepard says he's found that women often make better anglers than do men. "They're more patient," he notes, "and they listen better." It must be said, however, that it was yours truly who netted the big one — a 7½-pound largemouth — a lunker weighing in just shy of an 8-pounder that recently won a Big O pro tournament for Shepard.

It was a great day of fishing that veritably repeated itself a few days later on the hidden backwaters of the St. Johns River near Deland.

ST. JOHNS RIVER

Nestled on 30 cypress-forested acres next to Lake Woodruff National Wildlife Refuge and connected to the St. Johns River system by a canal, Highland Park Fish Camp (800-525-3477, www.hpfishcamp.com) stands at the heart of a backwoods fantasyland — hardly more than a stone's throw from Orlando with its aggregation of theme parks.

A rustic reminder of "old Florida," the camp has been owned and operated by the Rawlins family for 51 years, and it takes due pride in its reputation as the foundation of freshwater fishing in central Florida.

Renner and I had the good fortune to join elder statesman and lead guide, Capt. Ron Rawlins, to test our developing skills against the St. Johns' wily bass. Crappie, bluegill and other panfish are plentiful here as they are at Okeechobee,

but it is the largemouth that remains the favorite of most sportfishers. HP's rates — half day at \$275 and full day for \$400 — are right in line with those of Shepard at Okeechobee and most other Florida freshwater guides.

Weaving our way along a network of backwater byways, gliding through a misty mélange of primeval forest, marsh and swamp, we were so hyped by the scenery and countless sightings of birds — heron, egret, spoonbill, osprey — and 'gators by the dozen, that fishing almost seemed a sideshow to this parade of nature.

We soon focused on our quarry, however, anchoring about 10 yards off a mat of lily pads fringing the river's bank, where Rawlins gave us the lowdown on casting our baitfish (wild shiners again) right up next to the pads. He added just a bit of weight to the leader so as to prompt the shiner to swim in under the pads — and into the waiting grasp of hungry bass.

It worked for me as I netted several nice 2- to 5-pound fish in quick succession. Renner soon latched onto the technique too, earning top-fish-of-the-day honors with a fat 6-pounder. It wasn't long before we'd filled a rather large cooler with fish for us to take home. This nice mess of fillets would serve as a succulent reminder of our memorable morning on the St. Johns. A lasting reminder, as well, that Florida rules the nation as First in Fishing. ♦



Florida-based writer/photographer Dave G. Houser has contributed regularly to *MotorHome* magazine since 1985.

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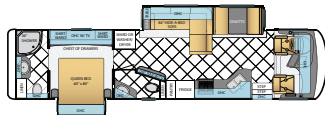


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Your Price

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Two-Year Warranty!

Spartan chassis, 450HP Cummins diesel, 2-stage Jake brake, Aqua-Hot!

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Your Price

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Savings \$89,262



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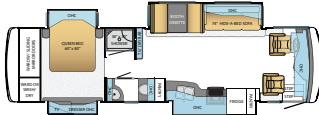


MSRP **\$215,693**

Your Price
\$169,995

Savings \$45,698

400HP ISL Cummins Diesel, Comfort Drive steering, 8K Watt Onan generator.



*All Units Are 2013 Unless Otherwise Noted.

Newmar Dutch Star 4344



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Your Price
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TOURING TUSCANY

THOR'S FLAGSHIP DIESEL PUSHER OFFERS ABUNDANT STANDARD FEATURES IN A COMFORTABLE, WELL-PRICED PACKAGE

by CHRIS HEMER



Above left to right: Massive full-wall slide on the curbside houses a two-place expandable dinette, 60-inch LED flat-screen TV, fireplace and double-door residential refrigerator. Cockpit is drivercentric with all controls within easy reach.



2015 THOR TUSCANY 45AT

WHAT'S HOT

Full-wall slideout
Roomy half-bath
Awesome entertainment center

WHAT'S NOT

Fit-and-finish issues
Unusable sofa bed
Tiny wardrobe

Among the many hallmarks that signify a high-end motorhome, a tag axle has got to be one of the most prominent. That third set of wheels tells the world that you're rolling in one of the biggest coaches available, and that your uncompromising nature won't be satisfied by something as modest as, say, a 40-footer. Tag-axle diesel pushers represent a manufacturer's best effort, leaving no expense spared when it comes to construction, equipment and furnishings. Wherever you go, it commands respect and inspires awe — even from the uninitiated.

As one of the largest manufacturers in the RV industry, you would expect Thor Motorcoach to offer its own entry in the larger-than-life diesel pusher category, and it does — several, actually. Its flagship Tuscany line is offered in a total of six floorplans ranging from the 41-foot 40KQ to the 45-foot 45AT, the unit we tested.

Thor is North America's No. 1 motorhome brand for good reason — the company's economy of scale allows it to build the products its customers want at a surprisingly low price. Now, we realize what constitutes "low" is subjective, but when we asked casual observers how much the test coach cost, most guessed \$.5 million to \$1 million dollars, and were shocked to learn that the base price was actually \$395,525. Who could blame them? The Tuscany is a beautiful motorhome, with its full-body Mystique paint scheme (one of three available), polished aluminum wheels and expansive one-piece windshield.

Delivering a coach of this magnitude for less than \$400,000 obviously requires some cost-cutting measures, but when done properly, they don't show. Unfortunately, what did show on the test unit was an apparent lack of quality control, fit and finish

in several areas. There was a large, rough-hewn gouge at the edge of the living area tile that we can only imagine was there for some sort of slide mechanism clearance issue, but surely there must be a better solution than this. The windshield gasket wasn't glued into place and began to unravel even before it was delivered to our offices, and the driver's-side mirror had come loose and was spinning in the wind. About an hour's time cured the latter two issues, but in our opinion, these things shouldn't happen on a \$12,000 economy car, let alone a luxury coach.

Looking past these issues, we prepared the coach for testing. As you would expect in a motorhome of this size, the basement storage is enormous, making our chairs, patio rug, barbecue and other essentials look like a shovelful of dirt in the Grand Canyon. The doors are all side opening and slam latch, which is nice, but what we really appreciated is that the baggage doors can all be locked or unlocked with the push of a key fob. Anyone who's had to pack or unpack a large motorhome, and fuss with ill-fitting keys, will love this feature. The entry door locks and unlocks with the same key fob.

The Tuscany's Freightliner XC chassis, with its 450-hp Cummins engine, was well sorted, stable and a pleasure to drive overall. Its air suspension soaked up bumps with aplomb, and its brakes in particular were excellent — especially when aided by the two-stage Jacobs engine brake. The steering has an impressive 60-degree wheel cut for excellent maneuverability, but we did notice a shudder in the wheel at about 60 MPH — no doubt a minor alignment issue. To Thor's credit, the interior was among the most quiet we've experienced; there were very few rattles from the furniture or appliances, and the engine was practically inaudible at any speed.



King-size bed is comfy, but storage around the bed is sparse. Tiny nightstands aren't even wide enough to hold a book or a glass of water. Overhead cabinets are small, too.

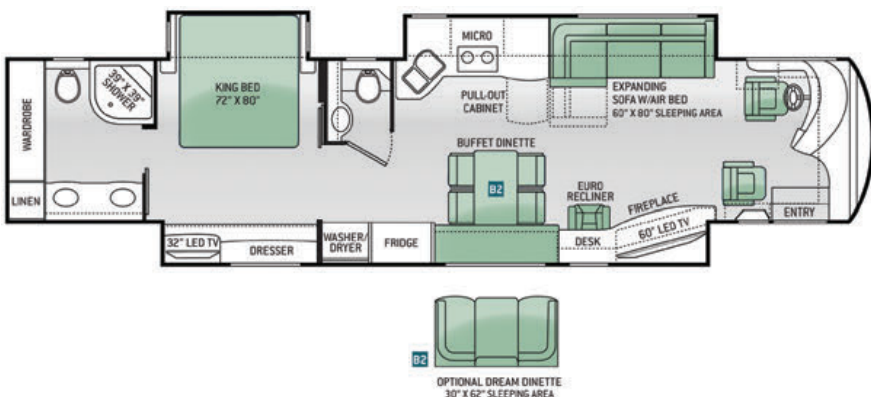
The Tuscany's cockpit is driver-centric, meaning that all of the instruments and controls are facing the driver. For the most part this is a good idea, but it also means that the co-pilot can't operate the navigation function on the touchscreen dash radio/CD/DVD player. The screen also displays the rear view when shifting into reverse, and is supposed to display side views when changing lanes, but we found this function to be almost completely ineffective. The monitor took a few seconds to display the appropriate side of the coach once the turn signal is activated, then stayed on for roughly seven seconds after the turn or lane change is completed. After a few minutes on the road, the right side camera ceased to function completely.

As we rounded the first left-hander, more quality issues became evident. True to its name, the galley's pullout cabinet pulled out with an alarming crash, and the rear bath pocket doors followed suit. We solved the former by wedging a dinette chair and cushion into place, and

the latter by placing the doors back on their tracks. Clearly, better hardware and/or construction methods should be employed in these areas.

The 45AT living area utilizes a huge full-wall slide on the curbside, as well as a large street-side slideout. Once these are deployed, you are greeted by an elegant and open space with light porcelain tile, high-gloss glazed Resort Cherry hardwood cabinetry and solid-surface countertops finished with a sort of antique patina. The brown L-shaped Ultraleather sofa provides nice contrast, and the pullout cabinet extends right alongside it to provide a residential kitchen/living area experience.

Opposite the sofa is an ideally placed, 60-inch LED HDTV that was so large, most guests mistook it for a pane of tinted glass — and its picture was so clear, we considered surreptitiously removing it and putting the 42-inch model from our home in its place. Kidding, of course, but it's the nicest TV we've seen in a coach to date, and the Blu-ray/DVD surround-sound system was impressive as



SPECIFICATIONS

CHASSIS

MODEL: FREIGHTLINER XC
ENGINE: CUMMINS ISL
SAE HP: 450 HP @ 2,100 RPM
TORQUE: 1,250 LB-FT @ 1,400 RPM
TRANSMISSION: ALLISON 3000MH
FRONT TIRES: 295/80R 22.5
REAR TIRES: 295/80R 22.5
WHEELBASE: 287"
BRAKES: AIR DISC WITH ABS
SUSPENSION: NEWAY AIR REAR, ZF INDEPENDENT AIR FRONT
FUEL CAP: 150 GAL
FUEL ECONOMY: 6.2 MPG
WARRANTY: 3 YEARS/50,000 MILES

COACH

EXT LENGTH: 44' 11"
EXT WIDTH: 8' 5"
EXT HEIGHT: 12' 9"
INT WIDTH: 8'
INT HEIGHT: 7'
CONSTRUCTION: FULLY WELDED TUBULAR STEEL FLOOR, WELDED TUBULAR ALUMINUM ROOF AND SIDE WALL, VACUBOND LAMINATED ROOF, WALLS AND FLOORS, FIBERGLASS ROOF, ONE-PIECE FIBERGLASS FRONT AND REAR CAPS, BLOCK FOAM INSULATION
FRESHWATER CAP: 91 GAL
GRAY-WATER CAP: 51 GAL
BLACK-WATER CAP: 51 GAL
LP-GAS CAP: N/A (ALL ELECTRIC)
AIR CONDITIONER: (3) 15,000 BTU W/HEAT PUMP
FURNACE/HOT WATER: AQUAHOT 65,000 BTU
REFRIGERATOR: 20-CU-FT RESIDENTIAL
INVERTER/CHARGER: 2,000-WATT INVERTER/100 AMPS
BATTERY: (2) 12-VOLT CHASSIS, (4) 12-VOLT COACH
AC GENERATOR: 10-KW DIESEL
MSRP: \$395,525
MSRP AS TESTED: \$396,961
WARRANTY: 1 YEAR/15,000 MILES

WET WEIGHT


(WATER & HEATER, FUEL, LP-GAS TANKS FULL; NO SUPPLIES OR PASSENGERS)
FRONT AXLE: 13,100 LBS
REAR AXLE/TAG AXLE: 22,800 LBS
TOTAL: 35,900 LBS

CHASSIS RATINGS

GAWR, F/R/TAG: 14,600 LBS/20,000 LBS/10,000 LBS
GVWR/GCWR: 44,600 LBS/59,600 LBS
ROCCC: 8,700 LBS

GAWR: GROSS AXLE WEIGHT RATING
GVWR: GROSS VEHICLE WEIGHT RATING
GCWR: GROSS COMBINATION WEIGHT RATING
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Clockwise from above: Dual vanities in the master bath have an abundance of woodwork and lots of counterspace. Cockpit seats swivel and recline, but adjustments for armrest height are difficult to reach and operate. Corner shower is roomy, mirrored wardrobe is not.

well as easy to use. The standard electric fireplace placed underneath the TV further added to the residential feel.

Immediately to the right of the TV is a comfortable and sleek Euro recliner (not pictured) and a desk area with drawer, which would be a nice place to work on a laptop, pay bills, etc. Also on this side is the extendable dinette with seating for up to four (courtesy of two folding guest chairs) and a cabinet with a number of drawers that could be used for office supplies, placemats, etc.

As you would expect from a coach like this, the Tuscany is equipped with a state-of-the-art kitchen, including a large stainless-steel convection microwave oven and a standard electric induction cooktop with two, um, burners. Induction cooktops don't burn or even get hot to the touch, so we don't really know what else to call the two places you put pots or pans. If induction's not your thing, you can opt for a good old-fashioned LP-gas three-burner cooktop. We found there was more than enough counterspace for meal prep, and the double-bowl sink with residential-style faucet and sprayer had plenty of room for rinsing dishes before placing them in the standard drawer dishwasher, located where you'd normally find an oven.

Adjacent to the kitchen area is the half-bath, which our guests seemed to love. It's quite roomy, the sink is generously proportioned, and there's enough countertop space for a soap dispenser, hand towels or other necessities. Two tiny cabinets beneath the countertop seem perfectly sized to accommodate extra



toilet paper rolls, and beneath the sink there's additional storage for towels and what-have-you. There's also a full-size mirror and plenty of light. Across from the half-bath, aft of the double-door, residential refrigerator, is a cabinet that houses a standard stackable washer/dryer.

The rear master bedroom and en suite bath aren't quite as successful as they could be. Make no mistake — the area is plenty large and the king-size Denver mattress supremely comfortable, but we question the use of space here. For example, there are no nightstands on either side of the bed — just small ledges with narrow cabinets below. There are three rows of small cabinets above the bed as well, though we're not sure what these could, or should, be used for. Moreover, storage space in the bedroom is, well, weird. There

isn't a traditional dresser or chest of drawers at the foot of the bed — it's more like a stepped seating area with drawers.

In the bath area, there is a porcelain Thetford Tecma toilet, 39-by-39-inch neo-angle shower with glass door, and a dual vanity with abundant counterspace. There are plenty of drawers and cabinets to keep his-and-her essentials, but the one thing we found odd was the tiny mirrored master closet. We could consider it undersized for a travel trailer, not to mention a 45-foot coach ostensibly designed for two full-time travelers. There's simply not enough room here for hanging clothes, and there are no wardrobes elsewhere. Hope you like folding.

Turning in for the evening yielded some unpleasant surprises. The powered windshield shade refused to come down completely, requiring us to tape a bed sheet to its edge for privacy. Très chic. We were also dumbfounded by the fact that there is no shade for the entry door, so we had to resort to a bathroom towel here. And the expanding sofa with air bed was so awful, we didn't even attempt to use it. It was a bear to deploy, it didn't lay flat and the folded mattress array strapped to its backrest would intimidate a NASA engineer. Putting the whole mess back in place requires a degree in geometry.

The Tuscany 45AT is a nice, very well-equipped motorhome that could be a lot nicer with better quality control and more attention paid to the way people use a coach like this. With more focus on refinement and livability, the Tuscany could be a bargain in the elite tag-axle class. ♦

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GOING UNDERCOVER

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Ever find yourself surrounded by yellowing fiberglass? How about cracked awnings? Or how about caked-on bug guts or bird droppings? These are all symptoms of one of the most inexcusable oversights in the RV lifestyle, and one needs only to stroll around the RV park to view this easily preventable RV malady face to face. Simply put, protecting your motorhome with a quality cover is absolutely necessary to help prolong the integrity of the coach's structure, not to mention keeping it looking good — when storing without the benefits of a garage or carport.

But it seems not everyone is convinced. In fact, there are several RV storage facilities near my central Texas home, and I am bewildered at the number of uncovered rigs, especially in a climate that can vary by 50 to 60 degrees ... in a matter of hours. That's a dangerous game when it comes to protecting the exterior of your investment. "UV and sun damage can be quite severe over time, especially in the South," said Lyndon Pohl, Eevelle director of marketing. "UV rays can break down exterior finishes such as paint, and also plastics and joint caulking. The results can be anything from faded and peeling paint to a leaky roof." But the damage doesn't stop on the outside. "Another factor to consider is that the interior of the RV can be damaged from prolonged UV exposure as well," said Pohl. "All of the interior plastics are

subject to fading, cracking and becoming brittle. The same is true of the interior fabrics. Exposure to direct sunlight will fade materials and cause premature wear."

Ideally, the way to avoid all that nasty sun damage is to park your motorhome in a covered, climate-controlled garage, and keep it free from the harsh extremes of seasonal weather. But we here in the real world understand that "ideal" is often far-fetched, so "near-ideal" becomes more of a reality. Covering your coach with a quality, nicely fitting cover is the closest you can come to the protection afforded by a covered garage, and it's exponentially more practical (and more affordable than you may think). With wide-ranging prices beginning around \$200 and rising to more than \$1,000 for certain (valuable) additions, there's virtually no reason you shouldn't make an investment to protect your coach. And, because of that wide range in prices, you should contact each manufacturer individually with precise measurements (see sidebar) and a list of your weather-related requirements. All manufacturers do agree on one thing: Do your homework, and beware of cheap, knock-off cover brands often available at big-box stores, as they will degrade quickly with time and exposure to the elements, and can do some serious damage to your RV's finish. Now that that's clear, following are some of the top cover manufacturers in the business, along with their best product offerings.



ADCO Tyvek

ADCO

ADCO covers are available in universal and custom configurations. “If the consumer is on a budget or doesn’t know how long they will own their RV,” recommends Morgan Ein, Managing Partner at ADCO Products, “there are two universal-fit options to choose from: ADCO’s **Designer Series SFS AquaShed** for short-term storage or moderate climates with more rain than sun; or **DuPont Tyvek** for long-term storage in high-UV and/or snow locations.” Both product lines feature three-ply polypropylene side walls while the roof of each cover features the SFS AquaShed or the DuPont Tyvek RV fabrics.

The SFS AquaShed roof is comprised of a three-layer fabric, with the outer two layers being polypropylene and the middle layer a micro-porous high-tech film that allows moisture to pass through while enabling proper breathing as well. The gray AquaShed is designed to be used in moderate climates or for short-term storage.

DuPont Tyvek RV roof fabric is engineered to block up to 98 percent of dirt and dust particles larger than 3 microns, and also blocks up to 99.8 percent of damaging UV rays, according to DuPont. Tyvek RV is also resistant to solvents, acids and alkalis, offering the RV improved protection from bird droppings and the dreaded acid-type rain. The off-white fabric is available in contour-fit and custom-fit configurations.

Produced in custom-fit covers only, ADCO’s Sunbrella fabric by Glen Raven Mills is made from woven acrylic, making it resistant to cold cracking. The (tan or gray) color of the fabric is woven into the fibers as it is extruded, which enhances fade-resistance. Sunbrella fabric is recommended “For anyone who plans to own their RV for many years and wants a perfectly tailored fit from their RV cover,” said Ein. ADCO products are available at Camping World.

ADCO Products, 800-541-2326, www.adcoprod.com

CALMARK

Calmark custom-tailored covers are made to order for the specific motorhome dimensions. All Calmark covers are manufac-

tured using Sunbrella acrylic-woven fabric by Glen Raven Mills, meaning they are highly UV-rated, water-resistant, breathable and mold- and mildew-resistant. Calmark covers offer a zippered door, polyester tie-down straps, buckles and grommets for improved wind protection and a six-year warranty. Perhaps most importantly, all Calmark covers feature the company’s exclusive Fabric Stress Reinforcement (FSR), which utilizes 2-inch-wide, 1,000-pound-rated webbing sewn approximately every 4 feet across the inside top and connected to the side panels. This FSR provides the necessary support to offset the added weight and stress on the covers caused by wind, rain, snow and ice, according to the company.

Calmark Cover Co., 800-838-7236, www.calmarkcovers.com

CAMCO

Camco’s **UltraShield** covers feature a three-year warranty and provide protection for your stored motorhome with what Camco calls the lightest-weight cover in the industry. The tear-resistant woven material allows the cover to slide on easily, while the cover’s fully breathable design resists mold and mildew growth. Other features include an integrated self-adjusting hold-down system and a storage bag. Intended for use in warm, sunny regions, the UltraShield’s design improves air circulation, which reduces lofting and inside moisture. Exclusive self-adjusting hold-down strap



Camco UltraShield



Camco UltraGuard



Calmark Class A

system holds cover securely to prevent flapping.

The **UltraGuard** features a triple-layer SFS top panel designed to bead water on contact for maximum resistance to rain-fall and snow. A heavy-duty polypropylene fabric around the sides increases durability, while the vented design resists mold and mildew growth and the vent flaps reduce wind lofting and inside moisture. Other features include tough interlocking seams, an integrated self-adjusting hold-down system and a storage bag. Recommended for cold, snowy regions.

Camco Manufacturing, 800-334-2004, www.camco.net



Classic Accessories PermaPRO



Classic Accessories PolyPRO 1

CLASSIC ACCESSORIES

Classic Accessories offers three lines for varying degrees of RV protection.

The **PolyPRO 1** line features a one-ply non-woven polypropylene that is lightweight, fast drying, highly breathable and scratch resistant. Construction features include elasticized bottom corners for a snug fit; integrated D-rings at ropes to help secure to the vehicle; a storage stuff sack; and a two-year warranty.

The **PolyPRO 3** line offers the same benefits as the PolyPRO 1 line, but adds three-ply, non-woven polypropylene to the roof panel. The water-repellant roof material is comprised of a polyethylene film between two polypropylene fabric sheets for added protection and breathability. Additional benefits of the PolyPRO 3 line include multiple tension panels for a snug, more custom fit; a three-year warranty; three to five full-length panels to allow

access to vehicle doors and bump-outs; and one to three vents on each side to promote air circulation and reduce moisture buildup and mildew, in addition to reducing the “lofting” effect caused by high winds.

The top-shelf **PermaPRO** line is made of what Classic calls a “super-strong single-ply polyester with a rip-stop grid pattern.” The polyester is quick-drying, lightweight and extremely durable, and slips easily over the vehicle and accessories. The fabric has been UV-treated to increase fade-resistance, and weather-treated to repel moisture (rain and snow). PermaPRO offers an integrated under-carriage strap system with click-close straps for wind security; multiple tension panels, five to seven full-length zippered panels; three vents to reduce wind buffeting; and a four-year warranty.

Classic Accessories, 800-854-2315, www.classicaccessories.com

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• Hi Flow - 50-55psi

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Also available at other RV retailers.



EZ COIL & STORE Drinking Water Hose



- Self-coiling
- Drinking water safe
- Quick connect fittings

COVERCRAFT

Covercraft manufactures custom made-to-order RV covers. Customers submit their motorhome's measurements to the manufacturer for a custom pattern. Covercraft offers three fabrics depending on the specific protection needs.

Ultra'tect covers are designed to retain their color and strength in extended outdoor exposure, while providing a high degree of water resistance and UV protection. Ultra'tect covers were developed in partnership with Safety Components Fabric Technologies Inc. (SCFTI), a U.S. textile firm and leader in woven fabric technology with roots going back more than 100 years.

Developed primarily for intense sun environments and long-term storage, **WeatherShield HD** uses heavier denier thread for



Covercraft Class A

MEASURING UP

When it comes to measuring a motorhome before purchasing a cover, it's best to listen to what the pros say. We spoke with Morgan Ein, Managing Partner at ADCO Products, and he offered some in-depth tips based on years of experience.

"Many consumers hesitate in making that cover purchase because they are not confident that they will purchase the correct product," said Ein. "There are two main areas of concern for these folks: buying the right size and buying the right fabric (see sidebar) for their specific climate. For sizing, it's important to hand-measure the overall length of the unit. It's a mistake to assume that the RV is a certain length based on the model number of the vehicle. They rarely match. With that said, measuring can be simple. Think about what a bird's-eye view of the motorhome would be. When you look down on your coach from the sky, you would want to know the overall length from the longest two points on the motorhome, be it a bumper, spare tire or ladder. If the consumer finds the overall length to be right on the border of two sizes of covers, use the bigger model. There are built-in features to take up any extra slack in the material. Once a true length is determined, consider what fabric or model would be best suited to the storage location of the RV. Consumers who plan on owning their motorhome for many years will save time and money in the long run by investing in a custom-fit cover. These are made to order based on the exact specs of the coach. They fit better and last longer."



CARPENTER

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Avena Foam Mattress

- Two layers of premium hypoallergenic foam add more comfort and deeper support.
- 100,000 cycle testing ensures lasting comfort and durability.
- Absorbs motion so you don't disturb or wake your partner.
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- Provides total body relaxation to soothe aches and pains for a deeper, restorative sleep.



Slumberfresh Mattress Pad

- Sleep comfortably on a mattress pad overfilled with 11 oz. of RELY™ antimicrobial fiber that effectively inhibits odor-causing bacteria for longer lasting freshness.
- NanoCool™ moisture-wicking system for cooler sleep.
- Soft 300 thread count 100% cotton cover.
- The 14" stretch-to-fit skirt fits mattresses up to 17" thick.
- Hypoallergenic.
- Available in Bunk, Short Queen, Queen and RV King sizes.

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GOING UNDERCOVER



Covercraft Sunbrella

maximum UV opacity.

Due to its unique construction process, the **Sunbrella** cover provides protection and years of service in intense sun climates, where UV rays can rapidly degrade the paint and interior. Because of the use of acrylic fibers, which are naturally UV-resistant, Sunbrella has long been the recognized leader in long-wearing marine fabrics for bimini tops, sail covers and deck enclosures.

Covercraft Industries, 800-426-8377, www.rvcovers4u.com

COVERQUEST

CoverQuest is an online retailer that offers ADCO products (see above) and **Carver Covers**. Carver Covers are made from a marine-grade 8-ounce polyester that is known as Performance Poly-Guard. Performance Poly-Guard is a loom-woven polyester available in haze gray. The fabric offers what CoverQuest calls "The highest tear-strength available" and is highly UV- and fade-



CoverQuest Carver

resistant. Poly-Guard is also water-repellant and mildew-resistant, while remaining breathable to allow moisture to escape. The cover features a five-year warranty.

New products from Carver will be offered by CoverQuest sometime this fall (www.carvercovers.com).

CoverQuest, 888-726-9300, www.coverquest.com

EEVELLE

Eveville offers universal covers at varying price points designed for the RV market. All covers feature straps every 3 to 4 feet for securing to the motorhome, and vents in the fabric help combat wind buffeting, in addition to allowing moisture to pass through to help fight mold and mildew. The covers are treated with a No. 8 UV finish to help minimize sun damage.

Expedition covers are Eveville's most popular selling brand. They are made of lightweight polypropylene and feature straps

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Eevelle Goldline

and roof vents, and offer a zippered side entry. The roof of the Expedition is made of a three-layer, waterproof fabric. Eevelle also uses a proprietary "Durapel" weather-finish additive for improved protection. Expedition covers carry a three-year warranty. Look for a new-and-improved **Expedition S2** lineup coming this fall.

The top-of-the-line **Goldline** covers are made of a durable marine fabric and offer all the features of the Expedition.

All Goldline and Expedition S2 lines are made in 2-foot increments, offering a snug fit not found in other universal covers, according to the company.

Eevelle, 760-434-2231, www.eevelle.com ♦



Kristopher Bunker, the former editor of *Trailer Life* magazine, has been RVing for more than a decade and is currently a freelance writer and stay-at-home dad.

KNOW YOUR FABRICS

There are a variety of fabrics used to formulate RV covers, and each type has its own set of benefits. At first glance, buyers may become confused due to the number of different nomenclature given to each particular brand, but they all virtually follow the same principles (with added benefits and increasingly more complex names, resulting in added costs, of course).

Generally, most covers begin with polypropylene, which is a thermoplastic polymer (think blanket of pliable material) that is lightweight, fast-drying and resistant to many types of acids (such as those found in bird droppings).

Some also include the familiar polyester, which is known for wrinkle resistance, durability and high color retention.

The common bond between the two fabrics above, of course, is the prefix "poly," which means "many." A polymer is a large molecule composed of many subunits, meaning RV covers (and rubber, clothing, plastics, etc.) are comprised of complex synthetic materials, the further description of which would likely lull you into a deep, dark sleep. Suffice to say, the poly prefix (whether occurring naturally or synthetically) generally means rugged and durable.

Other materials may include the coveted Sunbrella fabric, which is interwoven with more durable acrylic for added longevity, and many manufacturers apply their own "secret" blend of synthetics for improved weather resistance. This is the material used to fabricate convertible tops on the more expensive models.



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Surge Guard Protects Your RV Against:

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BAY STAR 3124

Newmar packs big features into a midsize gas coach

Newmar is known throughout the RV industry for quality craftsmanship, and the 2014 Bay Star continues the tradition at a price that is attractive to first-time buyers. Newmar provides many luxury features in the gas-powered Bay Star line that were previously only offered in diesel pushers. Available in six impressive floorplans ranging from 29 to 33 feet, the Bay Star is built on the proven Ford F53 chassis with the Triton V-10 engine.

Launched last year, the Bay Star 3124 floorplan has great features, including a full-wall slideout, upscale furnishings, handmade cabinetry and full-body paint available in two colors, Latte and Hazelnut. The full-body paint scheme with protective finish is attractive, modern and sleek-looking. The 3124 is equipped with a large electric patio awning, and is color coded to match the full-body paint. Outside storage is plentiful, with pass-through storage bays easily accessible from both sides of the motorhome.

The Bay Star's cockpit is adorned with wood trim, easy-to-read gauges and controls for the stereo, heated power mirrors, 4 kW Cummins-Onan generator, backup monitor and the standard hydraulic auto-leveling system. The cockpit chairs are comfortable and swivel to face the cabin. Controls for the air conditioning and heat pump are placed on the wall next to the driver's seat for easy access. The Sony surround sound audio system and optional 32-inch LED TV (prewired for satellite) are mounted above the cockpit and provide theater-quality sight and sound to entertain, even if the viewing angle from the sofa isn't optimal. The cabinet above the entry door houses the tank-monitoring systems, slideout controls and battery disconnect. The panel



has been redesigned and is angled to better accommodate shorter travelers.

The Bay Star interior is available in two décor choices and three different wood options. Our test unit was outfitted with the Inca Tan interior, a combination of light browns offset by the Empire Maple wood trim. All of the overhead storage cabinets have hidden hinges that provide a very clean look. The quality cabinet design and rich wood trim are impressive. The roomy cabin has an expansive feel with integrated ceiling and overhead lights, artwork and lighted wall sconces that give the appearance of a much more expensive coach.

The highlight of the living area is the aforementioned full-wall streetside slideout that runs nearly the entire length of the coach. This feature, combined with large windows, gives the Bay Star 3124 an open, residential feel that seems bigger than 31 feet.

The Bay Star kitchen is functional and very modern. The solid-surface counters and backsplash with glass inserts are a luxury design element. A twin-basin sink with matching covers provides additional countertop space. Meal preparation is made easy with a three-burner cooktop, convection microwave and Norcold 8-cubic-foot refrigerator with black front panel. The residential-style full-extension drawers are deep and provide exceptional storage.





SPECIFICATIONS

CHASSIS: FORD F53
ENGINE: 6.8-L TRITON V-10
FUEL CAP: 80 GAL
GVWR: 20,500 LBS
EXT. LENGTH: 31' 11"
EXT. WIDTH: 8' 5"
EXT. HEIGHT: 11' 3"

INT. HEIGHT: 6' 6"
WHEELBASE: 200"
FRESHWATER CAP: 75 GAL
GRAY-WATER CAP: 60 GAL
BLACK-WATER CAP: 40 GAL
LP-GAS CAP: 25 GAL
BASE MSRP: \$119,350

NEWMAR CORP.

800-731-8300, WWW.NEWMARCORP.COM

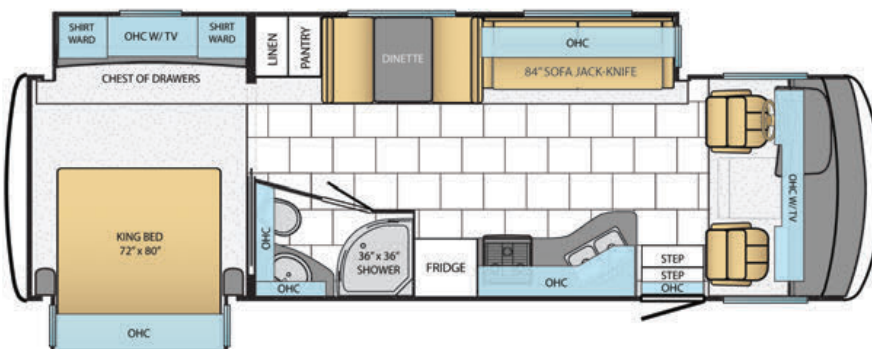
The ceiling is well-insulated and the result is a very quiet coach even while the air conditioning is in use. The vinyl flooring has the look of the Newmar Ventana without the added price. The Flexsteel sofa with braided-welt trim is comfortable and attractive, housing a queen-size pullout bed. The bed comfortably sleeps two adults, even though the mattress is a little on the soft side.

The booth dinette allows the table to easily be lowered with the touch of a button, converting into a small bed. Seating can accommodate two people per side; however, the inside person may be a little cramped by the window treatment and table leg. Two full-extension drawers beneath the dinette make good use of the space, and additional storage can be found in the full-extension pantry and linen closet located behind the dinette.

The bathroom is bright, well-lit and offers a good use of space. Other features include a 36-by-36-inch radius shower, modern fixtures and a footrest built into the bottom drawer for shorter travelers.

The bedroom offers a standard king-size bed in a comfortable retreat. The décor in the master suite is inviting with a wood-framed headboard, wainscoting on the rear wall and new bedding style. A Sony LED TV faces the bed and the two wardrobe closets have six dresser drawers beneath.

The Bay Star 3124 is a great example of the high-



quality fit and finish that Newmar is known for in a competitively priced package.

Our thanks to Tom Lindstrom RV in Southern California for providing this motorhome for our review. ♦

SMALL-SPACE WORKSTATION

ANYONE WITH BASIC SKILLS CAN
**BUILD AND INSTALL A COMPUTER
POLE DESK IN A MOTORHOME**

by DENNIS C. BREWER



PARTS LIST

- | | | |
|--|---|--|
| 1 HDMI cable to length (about 35 feet) | 3 $\frac{3}{8}$ -inch split-lock washers | 1 10-foot, 1-inch conduit (cut to length later) |
| 1 HDMI cable (4 to 6 feet) | 2 $\frac{3}{8}$ -inch flat washers | 1 Carlon or equal backless outlet box |
| 1 HDMI outlet or outlet insert | 1 VESA standard pattern two-piece TV-mounting bracket | 1 Decorative shelf bracket by Mintcraft $6\frac{7}{8}$ by $11\frac{1}{4}$ inch |
| 2 DVI-to-HDMI connector | 1 1-inch pipe floor flange | 1 Elmer's Wood Glue |
| 4 3.5-mm ($\frac{1}{8}$ -inch) wall jacks | 1 $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch pipe floor flange | |
| 1 Two-hole outlet plate | 1 $\frac{3}{4}$ -by-2-inch threaded pipe nipple | |
| 1 Three- or four-hole outlet plate | 1 1-inch compression conduit fitting | |
| 5 Split-ring 1-inch pipe hangers | 1 CAT 6 Ethernet cable to length (50 feet or less) | |
| 5 $\frac{3}{8}$ -inch-by-18 thread by $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch-long bolts | | |

PHOTOS: DENNIS C. BREWER

Few motorhomes have room for an office desk with space for a computer, a full-size monitor and the accompanying peripherals. This was an issue I encountered while living full time in my motorhome and trying to write books on my computer. I experimented with different locations in the coach for my make-do office, but none met my needs. Each area was already serving its own function extremely well and I didn't want to make major renovations. I also didn't want to give up the full functionality and expansion capability of a desktop computer.

After shopping around without success, I decided to fashion a pole desk to meet all my needs. The modification to install the desk would require only eight small holes for short screws and drilling a small path for an HDMI cable to connect the monitor to the computer. With the pole desk permanently mounted in the living space, the actual computer and all of its bulky accessories (uninterruptible power supply, printer, storage hard drives and cords) could be connected up and stored in a basement compartment that was already equipped with electrical outlets. Using this below-deck space also provided an existing route through the floor for the cables up to the inside of the coach behind the kitchen cabinetry. The space that worked best during my "trial office" iterations was a narrow space between the bed and the end of the cabinetry and bedroom privacy door as shown in photo 1, below.



1. The narrow space available for my desk.

This space afforded 23.5 inches to work with. The pole would be centered exactly in this space thereby centering the monitor and keyboard. A floor-to-ceiling pole would provide an ergonomically adjustable computer desk in a variety of styles of motorhomes. Each coach will present its own location opportunities. Find a similarly suitable location in your RV to begin your own computer pole desk project.

This DIY project was designed to use materials commonly found at big-box building supply stores such as Lowe's, Menards, Home Depot, etc., and requires hand tools and an electric drill. You may also need to go to a store such as Radio-Shack to buy four audio jacks.

MOUNTING THE HDMI OUTLET BOX

The first task is to locate, drill and saw out an outlet box at the desk location to mount an HDMI outlet as shown in photo 2. Along with the HDMI insert, the wall plate will also hold two 3.5 mm (1/8-inch) stereo jacks for connecting to the monitor



2. Pencil in the outline of the box and drill the corners to cut out with a keyhole saw.

speakers for listening to music and videos and a microphone jack for Skype or for computer voice commands. HDMI and sound jacks are low voltage, so you can use a backless outlet box. Use the guide holes in the box to locate lines for drilling and cutting out the box location paying attention to plumb and square alignment.

Use a small 1/4-inch bit to drill the located box corners and then use a keyhole saw to cut out the box. If the wall material is less than 3/8-inch thick, once the hole is

cut then glue in 1/4-inch or slightly thicker gusset pieces of wood inside the wall extending 1 inch past the opening on the top and the bottom of the box hole to accommodate the clamp mounting integrated into the backless box; use C clamps to hold the gussets in place while the glue dries. Insert the box in the opening and tighten the top and bottom clamp screws securing the box in place as its clamps



3. A backless box makes connections easier.

squeeze the wall material and gussets to the box. Further secure the box by using No. 6 wood screws or sheet-metal screws in the two mounting holes as shown in photo 3. This will eliminate stresses that might cause the box to loosen from use and vibration.

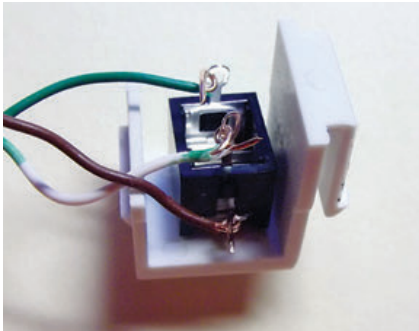
HDMI cables are available in various lengths up to 50 feet. A 35-foot length will allow the computer to be located remotely in most motorhomes. Next route



4. The paired wires of the CAT 6 cable will connect the speaker and microphone to the computer.

the HDMI cable and a CAT 6 Ethernet cable from your intended location for the computer to your desk area. Bring the ends though the backless box shown in photo 4. The CAT 6 cable will carry the speakers and microphone analog stereo sound signals.

The Ethernet CAT 6 will have four pair of color-coded wires — blue, blue/white; orange, orange/white; green, green/white; and brown, brown/white. Save the blue, blue/white pair in case you want to hook up a phone line to your desk area. Use the six others to connect between the 3.5-mm audio jacks. Use the brown wire for the common for the speakers and the brown/white wire as the common for the



5. The speaker jacks and microphone jacks are needed on each end of the Ethernet cable, a total of four.

microphone. Use the green and green/white to connect the speakers right and left as shown in photo 5 and the orange and orange/white to connect the left and right microphone lines in the same way. These jack connections will need to be affixed with a soldering iron or gun and fine-rosin core solder.

Later, you will use a smaller 4- to 6-foot HDMI cable to connect from the outlet box to the back of the monitor using two DVI-to-HDMI connectors, one on back of the computer and one on the monitor. The monitor speakers and a microphone or a microphone/headset combination can be plugged into the jacks.

PERMANENT MOUNTING FOR COMPUTER HARDWARE

Instead of setting the desktop or tower computer on the floor of a storage compartment, which would also work, I installed a three-rail aluminum open shelf

To build a similar shelf, cut three or more angle aluminum rails to length to match your mounting plan. Cut notches in the lower half of the aluminum angle so the top of the rail will straddle the existing framing material. Drill pilot holes in the ends for fastening the angle rails with sheet-metal screws. Once located, drill pilot holes in the existing framing, then use No. 8-by-1/2-inch sheet-metal screws to fasten the rails to the motorhome framing. Photo 6 shows the shelf rails installed. By using an open-rail shelf there will be better air circulation for keeping the computer cool. Use pop rivets or No. 6-by-1/2-inch machine screws and nuts to mount an aluminum angle rail on the side(s) and front of the computer to hold the computer securely in place when traveling. This elevated shelf allows use of the storage bin for housing a full-size multifunction ink-jet printer, and ample space for external hard drives making the computer system



6. Aluminum angle shelf for remote computer location.

a no-compromises installation except for occasionally having to go outside to plug in a jump drive. If your computer will be within 16 cable feet of the desk area, you can install a USB extension cable to avoid this inconvenience. To go longer distances with a USB requires a powered USB hub and more cables.

MOUNTING THE MONITOR, ALL-IN-ONE PC OR LAPTOP COMPUTER

The computer monitor for this project must be equipped with a VESA standard wall-mounting pattern and screw holes in the back (200-mm-by-200-mm, 100-mm-by-100-mm or 75-mm-by-75-mm) to match the mounting bracket. One monitor that meets this criterion is the HP W2072a, list price of \$119.99; there are

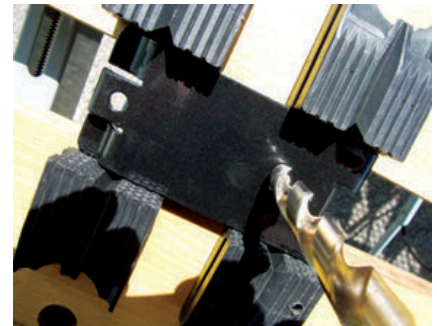
many others available with this feature. The pole desk will support a Windows or Apple iMac all-in-one computer as long as it is equipped with VESA mounting or a VESA mounting adapter is available for it. Follow the computer manufacturer's guidebook to remove the desktop mounting. Use a wireless keyboard and mouse



7. Remove the desktop mounting from the monitor or all-in-one PC.

that will work with your computer such as the Microsoft Wireless Desktop model 800 compatible with most Windows OS computers. To make the pole desk usable with a laptop or notebook PC, simply use a wider shelf bracket and build a wider wood tray big enough to hold the laptop.

Place the monitor face down and remove the stand by pressing the detent with a screwdriver as shown in photo 7. Next, remove the four Philips screws for wall mounting already in the back of the monitor. Then remove the setscrew holding the two pieces of the VESA TV-mounting bracket together. Use a vice or clamp to hold the TV-mounting bracket while drilling out the two mounting holes with



8. Carefully drill out the mounting holes in the VESA bracket for 3/8-inch bolts.



PLATINUM PLATINUM II Arriva

30 YEARS OF QUALITY

IT ALL BEGAN IN A SMALL WAREHOUSE IN VENICE, Fla., in 1985, with an entrepreneur, his sons, and a small but dedicated group of craftsmen. They had a simple idea: Build the best small motorhomes in the RV industry and back them with outstanding customer support. Their innovative designs, exceptional materials, and attention to detail made Coach House into one of the most recognized, highest-rated motorhome manufacturers in North America.

Through the years Coach House has evolved and now offers motorhomes in many different layouts and sizes ranging from 23 to 27 feet long. The Platinum (Ford)

and Platinum II (Mercedes) lines feature an exclusive one-piece hand-laid fiberglass body that is reinforced with carbon fiber. This patented design greatly reduces the chance of any water leaks, squeaks or rattles, providing years of trouble-free operation. In addition, Coach House offers more standard features than almost any other recreational vehicle manufacturer.

Coach House enters its 30th year by introducing the Arriva, an all-new Class B Sprinter motorhome. Built to the same high standards as the Platinum line, the Arriva will keep Coach House at the forefront of the small motorhome market for some time to come.

A BETTER WAY TO BUY

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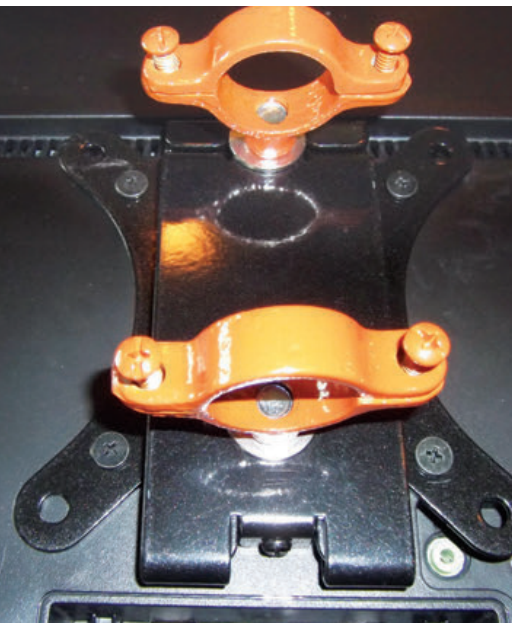
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a $\frac{13}{64}$ -inch bit that is big enough to accommodate the $\frac{3}{8}$ -by- $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch bolts that will fasten the monitor bracket to two of the 1-inch split-tube (pipe) hangers as shown in photo 8. Always use eye protection (goggles or safety glasses) and due caution when drilling in wood or metal. As your drill bit gets close to going through, lighten the pressure to reduce the risk of the bit catching and twisting the drill or the work piece.

Once the two holes are drilled in the TV-mounting bracket, use two of the $\frac{3}{8}$ -by- $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch bolts and one flat washer behind the bracket to connect to the 1-inch split-tube hangers. The flat wash-



9. Bracket assembly ready to mount on the pole.

er will ensure that the bolt's end will not contact the pole. The next step is use the setscrew to reassemble the two pieces of the TV bracket back together. Then use the four screws removed from the monitor to mount the TV bracket to the back of the monitor as shown in photo 9. Be sure to pay attention to the bracket's up-arrow. To make it easier to connect the HDMI-to-DVI adapter, I sawed off the lower right mounting tab with a fine-tooth hacksaw.

FABRICATING THE KEYBOARD/MOUSE TRAY ASSEMBLY

Cut one piece of $7\frac{1}{4}$ -by- $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch (8-inch-by-1-inch-by-4-foot) thick wood to the length needed for your keyboard and



10. Keyboard tray ready for shellac, stain varnish or painting.

mouse pad. Drill three pilot holes in the center of the keyboard area for mounting the wood tray to the metal decorative shelf bracket that will hold the keyboard tray to the pole. Use the two locations of the existing holes on the horizontal side of your shelf bracket if possible. Again, use eye protection when drilling and secure the work piece with clamps for safety while drilling. In my location, I had to hinge the mouse-pad end of the tray so that it would fold out of the way when the bed slide is brought in as shown in photo 10.

When the tray is completed, then drill out the two mounting holes on the vertical side of the shelf bracket to accommodate the $\frac{3}{8}$ -by- $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch bolt with the $\frac{13}{64}$ -inch drill bit. Drill out the horizontal side of the shelf bracket to match the three holes



11. Use a wider shelf for a notebook or laptop computer.

drilled in the keyboard tray. If you use the locations already drilled in the bracket, only one new hole is needed. Assemble the keyboard tray to the horizontal side of the bracket using No. 10-32-by- $1\frac{1}{4}$ -inch machines screws, nuts and finishing

washers to secure the keyboard/mouse tray tight to the bracket. To reinforce the wood tray I added a 1-inch aluminum angle to the back of the tray. Photo 11 shows the keyboard tray ready for mounting on the pole.

INSTALLING THE DESK POLE

With the monitor and keyboard assemblies ready, the next task is to cut the 10-foot-long 1-inch EMT steel conduit pole to the proper length and use the two pipe floor flanges, compression fitting, and $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch pipe nipple to permanently mount the



12. A tubing cutter makes a clean, straight cut on the 1-inch EMT conduit.



13. Locate and pilot drill for the floor-flange mounting screws.

pole to the floor and ceiling. Carefully measure the floor-to-ceiling height using a steel tape rule. From this measurement subtract 3 inches to accommodate the flanges and the fittings, then use a tubing cutter to cut the 10-foot EMT pipe to that calculated length as shown in photo 12. Then locate where you will install the pole, pilot drill and install the 1-inch flange to the floor using No. 10-by- $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch

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SMALL-SPACE WORKSTATION

flat-head sheet-metal screws as shown in photo 13.

Next, thread the 1-inch compression fitting into the flange tossing aside the box-mounting ring. Loosen the compression connector nut on the fitting. Thread the 3/4-inch pipe nipple into the 3/4-inch pipe flange leaving four or more threads exposed on that end. With the flange attached, force the other end of the 3/4-inch pipe nipple into the factory-cut end of the pipe. You may have to rotate it slightly to get it into the pipe the first time. Place the cut end of the EMT pipe into the compression fitting, swinging the top end with the 3/4-inch flange toward its location on the ceiling or cabinet that it will attach to with sheet-metal screws. At this point you will need someone to hold the pipe as you use a torpedo level to ensure that the pipe is plumb and square. Once squared up so the pipe is perfectly vertical, drill a pilot hole with a very short bit in the center of the four flange holes and screw the flange to the ceiling. Return to the bottom flange and tighten the compression nut with an



14. The split-ring hangers will hold the monitor and keyboard tray to the pole at any height.

adjustable wrench or just enough so that the pipe will no longer rotate.

At this point, take out one screw on each of the 1-inch split-tube pipe hangers on the monitor assembly and have



15. DVI-to-HDMI converter is shown attached to the monitor; one converter will also be connected to the computer.

someone hold the monitor while you place the hangers around the pipe. Put the screws back in and adjust the monitor assembly to its desired height from the floor as shown in photo 14. Do the same for the keyboard assembly attaching it to the pipe. You can use additional split-tube hangers to attach other accessories to the pole desk to suit your needs. Two or three hangers could also be used to hold a tower PC to the pole behind the monitor with a little more shelf fabrication.



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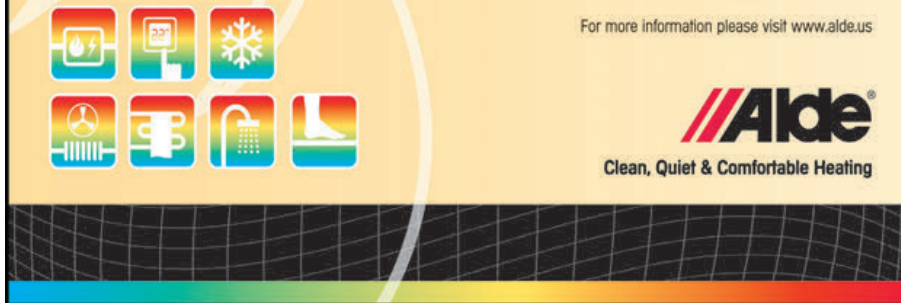
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16. Outlet plate ready to receive connection cables.



17. Completed computer desk work area.

Connect the DVI-to-HDMI connector shown in photo 15 to the back of the monitor and plug in the short extension cable from the finished outlet box shown in photo 16. Do the same for the audio cable. Place your computer's wireless keyboard and mouse on the tray. Turn the computer on, pull up a chair and start using your small-footprint pole desk for all your computing needs. The completed ready-to-paint desk is shown in the photo above. ♦



Dennis C. Brewer and wife, Penny, have spent four years full-timing and three years snowbirding in their motorhome. Dennis is a technology author and consultant.

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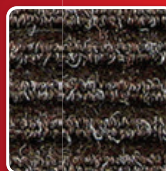
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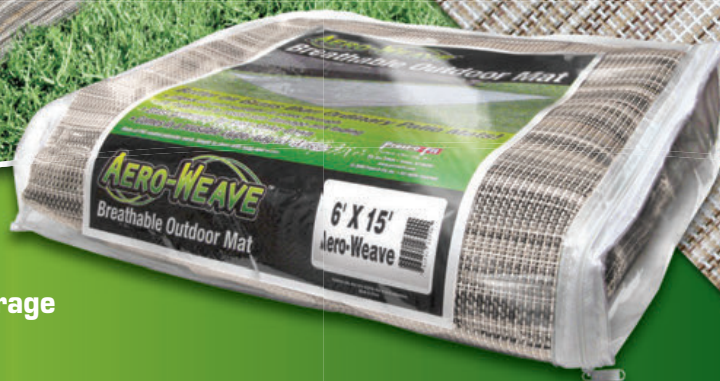
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AIR TIME



Above left to right: The 2WayAir system is designed for universal application, so the first step is to locate the most convenient area to air-up/air-down the motorhome tires. With that decided, begin by brushing Teflon paste on the components prior to assembly. Shown here is the mini control valve, which is the main control valve for the system. The components are then assembled and tightened.

Several different mounting brackets are available to suit a variety of applications ranging from the basic to the sophisticated. Here, the assembly of a basic control panel is underway; in the foreground are two Schrader inflation valves with the push-to-connect tubing adapters installed, and a mini control valve, which will be fitted with a male D-type connector in a later step.



THE 2WAYAIR SYSTEM BY ROCK SMASHER ENGINEERING ALLOWS EASY INFLATION OR DEFLATION OF ALL TIRES SIMULTANEOUSLY

by CHRIS HEMER

If there's one thing that all RVers can agree upon, it's that checking and adjusting tire pressure on the motorhome and dinghy vehicle is a pain in one's backside. Without a doubt, proper tire-inflation pressure is critical to safe travel, and tire manufacturers typically recommend that inflation pressure be checked and adjusted before and during your trips. But getting down on one knee and moving around a motorhome with a gauge and an air hose — if you can even find a source for compressed air — is

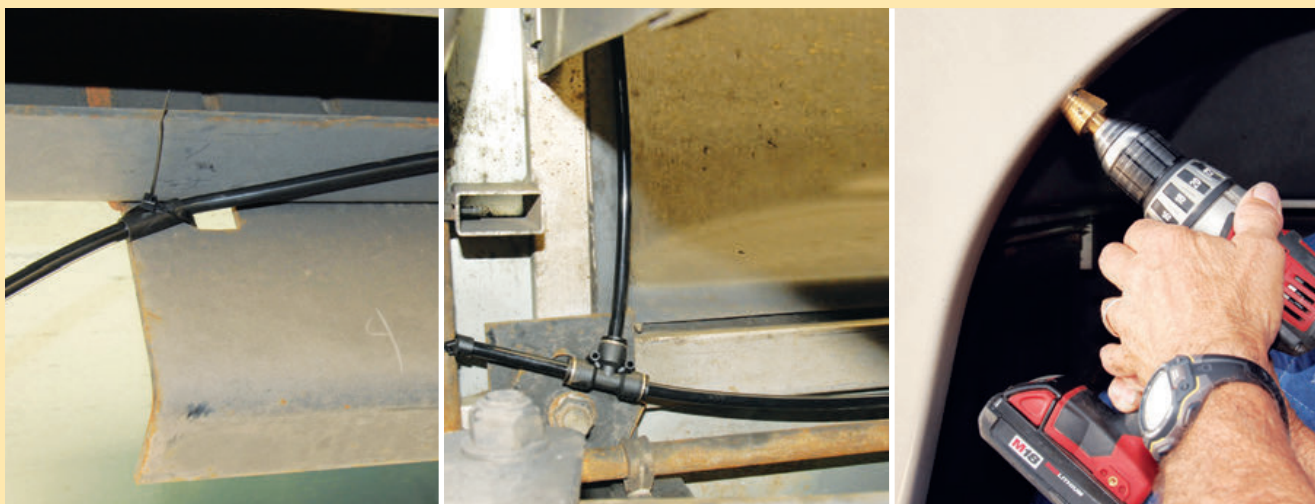


The 2WayAir kit for six tires comes standard with two small sections of protective polyethylene tubing, 40 feet of black $\frac{3}{8}$ -inch polyurethane manifold tubing, 15 feet of $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch black polyurethane tubing, 24 feet of yellow polyurethane “whip” tubing plus UV-rated mountable and standard nylon cable ties, an assortment of push-to-connect and quick-disconnect fittings, and patent-pending mountable Schrader valves.

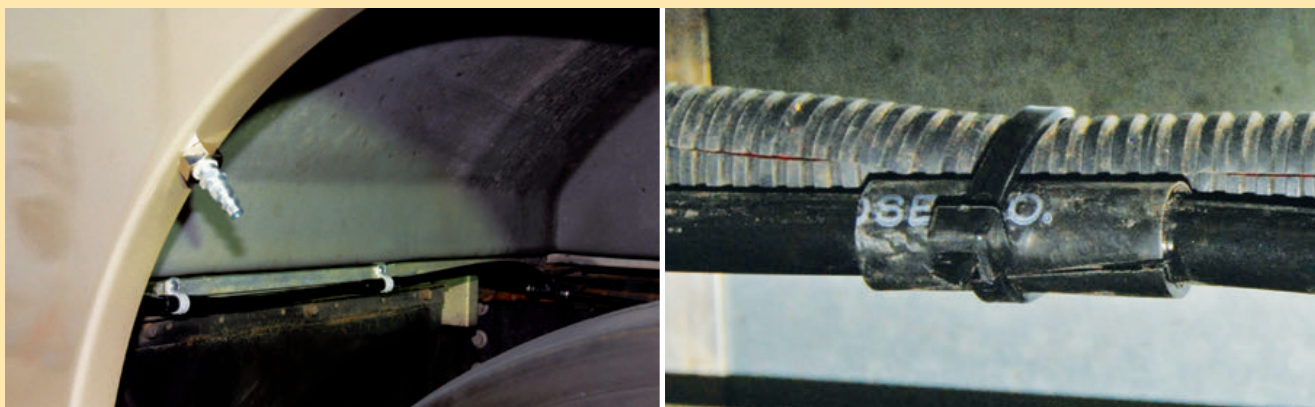


Above left: Here is the control panel shown from the rear. From this angle, you can get a better view of the push-to-connect bulkhead adapter on the mini control valve, as well as the push-to-connect adapters on the two Schrader inflation valves. Either Schrader valve can be used to admit air into the system with a common gas station air hose, while the other one can be used to check system pressure with a tire pressure gauge. Once fitted with a male D-type fitting, the mini control valve (shown in the closed position) can be connected to a compressed air hose and opened to admit air into the system, inflating all tires at once. The same valve can be opened without a hose attached to release air from the system and deflate all tires at once. Having two different styles of inflation valves is a great feature, especially when you consider how difficult it can be to find a

filling station where a hose can reach all tires. A central inflation point allows the user to “nudge” up to the air source and inflate all tires without having to stretch a hose or move the coach from side to side. Above middle: A popular option is to fit the 2WayAir system with a brass pressure relief valve, which was pre-set for this application at 95 PSI. Once that pressure is reached, the valve “burps” excess pressure until the inflation source (air compressor, air tank or on-board air) is turned off. Above right: Here, the control panel has been mounted to the side of the hitch receiver. The main $\frac{3}{8}$ -inch manifold tubing exits the rear of the mini control valve, then goes to a $\frac{3}{8}$ -inch to $\frac{1}{4}$ tee that is plumbed to the pressure relief valve (top of frame). The loop of tubing ties the two Schrader valves together, and tees into the main $\frac{3}{8}$ -inch manifold.



Above left: The $\frac{3}{8}$ -inch manifold tubing is routed along the passenger side of the coach. Above, middle: A tee is used to direct tubing from the manifold into the rear wheel well. Above right: Because six-tire kits use a male D-type connector to service the rear duals, the first step is to use a Unibit to drill a .79-inch hole in the fiberglass wheel-well lip.



A D-type push-to-connect bulkhead adapter is then mounted using a nut on the other side. The male D-type fitting is then installed into the bulkhead adapter and tightened. Typically, a female fitting is used on the supply side of an air system, but in an application like this, a female D-type connector is more likely to become clogged with dirt and debris. In the background, you can see the manifold tubing running into the wheel well from the tee in the main line and secured with clamps. It was then run up the wheel-well lip to the bulkhead adapter.

The main $\frac{3}{8}$ -inch manifold tubing is run along an existing wiring loom and secured with supplied nylon cable ties. The stiff polyethylene tubing is used to cover the manifold tubing to prevent chafing wherever a tie is used. Alternately, the manifold tubing can be secured by drilling $\frac{3}{16}$ -inch holes along the plumbing route and the mountable cable ties used. The polyurethane tubing has a temperature limit of 160 degrees Fahrenheit, so make sure to route it away from heat sources.

a time-consuming process at best; in extreme temperatures, it can become downright uncomfortable. With six to eight tires on the motorhome and four on the dinghy vehicle, we don't need to tell you how long the process can take. The fact is, as much as we all hate having to constantly check and adjust tire pressure, no one has come up with a more convenient way to do it — until now.

Rock Smasher Engineering (RSE) is a start-up company founded by a group of engineers who have designed suspensions for everything from road-race motorcycles

to off-road trucks. As off-road enthusiasts and RVers themselves, they worked for several years to develop a system that would make it easier to manage tire pressure, and created a product they call 2WayAir.

2WayAir is a universal-fit central manifold system that allows users to inflate or deflate all tires on the vehicle at the same time using polyurethane manifold tubing, nylon cable ties, specially designed Schrader valves and an assortment of push-to-connect fittings. The idea behind 2WayAir is that it fits any vehicle (just specify four, six or eight tires), in-

stalls with a minimum amount of tools and can be repaired quickly and easily.

Here's how the system works: The $\frac{3}{8}$ -inch manifold tubing runs along either side of the vehicle. It tees into smaller $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch tubing that runs to each corner of the vehicle where one of the kit's Schrader valves is mounted. Once the system is plumbed, all the user needs to do is connect "whips" to the Schrader valves on the tires and the connection points on the coach, which are Schrader valves up front and D-type connectors (the same as used on compressed air lines) rear. All tires can

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Clockwise from above: The main manifold tubing continues to the front of the coach. A push-to-connect, $\frac{3}{8}$ -inch to $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch Y fitting splits the main manifold to the front Schrader valves on either side. The brass Schrader valves are patent-pending, and with the long shank and double-nut design, can be mounted in almost any material thickness. The valve is then mounted in the front-wheel lip, and the tubing routed to it from the main manifold.



then be inflated via a centralized inflation point, which can be located anywhere it's convenient. The system balances the pressure in all tires during inflation, so even if one tire is higher or lower than the others, they all inflate to the same pressure. And because the system is not pres-

surized unless the whips are attached and the system is in use, there's no danger of losing pressure out of the tires if one of the lines were to become severed.

The system's design is at once simple and sophisticated. For example, the central inflation point is a common Schrader

valve, but all kits also come with a mini control valve that can be fitted with a common male D-type connector so you have the option of inflating with an air hose, an air/CO2 tank, etc. Polyurethane tubing rated to 150 PSI was chosen instead of the more common nylon for several rea-

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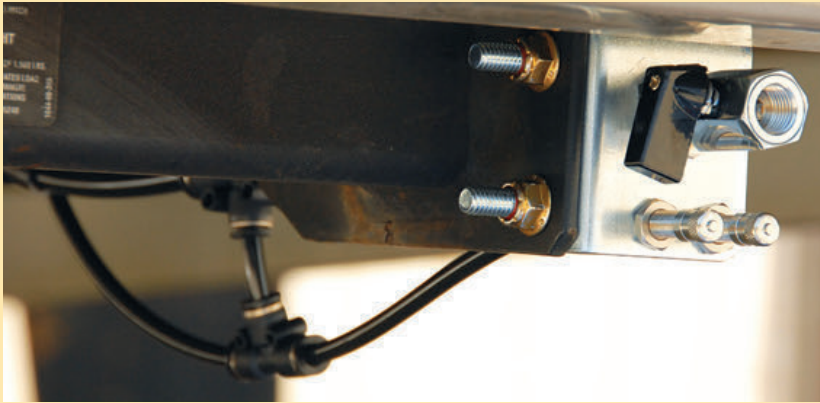
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The control panel as viewed from the rear of the coach, mounted to the hitch receiver. The user now has the option of airing up with a male D-type connector (yet to be installed) inserted into the mini control valve, or one of the Schrader valves. The other Schrader valve can be used to check tire pressure of all tires with a tire pressure gauge. To release pressure from all tires, simply open the mini control valve.

sons. First and foremost, it's flexible and can't kink. Second, this particular tubing is food grade, meaning it is manufactured to a much higher standard than industrial tubing. Finally, it's very easy to work with and cut, which makes it possible to install or repair the system anywhere.

To keep installation simple, all fittings are push-to-connect — no hose clamps are required. The tubing itself can be secured with two different varieties of UV-rated nylon cable ties: standard and mountable. The mountable ties have small anchors that push into an existing

or predrilled $\frac{3}{16}$ -inch hole; simply push the anchor into place, insert the manifold tubing and zip it closed. RSE even supplies sections of hard polyethylene tubing to protect the manifold tubing wherever it is mounted, so there are no concerns over chafing. Last, but certainly not least, anyplace the manifold tubing passes through metal is bulkheaded, so the polyurethane never makes contact with sharp edges.

Realizing that the system could be used on anything from a short-wheelbase Jeep to a tag-axle motorhome, RSE designed 2WayAir to be modular so the base system can be custom tailored to the application and/or upgraded with a variety of available accessories. One of the most popular options is a liquid-filled, vibration-resistant air-pressure-gauge kit and a pressure-relief valve that can be set to the tire's specific inflation pressure. Once the whips are connected, simply connect an air source, or in the case of an onboard air compressor, just turn on the compressor and open the valve. When the air pressure reaches the set point on the relief valve,

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Above left: With the system plumbing completed, it's time to build the whips. Simply measure from the Schrader valve on the vehicle to the Schrader valve on the tire at its farthest possible point, then cut the material. A tubing cutter designed specifically for this purpose is offered through RSE for \$8.95. You can use a razor if you want, but the cut must be absolutely straight to ensure a leak-free seal. Above right: Once cut to length, simply direct the tubing into the push-to-connect adapters installed in the quick-connect fittings. RSE applies Teflon tape for the adapter fittings from the factory.

the valve makes a loud “burping” noise. This is the valve bleeding off excess air, which prevents overinflation of the tires. Disconnect the whips, and you are ready to travel. There are also a variety of mounting brackets available so all accessories can be mounted in one place, or individually.

RSE offers its 2WayAir kits for four

wheels (cars, trucks and vans), six wheels (duallies and motorhomes) and eight wheels (tag-axle motorhomes). And recently, the company released kits for single-, double- and triple-axle trailers, as well as a jumper hose kit that will connect the 2WayAir system on the motorhome to the one on the dinghy vehicle. By using

separate valves and connecting/disconnecting whips, it is possible to inflate the tires on the coach and dinghy to different pressures.

To test the 2WayAir system, we contacted RSE and requested a six-tire master kit (\$319.95) to be mounted on a Class A gas motorhome. RSE also recom-

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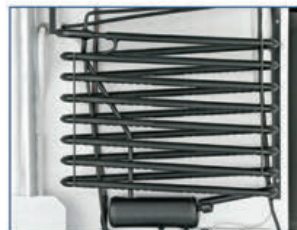
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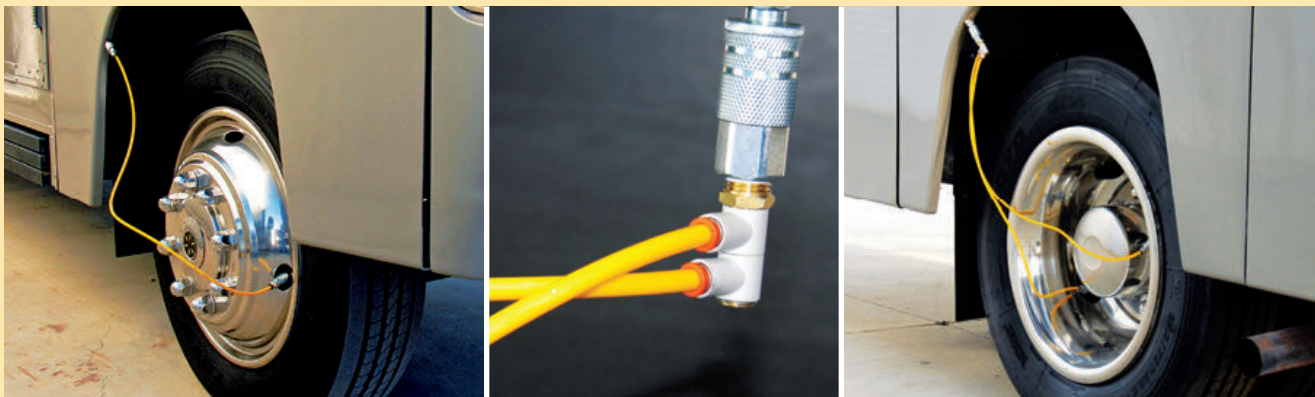
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Above left: Whenever a tire or tires are to be inflated or deflated, simply connect the whip to the Schrader valve on the vehicle and tire, and turn clockwise until they lock — about a quarter-turn. Above middle: The double whip for the rear duals consists of a unique articulating fitting that can be turned to create the optimum angle for either tire. It is installed in a female D-type connector, which is then attached to the male D-type connector mounted in the wheel well. Above right: Here are the rear duals with the double whip connected.

mended a 36-100 psi pressure-relief valve (\$24.95), pressure-relief-valve mounting kit (\$29.95), mounting bracket (\$10.95) and tube cutter (\$8.95), bringing the grand total to \$394.75. Considering the convenience afforded by this system (which will likely outlast the vehicle),

that's a pretty reasonable price.

Since no shop space was available for this project, the system was installed right at the storage unit, proving RSE's claim that 2WayAir can be installed pretty much anywhere. The installation took roughly three hours, and once connected,

it worked as promised.

The 2WayAir system is an innovative solution to an age-old problem. Once you try it, you'll never air-up your vehicle's tires the "old" way again.

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 **RAND McNALLY** **DATA**

here



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†From clinical studies conducted for Sleep Number by the Sister Kenny Institute at Abbot Northwestern Hospital and the Physical Therapy at the Marsh Health Center in conjunction with the Sleep Fitness Center.
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Power converters fall into the category of “out of sight, out of mind” — literally. In fact, some owners may not even know where the converter is located in their motorhome. Compact size and a high degree of reliability enable manufacturers to install converters in convenient and inconspicuous places. Modern electronic converters are quiet and efficient, operating automatically when the motorhome is plugged in to shorepower or when the generator is running.

Converters have two basic jobs to perform. As their name implies, they *convert* 120-volt AC power into 12-volt DC power for running multiple 12-volt DC appliances and accessories without draining the batteries. They also are supposed to keep the batteries at least partially charged. While the concept is good, reality suggests that many of these basic single-stage converters do not condition batteries properly. In fact, many supply only a float charge, which in time will prevent the batteries from reaching maximum capability, from both power supply and longevity standpoints.

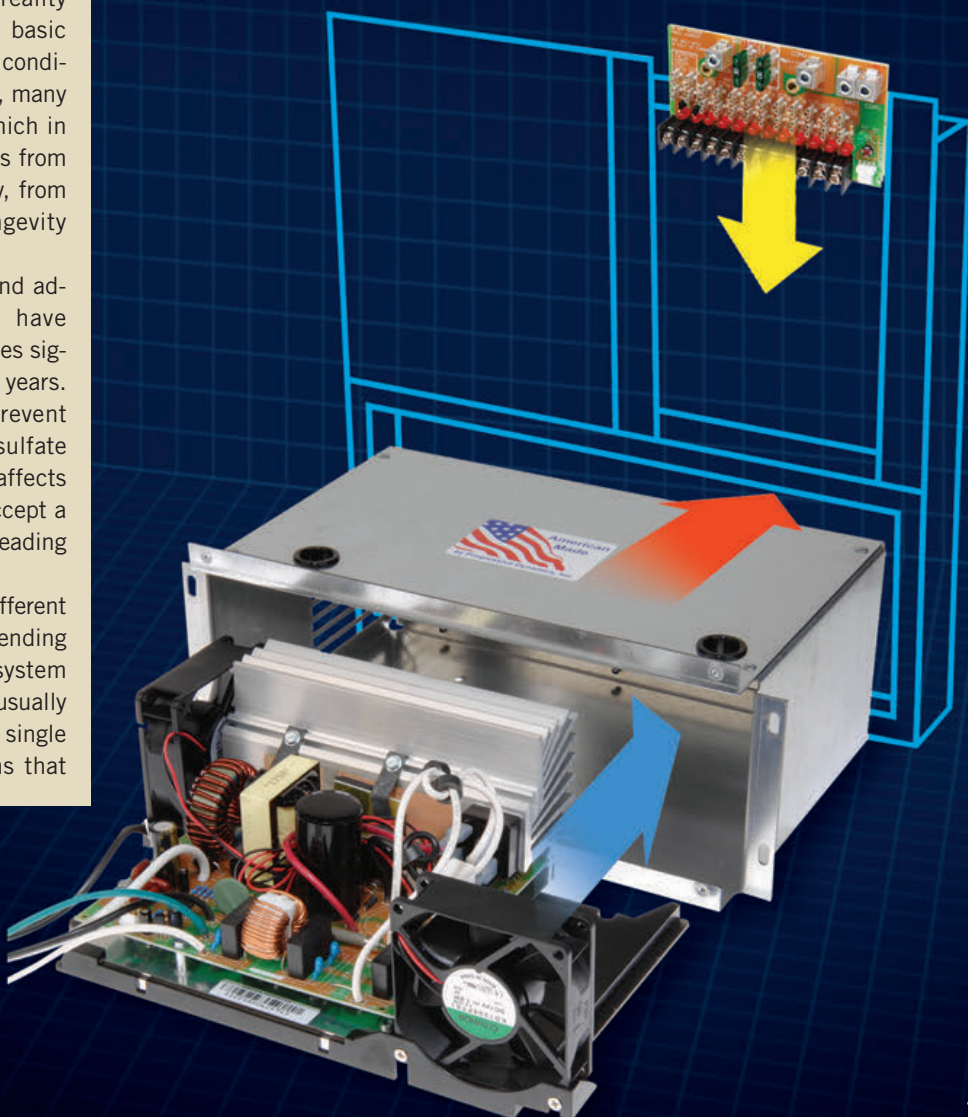
The rising cost of lead and advancements in technology have catapulted the price of batteries significantly during the past 20 years. Proper charging will help prevent sulfation, a deposit of lead sulfate on the plates that adversely affects the ability of the battery to accept a charge. This condition is the leading cause of battery failure.

Today's converters have different amperage output ratings, depending on the coach's 12-volt DC system requirement, and the ratings usually range from 45 to 90 amps in single and multistage configurations that

POWER UP

CONVERTERS ARE DESIGNED TO PROVIDE 12-VOLT DC CURRENT AND CHARGE BATTERIES — BUT NOT ALL ARE CREATED EQUAL

by BILL AND JENN GEHR



Progressive Dynamics offers a lower section replacement/upgrade converter with a built-in Charge Wizard that constantly manages the motorhome's batteries.



Parallax Power Supply's converter/charger utilizes a unique temperature-compensation feature designed to maximize output in extreme temperatures.

may include an equalization mode designed to help batteries live a maximum life. Here's an encapsulation of what's out there.

MULTISTAGE CONVERTER/CHARGERS

Multistage converter/chargers with an equalization process are an effective method of charging lead-acid or other types of batteries. For many years, the only available converters had a simple single-stage or fixed-voltage design with an output of approximately 13.2 volts DC. There are thousands of these converters in use.

Electrical systems have advanced with the use of printed circuit boards and sensitive electronic equipment, creating the need for a more comprehensive charging system. The benefits are faster charging rates and cleaner DC voltage output. For instance, an 80 percent recharge can occur in two to three hours, instead of the roughly 24-hour charge rate of a single-stage converter/charger. Replacing an old single-stage converter with a multistage model may seem complicated, but it is well worth the time and expense, especially considering the former never properly conditions batteries.

HIGH-OUTPUT CONVERTERS

RV electrical systems have more power demands than ever. Several companies offer 80- and 90-amp converter/chargers to meet the highest demands of today's advanced systems. Parallax offers a 90-amp converter/charger (model 5490TC) with temperature compensation and a proprietary Power Factor correction. With this latter feature, the electronic circuit uses 120-volt AC input current much more efficiently, producing up to 90 amps of DC output yet drawing only the current required to run a 65-amp converter.

Living in areas of extreme ambient temperatures presents challenges, even for the best batteries. Ambient temperatures affect the way batteries charge and discharge and, of course, that leads to longevity expectations. Parallax's TC series utilizes unique temperature-compensation technology. Temperature-compensated charging will improve performance, whether the battery is a flooded lead-acid type, AGM or gel cell.

Typically, a battery may be subject



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If you suspect that the converter is not functioning, check the AC outlet for 120-volt power. These outlets are controlled by the GFCI.

to excess fluid loss during high ambient temperatures. Parallax's TempAssure converters will compensate and adjust to an ideal charge voltage based on battery temperature. Parallax offers an upgraded power-supply module with temperature



Magnetek's (Parallax) lower section upgrade kit has recently been installed.

compensation (model 4400 TAU) for its series 4400 and 5400 converters. Parallax, formerly Magnetek Converters, also offers electronic upgrades for older Magnetek power centers, including a temperature-compensation model.

Progressive Dynamics, also known as Intelli-Power, builds RV converters and chargers that feature a two-year no-hassle warranty and are made in the United States. Progressive Dynamics developed its first power converter for the RV market in 1968 and in 1993 began manufacturing electronic power converters. The "new" design gave RV manufacturers a reliable electronic power converter that was smaller and lighter than what had previously been available. Since then, Progressive Dynamics has been improving its converter/chargers.

The company's 80-amp converters with the built-in Charge Wizard (models PD9280V and PD9180V) offer automatic electronic current that reduces output voltage when maximum charge capacity is reached. The company's patented Total Charge Management System (TCMS) technology senses when batteries are low or are in need of a fast charge and will automatically increase the voltage to 14.4 volts DC. The TCMS will charge a 125 amp-hour battery to 80 percent capacity in roughly

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Cover for Q® 2000 & 2200 Models (Mfr. #6551)



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The Intelli-Power Charge Wizard is a great upgrade for 9100 Series converters.

two to three hours while attaining a complete charge in approximately 15 hours.

Standard features on all Intelli-Power models include reverse-polarity protection that guards against damage resulting from improper battery connection, low-voltage protection that automatically shuts the converter down if input voltage is insufficient, and electronic current that automatically reduces output voltage when maximum battery charge has been attained. An automatic thermal shutdown feature will power off the converter when temperatures exceed 150 degrees Fahrenheit, protecting the converter from damage due to excess heat.

Progressive Dynamics also offers a Charge Wizard (model PD9105V) that's designed as a retrofit for its 9100 series converters, effectively changing from a single-stage to a four-stage converter. The Charge Wizard constantly monitors battery voltage and battery usage, then selects one of the following four operation modes: boost, normal, storage or equalization.

The Charge Wizard has been shown to increase battery life by as much as two to three times and is designed to eliminate battery over- and undercharging frequently associated with less-sophisticated battery chargers. The Charge Wizard is easy to install via a simple plug-in system.

Iota Engineering offers its DLS series with exceptionally clean DC power output for sensitive electronic circuits. With current-limiting and thermal-overload protection, the DLS models can be used without a battery in the system. This can be an advantage, since the DLS models do not produce a high AC ripple voltage that can adversely affect some electronic appliances.

In the past, living in an RV park 365 days a year required a battery to be on-board at all times to act as a capacitor for DC voltage spikes. Iota's patented IQ4 Smart Charge Controller will transform the standard DLS series converters into a four-stage charger. The four-stage charging system will reduce battery charging time and minimize excess gassing, often caused by high voltage. The IQ4 delivers boost, absorption and float segments as well as an equalization phase. An LED indicator light flashes at different speeds to display the charging activity, and it will even indicate a fault state, should an over-voltage condition be detected. If overvoltage occurs, the converter will be kept in the float mode until it is reset.

Xantrex TrueCharge2 battery chargers are microprocessor-controlled and deliver a two- or three-stage charge to any type of deep-cycle battery. These units are not easily affected by low or high AC power from less than perfect shorepower or a generator. Temperature-compensated charging, a battery-equalization feature and the ability to charge a completely dead battery that has been in storage too long makes this charger practical for RVers in need of better performance. Xantrex's reverse-polarity protection will mitigate accidents when replacing batteries in the future.

The TrueCharge2 models have the ability to parallel stack — this allows two of the chargers to work together for up to 120 amps of output. Xantrex went one step further by adding a storage mode that turns on every 21 days for proper charging of batteries that are in storage. Xantrex offers a remote panel (part No. 808-8040-1) that allows the user to monitor all aspects of battery charging. Add the temperature sensor (part No. 808-0232-01) for operation in extreme temperature climates. Xantrex offers models with 20-, 40- and 60-amp ratings.

BASIC TROUBLESHOOTING

Modern electronic converter/chargers are very durable and should last without maintenance for many years. But problems can arise. If you suspect that the converter in your motorhome is no longer



Iota Engineering's IQ4 Smart Charge Controller converts its DLS Series converters to a four-stage charger.

charging, here are a few helpful tips for troubleshooting in the field.

Converters need adequate AC voltage for proper operation. Start by checking for voltage at the outlet into which the converter is plugged or wired. Use a handheld voltmeter (multimeter) to confirm voltage to the converter. This electrical circuit is sometimes protected by a ground fault circuit interrupter (GFCI). If voltage is not present, check the GFCI reset button to see if it has been tripped. Most modern electronic converters have a set of fuses visible in the back section of their housings. If you suspect the converter is not working, check the fuses. Caution: Use fuses that are exact replacements only.

Upgrading to a multistage charger, whether by replacement of the unit itself or by adding new components, will make a big difference in battery performance. With a number of high-tech options to choose from, it's easy to find all the power and versatility your motorhome needs. ♦

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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www.iotaengineering.com

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800-730-2557
www.parallaxpower.com/esm.htm

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SOLID SATELLITE AIMING ▼

After aiming my roof-mounted satellite dish for the best reception, I found that a stiff breeze could undo all of my careful work. Sometimes the wind would cause slight rotation; other times the dish would tip ever so slightly. In either case, my precise aiming would be compromised.

To keep the adjustments in place, I stretch a mini-bungee cord from the top of the dish to a solid location on the roof, either to the radio antenna or the bat-wing assembly, depending on the dish's location when correctly aimed. This eliminates the tilting problem. To stop rotation, I use another stretched bungee from the 3 o'clock or a 9 o'clock location on the dish to a permanent anchor. This could be the radio antenna or the bat wing, depending on the location of the dish. Now that there's slight tension on the dish, a very slight adjustment may be needed from inside the coach.

I use this technique whenever we camp in one location for a while; it's not worth getting up on the roof just for overnight camping. **Note: Be very careful whenever accessing the roof of an RV and when using bungee cords.**

FRANK WOYTHAL | ANDOVER, NEW YORK



SALT ON THE SIDE ▲

The butcher-block knife rack in our motorhome's galley is held in place with hook-and-loop fasteners. I screwed a small metal rack onto the side of the block. Now, the salt, pepper and garlic salt are always available to use and they're no longer sliding across the counter.

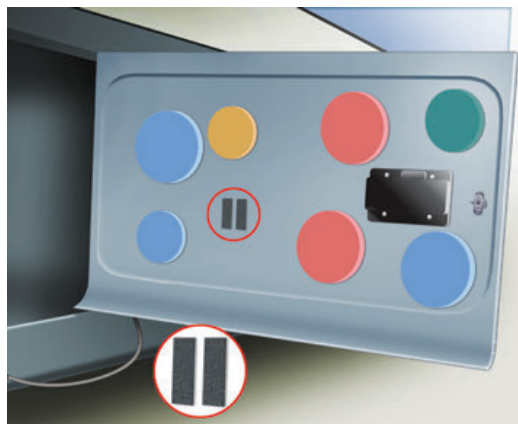
**ARLENE AND PETE CHIAROLANZO
FLORHAM PARK, NEW JERSEY**

BUFFER-PAD ZONE ▼

The pads used on a lot of dual-action buffers have hook-and-loop backing. Here's where and how I store mine. Clean the inside of a storage-bay door, then attach two 3- to 4-inch lengths of adhesive hook-and-loop fastener (per pad) to the interior side of the storage door — making sure that the pads will clear all of the door latches and seals. Attach the buffering pads to the doors.

The pads have next to no weight so there is no stress on the door hinges and the pads won't get smashed, torn or deformed from being stored against other tools or bottles of wax and polish. I also mark the back of the pads with a permanent marker to remind me what each pad does by its color: orange for cutting, blue for pre-wax and black for wax.

TONY PIERGALLINI | STEUBENVILLE, OHIO ♦



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Quick Tips, *MotorHome's* monthly column of handy, simple tips by fellow RVers, is looking for submissions. Please send your favorite DIY ideas to: *MotorHome* Quick Tips, 2750 Park View Ct., Ste. 240, Oxnard, CA 93036, or email letters@motorhomemagazine.com. Be sure to include any photos, illustrations or drawings. If your tip is selected for publication, you will receive \$35. All payments require an FEIN or SSN.

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techsavvy

HANDS-ON | COACH & POWERTRAIN

HANDS-ON | *by* OWEN MITCHELL



PATTY O'SHADE

Dometic offers relief from the sun in a tidy package



Along with warm weather comes the enjoyment of being outdoors and hanging out with family and friends. But it may also come with the challenge of staying cool in hot afternoons without retreating into an air-conditioned motorhome.

When the motorhome awning is not ideally positioned for full shade, it may be necessary to get creative. Patty O'Shade to the rescue. Offered by Dometic, the refrigerator company that also offers everything from awnings to RV toilets, this product is an add-on enhancement for manually operated awnings.

Generically known as a drop shade, the Patty O'Shade consists of a 54-inch-by-15-foot length of vinyl-coated polyester mesh that can be attached to the awning; it's described by Dometic as capable of blocking more than 50 percent of the sun's rays, and also is available in a 10-foot length.

At the top edge of the Patty O'Shade is a stitched-in cord that allows the shade to be fed into the awning's utility slot. At the bottom are two grommets that can be attached by

stretch cords to two stakes that secure the shade at a convenient angle for maximum shade and space under the awning.

While Patty O'Shade obviously is not a total sun block, it very noticeably cuts down on the sun's heat while allowing visibility and air movement through the fabric, as well as air circulation between the lower edge of the shade and the ground. The shade also serves as a privacy screen during daytime hours.

It must be removed so the awning can be retracted, and removal is quick and easy by releasing the stretch cords and withdrawing the stitched edge from the awning slot. The shade can be folded to 12 by 15 by 6 inches for storage.

Patty O'Shade is available in burgundy, blue, coffee and

white, and is a valuable addition for those who like to hang out under the awning during the heat of the day. It's available at Camping World for \$97.77 (online price for members), as well as other RV supply stores.

Dometic
800-544-4881

www.dometic.com ♦



Tire Time

I think it's time for me to replace the tires on my Gulfstream Ultra Class C motorhome. The tires are the originals and 7 years old. I read that the sidewalls break down over time, and there is cracking on the sidewalls. I have dual wheels on the rear and can't see the wear on the inner tires. The tread looks fine. Will they be in need of replacing too or can they be rotated out with new tires on the inside? Do I replace all six tires at the same time?

GORD TAYLOR
NAPANEE, ONTARIO, CANADA

The tires on motorhomes, unlike commercial vehicles, usually degrade because of age and sidewall cracking before they wear out. Seven years is a generally accepted age that many tire manufacturers suggest replacement. Since all of the tires are the same age, they all should be replaced at the same time.

GAS OR DIESEL?

As I approach retirement we will be upgrading our coach and hitting the road full time. Some of my friends swear by diesel as opposed to gas, some are emphatic about getting a tag axle. However, working the numbers, there is no way I can make the numbers work, i.e., the 30 to 40 percent more in the initial cost, fuel and maintenance cost.

Are there any real and objective stats on this you can share with me? Also, do you have any service statistics on the individual brands of motorhomes in terms of breakdown frequency, customer satisfaction, average service intervals and average cost of repairs?

Which coachbuilder rates the highest in terms of customer satisfaction, dependability, safety and resale values? We are considering a Winnebago Sightseer or maybe a diesel Tiffin Phaeton or one of its gas models.

MAC VAUGHN | CYPRESS, TEXAS

The age-old question of which is best, gas or diesel, depends greatly on your budget. If price were no object, I'd choose diesel. Gas models are cheaper

initially, but use roughly 30 percent more fuel per mile than comparable diesels. It generally boils down to gas models win if you won't be driving that many miles per year, and you don't plan to keep it for a very long time (which helps amortize the cost). Motorhome owners who drive frequently, logging high mileage and live in their coaches during all four seasons typically prefer the diesels.

The car business has J.D. Power & Associates, which compiles statistics on vehicle reliability and owner satisfaction. Due to the smaller numbers of motorhomes compared to cars, there is no organization that I know of that does comparable studies. Resale value is a fairly good indicator of consumer preference in the marketplace, and book values of the models you are considering can be researched at www.kbb.com

THE AGE-OLD QUESTION OF WHICH IS BEST, GAS OR DIESEL, DEPENDS GREATLY ON YOUR BUDGET.

IF PRICE WERE NO OBJECT, I'D CHOOSE DIESEL. GAS MODELS ARE CHEAPER INITIALLY, BUT USE ROUGHLY 30 PERCENT MORE FUEL PER MILE THAN COMPARABLE DIESELS.



and www.nadaguides.com. Checking in with the various RV brand and model owner forums online is another way to gather user experience information about the coach you have in mind.

ALADDIN MONITORING SYSTEM PROBLEMS

We have a 2004 Holiday Rambler Scepter diesel with Aladdin 400 and 100 series monitoring systems. We would like to get the Aladdin systems repaired or find something else to replace them with. The Aladdin seems to work on most functions like motor, stats and everything except tank volume. I installed a new tank sensor, which did no good. I filled the black tank with clear water and it showed that I had 204 percent with 34 gallons. I also filled the gray tank and it showed 0 percent and 0 gallons. The freshwater tank shows 60 percent (which could be correct) but shows no gallons. The temperature and LP-gas seem to be working. Do you think this is something that can be fixed or replaced with an aftermarket unit?

KEN PATTERSON
SAINT CHARLES, IOWA

The Aladdin system is no longer supported, but SilverLeaf Electronics has developed a tag-on system that utilizes existing wiring, so there is very little downtime for installation. It features full engine/transmission instrumentation, holding-tank levels (with more reliable tank sensors), AC voltage/amperage, an upgraded 50-amp transfer switch with surge protection built-in, DC voltage/amperage, solar panel volts/amps, plumbing/outside temperatures, plus extra features and Bluetooth control options. SilverLeaf Electronics, 888-741-0259 or 541-967-8111, www.silverleafelectronics.com.

BATTERY CHARGING TIP

This is regarding the "Condensation and Charging Problems" letter in the July issue. I solved a similar charging problem with an Automatic Charging Relay from Blue Sea Systems (www.bluesea.com). This type of equipment is also

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Beckson Manufacturing, 203-366-3644, www.becksonmfg.com



known as a battery isolator. The installation was very easy. The relay joins the battery banks, or separates them, depending on the drain and the voltage in each battery bank. It allows charging of both battery banks at the same time from any source — the vehicle alternator, the onboard generator or shorepower. The relay will separate the banks when one of the batteries is fully charged and the other batteries still need more charge. By the same token, the relay will separate the battery banks when the voltage in one of those banks drops below a preset voltage. In this way, the house cannot drain the chassis and vice versa. I am very pleased with this unit. There are many models available so make sure you choose one that will accommodate the amperage output of your vehicle alternator.

KEN HORN | HERMON, MAINE

I have not tried this unit, but it appears to be a well-designed piece of hardware. Relays are subject to less voltage drop than solid-state devices such as diodes. This tip should help many readers with similar problems.

HORIZONTAL PROPANE TANK CERTIFICATION

I have a 2005 Four Winds Majestic 30-foot Class C. What is the requirement, if any, for certification of the horizontal, nonportable propane tank in my coach?

DICK MITCHELL | VIA EMAIL

inspection and certification requirement. In the U.S., only removable Department of Transportation (DOT) cylinders (such as those used in trailers, fifth-wheels and barbecue grills) require periodic inspection and recertification. Transport Canada has similar rules.

The American Society of Mechanical Engineers (ASME) certifies this type of horizontal motorhome tank. ASME tanks that are permanently installed do not have to be recertified. However, regardless of regulations, all types of propane containers, including tanks and cylinders, should be cleaned, inspected and tested for leaks as part of the RV's regular preventive maintenance schedule.

FORD V-10 MILEAGE

I am back into a Ford V-10 gas engine in my motorhome because my Ford 6.0-liter diesel repairs were eating my pocketbook. I have looked all over for a magic cure for the low gas mileage on the V-10 and guess what? I can't find much. The only improvement I can find is headers and better air cleaners. Is there a magic cure or improvement that will pay for itself in about a year or 10,000 miles? I always drive below 60 MPH and try to stay on the major highways. I get 9 MPG on a good day, but average around 7.5 to 8 normally.

**DALE WILSON
SILVER CITY, NEW MEXICO**

If I had a magic mileage cure that actually worked, I could retire as a very rich man! It takes a lot of power to haul a big,

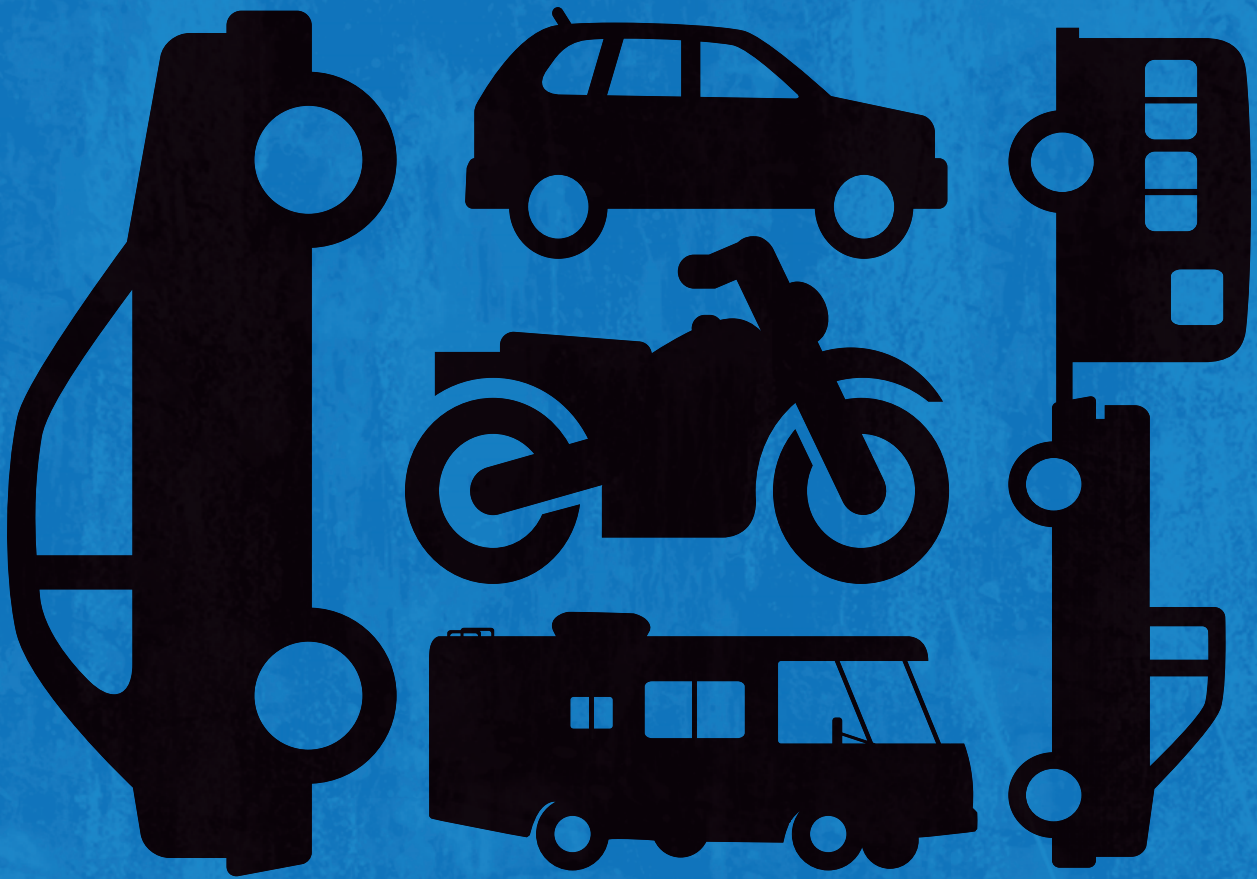
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heavy motorhome down the road. Gas engines are less fuel-efficient, although as you noted the diesels can get expensive to repair. The 9-MPG fuel mileage you report is at the very high end of what most people get with this engine; 7.5 to 8 MPG is much more typical of average conditions; many see less than 7 MPG, depending on weight.

The low-restriction exhaust systems and air intakes do help, but they generally improve acceleration and hill-climbing performance more than fuel mileage. If your budget is really tight, I suggest you try installing an aftermarket low-restriction muffler setup first (not the headers because of cost), along with perhaps an aftermarket air filter. Do one change at a time and document the mileage results carefully. The biggest gain comes from driving slowly; 55 MPH will yield better mileage than 60 MPH.

FUEL-FILLING FIASCO — COMMENT

This is in regard to “Fuel-Filling Fiasco” in the July issue. Shame on Winnebago for telling you that it has never received complaints about the 2008 Voyage gas filler problem. The problem lies in the new EPA gas nozzles and Winnebago placed the filler too high, so it interferes with the bottom lip of the slideout. I dealt with the problem for more than a year, tried several purchased remedies online and self-manufactured funnels to solve the problem, as suggested by RV blog sites. The only thing that worked was to open the slide about 8 inches to get underneath the lip of the slide when I fueled the motorhome. I finally got the problem solved at Concord Coach in Concord, California. They moved the filler tube down about 2 inches and I have not had a problem since.

DAVID ARIZU | OAKLAND, CALIFORNIA

Thanks for writing, David. Reader feedback is very helpful on problems like this. It can be difficult to troubleshoot problems just from written descriptions, and I encourage readers to include photos where they are helpful in clarifying a situation. Also don't forget to include make, model and your city and state or province.

MARKS ON TILE — COMMENT

This is in response to “Marks on Tile” in

CONTINUE ON PAGE 127

advertisersindex

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the July issue. There are three common problems that Tiffin is aware of, but they may not be spotted by dealer service departments. Most dealers will not fix them like Tiffin will, due to the complexity of the repair and high cost.

One is concerning the left (driver's side) slideout, which caused marks on the tile in my 2010 Tiffin Phaeton. I believe 2012 is one of the years that had this problem. If so, Tiffin will fix it for free. The only catch is you must bring it back to the company's repair facility in Red Bay, Alabama. The fix is a new floor in that slideout. There is more good news. If you bring it back to Tiffin's repair facility, the mechanics will check it over for the other two common issues that have been identified, and if you have them, the company will fix those for free also. I know one of those, the wet bay floor that had been corrected by late 2010 production, but the third was the fiberglass roof edge caps crack, and may have included 2012. All the fiberglass caps were replaced with aluminum caps. Most dealers just patch the fiberglass, which may crack again. You should contact Tiffin for exact details.

It's not often you find a manufacturer that will stand behind its products even after the warranty ends.

STEVE VINEYARD
WEATHERFORD, TEXAS

Thanks for writing, Steve. Manufacturers tend to keep these sorts of things under the radar, but knowing this can help Tiffin owners having similar problems. Tiffin has a superb reputation for customer service and your note is another example of this.

ONE BAD BATTERY

I have four Deka Seamate RV 8D AGM coach batteries in my motorhome, which were installed in January 2011. One battery has failed. People who sell batteries tell me I need to replace all four batteries because the older ones would drag the new one down if just the one was replaced. RV technicians who do not sell batteries tell me to just replace the one battery. Which should I do?

JOHN GARTIN | VIA EMAIL

It is normally good advice and industry practice to change them all at the same

time. It is also true that the weaker batteries draw power from the stronger ones when they are wired in parallel. If one is defective and failed prematurely, if it were mine, I would try just replacing one and see how that works. If you're not happy with the results, you could then replace the remaining three batteries.

ROUGH RIDE

My wife and I are wondering why our 2001 diesel Bounder motorhome, constructed on a Freightliner XC chassis, rides so horribly when confronted with rough roads and road expansion joints. Is this normal? Is this the best we can expect? We have had ride height adjusted and new Koni No. 8805-1020FSD shocks on the front. Front tires are Goodyear G670 at 90 psi. The coach has been professionally weighed at each wheel:

L. Front 3,820 R. Front 3,970
L. Rear 7,200 R. Rear 8,250

When approaching a rough section of road or an expansion joint, we shudder because there is no cushioning effect on the ride. It is very bone-jarring and everything shakes throughout the coach.

ROGER AND DIANE HADDOCK
GENEVA, OHIO

Freightliner's headquarters are in Gaffney, South Carolina, so hopefully you had the ride height adjusted there and discussed your concern for ride quality. Freightliner personnel are the top authorities on their own products, so if they inspected it and determined that everything is within specifications, it probably is. The only number I see that stands out is the difference between left and right rear weights. However, differences like this are fairly common and it probably isn't the cause of your concern.

You didn't mention what tire size you have; if it's 245/70R19.5 you can drop down to 85 PSI on the front, although that won't make a big difference.

In my experience, Koni shocks ride a little harder than Bilsteins, but I think you may simply be unfamiliar with how such a heavy vehicle rides and handles. They are much harsher than passenger cars. I suggest that before you spend any more money chasing a problem, try test-driving another similar coach. Other owners in RV

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parks may allow you a test ride, or a dealer selling used coaches may let you try one.

Also, remember that driving speed, vehicle wheelbase, suspension stiffness and running solo or towing all factor into how badly a vehicle reacts to rough sections of highway. If you've done everything you know of to remedy the problem already, you may just have to deal with it.

TROUBLE REFUELING

I have a 2000 Monaco Knight diesel motorhome that I bought new. The issue I've had since day one is that, on occasion, I am unable to get fuel in the tank. I can only fill with the small fill nozzle; if I use the large hose nozzle at the truck station, it fills very slowly and takes about 20 minutes. My coach has only one fill located on the curbside. I have checked the vent, the fill hose for kinks and found nothing in either case.

DENNIS MORIN
ROCK HILL, SOUTH CAROLINA

You must be very patient indeed! I checked with Monaco to see if it had any suggestions or service kits. The only suggestion, which would be mine too, is to check for drooping in the vent hose. If there is a section that droops, it can fill up with fuel and block the venting process. You will need to correct that.

Using the large fillers at truck stops also causes a lot of foaming of diesel fuel, which causes automatic shutoffs too. There's not much you can do about foaming other than fill more slowly. There are also a couple of temporary cures I've tried that may work for you as well.

First, I look for a fueling spot with the pavement apron sloping slightly down on the side away from the motorhome's fuel fill. That modest slope may be enough to help facilitate a free flow of fuel into the tank due to an otherwise too-level fuel line. If the pavement is level, I'd haul out a few leveling-block-size planks of wood and drive the fuel-fill side of the coach tires up on the boards to accomplish the same slight tilt away from the fill location. It's not elegant, but it worked for me. ♦

TO CONTRIBUTE TO COACH & POWERTRAIN, refer to Contact MotorHome, on page 16.

Slow Down!

A VISIT TO MONUMENT VALLEY SERVES AS A REMINDER THAT THE TRUE BEAUTY OF MANY PLACES ONLY REVEALS ITSELF TO THOSE WHO TAKE THEIR TIME



by ALAN RIDER

As the pace of modern life continues to accelerate, a growing number of people have begun embracing the idea of “slowness” in everything from food to fashion, part of a broader movement based on the downright heretical notion that faster is not always better.

Now it seems to me that if there's a group capable of wholeheartedly adopting this “slow living” philosophy, it would be those of us who prefer to travel by motorhome. Fact is, the size of our rigs alone makes a more leisurely pace just another part of everyday life on the road.

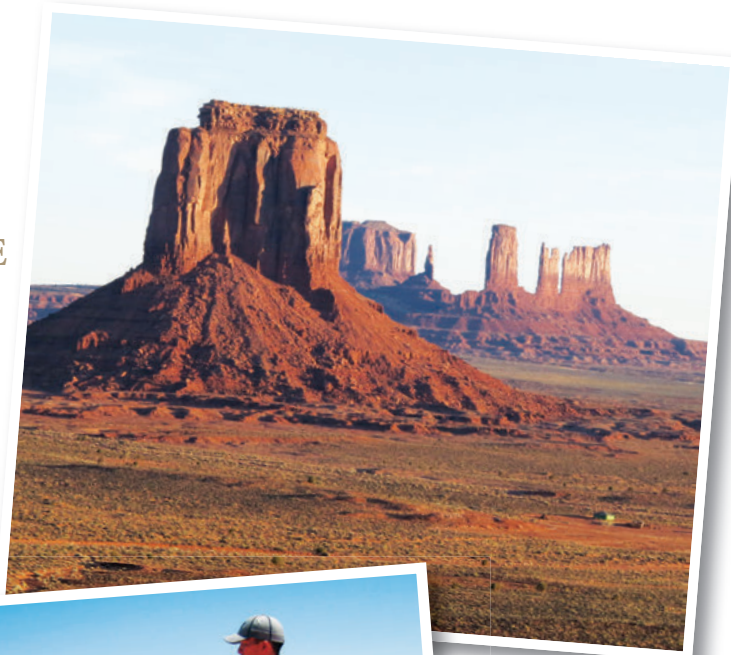
There is a very distinct upside to this self-imposed limitation, however. Namely the opportunity to enjoy a lifestyle that emphasizes quality over quantity, an approach that makes it possible for us to savor both where we are and the unfamiliar territory we traversed to get here.

This contrast between our motorhome journeys and other forms of travel really hit me on a recent visit to Monument Valley, Utah. As the first of many bus loads full of tourists descended on the Navajo tribal park's visitor center, stopping only long enough to snap a few quick selfies on their way to the Grand Canyon, my family and I were a few short miles away relaxing over lunch in our shady pull-through site amid the red rocks of Goulding's Campground (435-727-3231, www.gouldings.com/campground).

We felt we'd earned this leisure after a chilly four-wheel-drive tour that began before sunup. As dawn broke over this remote corner of the Southwest, the three of us stood quietly looking out at the valley below as the rising sun turned the sandstone buttes, mesas and spires an uncommon shade of orange that made them appear to glow from within.

If pressed to describe my experience on that early morning outing, the first word that comes to mind is reverence. Stepping out onto that rocky overlook on the Utah-Arizona border was not unlike entering a soaring stone cathedral where you find yourself unconsciously speaking only in respectful whispers.

It's moments like these that those hordes of just-passing-through visitors will never know, because they're either unable or unwilling to give this remarkable location the time required to



fully appreciate it. Like so many places I've experienced over the years, the fact is the true beauty of this rugged high desert country cannot be captured in a few quick snapshots while en route to

somewhere else.

Instead I would encourage visitors to spend at least a few days here. While it makes sense to start at the mile-high park's visitor center, be sure to set aside time to leave the crowds behind on the various guided hiking, horseback and Jeep tours that offer access to the parts of the valley that are normally closed to outsiders.

Which is precisely how we met a young Navajo artist and Jeep tour guide named Darren Oliver. In addition to sharing his knowledge of Monument Valley's geology, history, wildlife and medicinal plants, spending time with Darren gave us a glimpse into an utterly unfamiliar culture as he told us stories of growing up in the slowness of the vast Navajo reservation with this starkly beautiful landscape for a backyard playground.

Ultimately though, this visit to Monument Valley taught me a lesson I now try to apply every time I load up the motorhome and hit the road: Slowing down is truly the key to making the most of all that awaits us out there along The Road Ahead. ♦

Alan Rider has been wandering the backroads of America for more than four decades. Though he's never been big on traditional souvenirs, he's passionate about collecting memories of the remarkable people and unforgettable places he encounters along the way.

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Fig. 1 Saturn



Fig. 3 Asteroid Gaspra



Fig. 5 Mercury

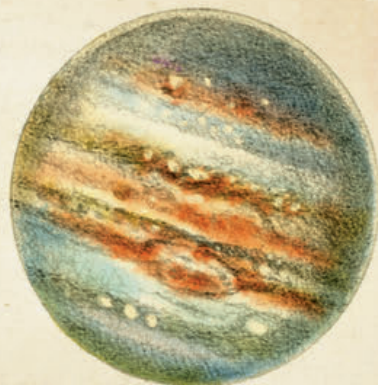


Fig. 7 Jupiter



Fig. 2 Neptune

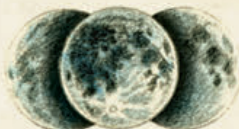


Fig. 4 Phases of the Moon

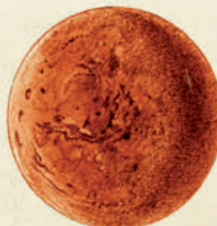
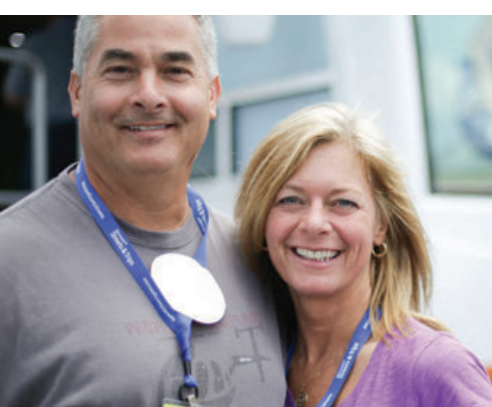


Fig. 6 Mars

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