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JANUARY 2011

BIG 3 DIESEL SHOOTOUT!



First Look

2011 TOWABLES

MVP RV VORTEX 270FS

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Photo by Rich Cox Photography

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Trailer Life (USPS 454-970) is published monthly by Affinity Media, a subsidiary of Affinity Group Inc. Printed in the United States. Periodical postage paid at Ventura, CA 93001 and additional mailing offices. Postmaster: Send address changes to: *Trailer Life*, P.O. Box 5860, Harlan, IA 51593-1360. Publication Sales Agreement No. 1488163. Canadian return address: Affinity Group Inc., 4960-2 Walker Road, Windsor, Ontario N9A 6J3. Canadian Post Sales Agreement No. 40012332. Subscription price for U.S. & possessions: 1 year: \$15.97, 2 years: \$27.97, 3 years: \$37.97. All other countries, including Canada and Mexico, add \$12 per year. *Trailer Life* and *Roads to Adventure* are registered trademarks and incorporated in *Trailer Life* magazine. *Trailer Life* is copyrighted 2011 by Affinity Group Inc. in the United States and Great Britain. All rights reserved. Authorized Subscription Agent - AGA.



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DRIVER'S SEAT

by **Kristopher Bunker**



NEW YEAR, NEW TRENDS



The beginning of a new year always marks an exciting time in any market, and the RV world is certainly no exception. Each flip of the calendar offers manufacturers an opportunity to hone their skills, refine their wares and improve upon past designs.

In years past, this was generally done by enlisting a group of engineers who did their best to foresee the future, and made a few tweaks here and there, often based on a small sampling of public opinion.

However, due to the industry's (and the economy's) recent downturn, many manufacturers have spent the last few years listening more than ever to their customer base, picking the brains of RV owners to learn what they most wish to see.

And it's definitely beginning to show. As the industry grows stronger in 2011, it has become more apparent that lightweight, easily towable trailers featuring eco-friendly composite materials are here to stay. This may seem like a repeat of years past because it is. Only now, RV builders are truly coming into their own when it comes to fine-tuning existing products. Whereas a few years ago, manufacturers were experimenting with composites and releasing models focused mainly on the materials, they are now incorporating those new technologies into everyday floorplans with features we have become accustomed to, rather than the construction being the main draw.

The proof is in the pudding; or, rather, it can be found in "Trending Toward 2011," beginning on page 35. We take a look at some of the hottest new trends in the RV market for the 2011 model year, which looks to be as exciting and innovative as any year in recent times. And, lest you think everything is going smaller and lightweight, there are still plenty of tantalizing options for larger trailers and fifth-wheels.

But the RV manufacturers aren't the only ones who have put an ear to the ground and listened to demand. The automotive market is also trending toward a more-efficient, greener direction, as recent refinements to diesel engines have led to lower emissions and increased fuel-economy — as well as more power. In that vein, we've decided to put The Big Three's top ¾-ton diesel pickups — Chevy's Silverado 2500, Dodge's Ram 2500 and Ford's F-250 Super Duty — to the towing test. We obtained three identical MVP RV Vortex 270FS trailers (see review on page 42), towed them around the California countryside, and can now report our findings to you. All three are more than capable tow vehicles worthy of your consideration, but there can be only one overall favorite; turn to page 30 to find out which one it is.

As the new year unfolds, there's no doubt that the curtain will be lifted on even more exciting new models, products and innovations, and we look forward to bringing them all to you. 🗨

LETTERS

from our Readers

“I will admit, it’s rare to spot another rig being towed with just a car, but we have no difficulties.”



CAR TOWING

Nice to see someone else out there towing with a car (*Letters*, November issue)! We have a 1988 23-foot Skamper towed by a 1989 Mercury Colony Park, both purchased new. I will admit, it’s rare to spot another rig being towed with just a car, but we have no difficulties and have had the combination coast-to-coast several times without any issues. As a matter of fact, the last trip was 5,400 miles, finally putting the Merc over 100,000 miles!

Bill Hardy, Via e-mail

RAILS & TRAILS

My letter is to comment on the “Rails to Trails” article in the November 2010 edition. First off, I think this is an outstanding article, but I have some issues with rails-to-trails facilities. To my knowledge, these trails are dedicated primarily to hikers and bikers. Many of the trails are used at such a low rate that it is nearly impossible for them to be maintained. Also, in many instances, the distance between get-off and rest areas are so far apart that a handicapped individual has no means of using the trail. I realize this letter is not going to change the world’s thinking, but it could cause some to realize that not everyone can ride a bike, walk, or hike these trails.

John Lloyd, Farmersville, Texas

To contribute to this column, write to 2575 Vista Del Mar, Ventura, CA 93001, or e-mail info@trailerlife.com.

RAILS TO KATY TRAIL

Thank you for your very informative article, “Rails to Trails,” in your November issue. I would have liked to see more exposure given to the Katy Trail here in Missouri. It is, as you said, the longest and follows Lewis and Clark across Missouri. Many small towns have catered to users of the trail with bed-and-breakfasts, places to eat, bike shops for rental and repair, etc. All of this is the result of many years of the efforts of many who made this dream come true. I’ve known people from as far away as Oregon who came to ride the trail. One person who made this dream a reality is Darwin Hindman, lawyer and mayor of Columbia, Missouri.

Don Reid, Independence, Missouri

EUROPEAN TOWER SHOOT

Regarding *The Outsider* in the November

issue, I have hunted birds for more than 40 years and have always been taught and practiced sportsmanship. The writer’s description of, and participation in the “European tower shoot” should be condemned by true sportsmen everywhere. The courage in avoiding the shot bird that was coming directly toward him, however, points out the severe risks one might encounter in this most dangerous activity.

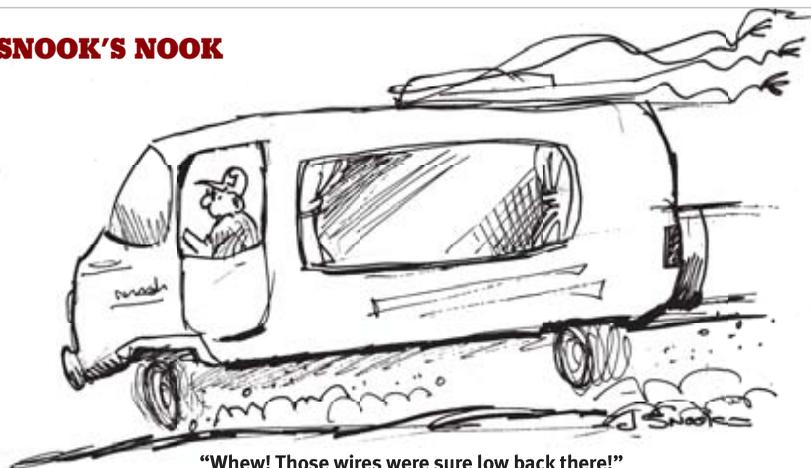
Fred Wisely, Via e-mail

ARCHWAY AT KEARNEY

Great article (*America’s Outback*, November issue) ... in fact, I have been under that structure on the interstate. My downfall is at Sydney, Nebraska — home of the original Cabela’s store! That stop always costs me some serious money. Keep up the good work.

J.P. Tyson, M.D., Denison, Texas

SNOOK’S NOOK



“Whew! Those wires were sure low back there!”

AROUND

THE BEND

NEWS • EVENTS • PEOPLE • PLACES • PARKS & RV TRENDS

Edited by Marleen Canniff

OUTDOOR KITCHENETTE

EverGreen RV has added a well-appointed outdoor kitchen to its growing line of environmentally friendly Ever-Lite travel trailers. Built with sustainable composites, stainless steel and aluminum, the new “Campfire Kitchenette” is crafted with EverGreen’s virtually wood-free CompositTek construction and includes a refrigerator, two-burner slide-out cooktop, stainless-steel sink, retractable goose-neck faucet, liquid-soap dispenser and plenty of polished hooks for towels, oven mitts and cooking utensils. It also includes a polished-aluminum spice/condiment rack, 120-volt AC power outlet, stainless-steel cabinets with positive latches and stainless-steel drawers with commercial slides. The line ranges in size from 25 feet 11 inches to 35 feet 9 inches, with a base msrp of \$33,442 for the Deep Slide 35 RL-DS. **For more information,** call (574) 825-4298 or visit www.goevergreenrv.com.



VANDALS DAMAGE ANCIENT ROCK ART



Ancient petroglyphs were recently vandalized on a popular hiking trail in Kaibab National Forest at Keyhole Sink, an outdoor interpretive site and popular destination for RVers. Thousands of visitors come to Williams, Arizona, each year to hike the ¾-mile trail to see the fragile rock art, made by Native Americans at least 1,000 years ago. The petroglyphs are protected under the Archaeological Resources Protection Act of 1979. Kaibab National Forest officials are seeking the public’s help in locating the person(s) responsible for this senseless act and have initiated an educational campaign to protect this valuable resource. **If you have any information regarding this incident,** please call (928) 635-5630.

SECURE COFFEE BREWING



For many RVers, the world just wouldn’t be the same without a freshly brewed cup of coffee on a cold winter morning — or any morning for that matter. A nifty new product for RVers, the Contoure CMM2000 coffee maker, can brew up to 10 cups of coffee while saving valuable space with its 12 × 11 × 9½-inch compact size. Best of all, it can be wall mounted or installed under a cabinet, so it always remains in place while you’re on the road. It comes with a double-insulated, brushed stainless-steel thermal carafe to ensure coffee stays hot without a hotplate and features a 24-hour digital clock and timer. It retails for \$139.95. **For more information,** call (941) 355-4488 or visit www.contoure.com.

DON'T MOVE FIREWOOD!

From western Colorado to New York and up through Maine whole forests are dying — and the Asian longhorned beetle, the Douglas fir beetle and the emerald ash borer are just a few of the culprits. Your firewood at home may look clean, but it could be harboring insect larvae that can become a deadly threat to our nation’s forests. To prevent infestations, many states now ban out-of-state firewood or even moving it long distances within the same state, sometimes with fines as high as \$250,000 as well as jail time for moving firewood out of a quarantined area.



Please help stop these tree-eating stowaways by buying treated firewood where you plan to burn it. Leave the logs at home, because one infested load is all it takes to destroy a forest.

For more information, visit www.aphis.usda.gov and www.dontmovefirewood.org.

banks **YEAR END SALE!**

ABSOLUTE ROCK BOTTOM PRICES... LIMITED TIME ONLY!

GREAT NEWS!

Recently, we completed our annual stock adjustment where our Stocking Dealers are allowed to return or exchange over-stocked systems. These unopened kits are complete and in their original shipping boxes. Other than the cartons being a little worn, the products inside are perfect. In the past, these would be re-boxed and put back into inventory. This costs us money. Instead, we have decided to offer them to our customers (like you) at incredible discounts.

Again, these kits are in perfect condition and include full factory warranties. Because this offer will generate a lot of interest, these kits won't last long and supplies are limited. I hope you can take advantage of this rare opportunity to enjoy the performance and durability our premium systems have provided for over 50 years.

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- » **FULL FACTORY WARRANTY**
- » **BOXES MAY BE DIRTY**

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THE PALOMINO Y-SERIES

Any way you fold it, Palomino's new Y-Series campers make sense for those looking for their first camping trailer — or even for their next camping trailer. With nine floorplans available, this line offers fully furnished interiors that have more elbow room than one might expect. Able to be stored inside a standard residential-style garage at just less than 16 feet long, the Y-4102 is said to weigh only 1,953 pounds dry. And in camp, the unit unfolds to 20 feet 2 inches long with an interior raised height of 6 feet 7 inches. It's built with fiberglass and aluminum construction with a manageable base msrp of \$7,284.

For more information, call (269) 432-3271 or visit www.palominorv.com.

NEWSWIRE

Camping World has selected ExxonMobil as its exclusive lubricants supplier. Under the agreement,

Exxon Mobil will supply Mobil Delvac 1300 Super and Mobil Delvac 1 ESP for diesel engines, as well as Mobil 1 and Mobil Clean products for gasoline engines, to Camping World's more than 75 locations nationwide. The company will also supply Camping World with Mobil-branded coolants, greases and auto-

matic-transmission fluids for gasoline and diesel engines ... **Excel Distributors**, the online purveyors of RV mattresses, honors the best film performances of an RV in their latest roundup, "Starring the RV: Cinema and the Illustrious Career of the Recreational Vehicle." The roundup showcases 13 films ranging from Lucille Ball's 1953 slapstick "The Long, Long Trailer" to the 2008 introspective documentary "A Finished Life" — and everything in-between. Excel classified the movies by the RV's function in each: as a comedic device, for example, or to propel a horror story, or to display different levels of wealth. Visit www.exceldistributors.com/movie-rvs.html for a full list of the RV movies ... **Follow us on Facebook** at www.facebook.com/TrailerLifeMagazine.



HEART OF COUNTRY MUSIC

You don't have to love country music — but it's even better if you do — to enjoy the Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum in Nashville, Tennessee. That's because if you favor, say, history, unique automobiles, flamboyant couture (dresses and suits lavish with sequins and rhinestones) or fine art, you'll find all this here as well.



This superb 130,000-square-foot museum truly has something for every-

one. The museum's main exhibit — "Sing Me Back Home: A Journey Through Country Music" — immerses visitors in the origins and traditions, stories and sounds of the genre with artifacts, photos, videos and the music of dozens of performers. You'll see such things as Webb Pierce's 1962 Pontiac Bonneville convertible (with a 7-foot pair of steer horns mounted on the front grille), Patsy Cline's cocktail dress, one of the oldest working letterpress print shops, six of Chet Atkins' most prized guitars, and a two-story-high wall display of all 854 gold and platinum records awarded country artists during the 20th century. Public parking lots are available nearby, but we recommend leaving the RV at one of Nashville's campgrounds, such as the Nashville KOA (800-562-7789; www.nashville.local.com).

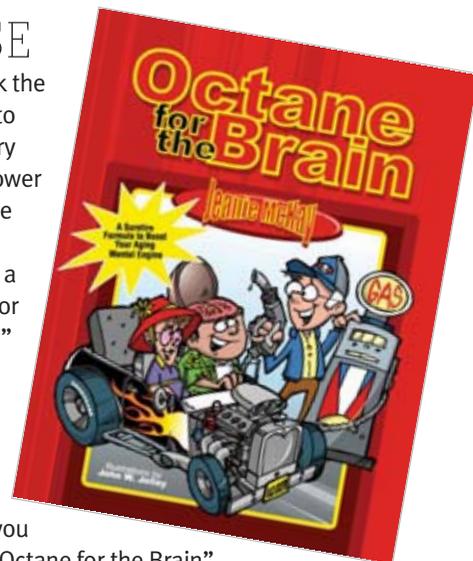
For more information, call (615) 416-2006 or visit www.countrymusicHalloffame.com. For other area sightseeing opportunities, check out the article "A Walk on the Wild Side," beginning on page 19.

— Pamela Selbert

BRAIN EXERCISE

Of course, nobody can bring back the younger years, but it is possible to help stave off age-related memory loss (aka senior moments) and lower your risk for dementia. RVer Jeanie McKay — maker of Rally Ho! The Travel Trivia Game for RVers — is a cognitive-fitness expert and author of the book "Octane for the Brain." This 272-page book details how lifestyle strategies can aid in the preservation of your aging brain. It has more than 100 fun and mentally challenging "preventive maintenance" activities you can bring on any RV adventure. "Octane for the Brain" can keep you sharp — regardless of age. Retail for \$24.99.

To purchase, call (541) 382-8785 or visit www.octaneforthebrain-seminars.com.



HOW'S THE WEATHER?

Hot over his trailer manufacturer's design that featured only one air-conditioning unit, a reader asked for help:

In April 2010, I purchased a new Heartland Big Country 3450TS fifth-wheel.

Upon purchasing the trailer and bringing it home, I turned on the air conditioner and noted the air at the duct was 39° F — which I believe is mediocre.

On several camping trips that followed, the A/C continued its sub-par performance. One of those trips was to Delaware in July, where the outside temperature reached 104° F. With the A/C on high, the temperature inside the trailer was 88° F at best.

While at the campground, I made an appointment with the dealer to have the A/C inspected. The dealer tested the A/C and said it was working as best as it could. My wife then called Heartland, and the sales manager agreed the trailer should cool to a more reasonable level.

As my wife has a respiratory condition, I asked the dealer to install a second A/C unit, for which I paid \$1,035 (the trailer was pre-wired for a second A/C). After the installation, the temperature in the trailer was a comfortable 77° F within 15 minutes on a 105° F day.

My wife again called Heartland and reported our findings, and the sales manager agreed to see what he could do. He later reported that Heartland would not help us. Can you help?

Dave Rummel, Pasadena, Maryland

Although we certainly sympathize with the Rummels, it's difficult to see how the manufacturer could be at fault here. When purchasing a trailer, buyers need to take into consideration all the destinations they intend to visit, and plan accordingly. So, if your travels will likely take you to hot-summer locations, order an additional A/C unit; conversely, if you plan on winter camping,

upgraded insulation and four-season protection should be on your "must-have" list. The lesson here is to plan ahead. Heartland responded with the following:

Heartland installs one A/C unit on all of its products. Additional wiring is run for a second A/C unit; however, the second A/C is an option and the cost is added to the unit if taken. It is up to the customer to determine the temperature in the area they will be camping, and to make the determination as to whether a second unit is necessary.

This is not a warranty concern. Heartland is not going to participate in the addition of a second A/C unit.

James Fenner,

Customer Service Manager,
Heartland Recreational Vehicles LLC

SUCCESSFUL COMPLAINT RESOLUTION

Periodically, we like to remind readers of a few things that may be very helpful in securing a positive resolution to their *RV Action Line* complaints.

The most important element in the process is a well-written letter, which should spell out the issues in simple terms and include what you would consider a fair resolution. Always include all receipts and documents related to your complaint. Also, the tone of your complaint can be crucial, as many resolutions from the business world are made on a goodwill basis.

Letters must be typed (handwritten letters will be returned without consideration) and should only include points relevant to your case.

Finally, we'd appreciate a follow-up letter from you if you've received a resolution from a company and it appears *RV Action Line* was not notified. 📧

After exhausting all other resources without success, please forward information (typewritten only) with copies of appropriate bills and correspondence to *RV Action Line*, 2575 Vista Del Mar, Ventura, CA 93001.

Please include a self-addressed, stamped envelope. No phone calls.

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THE OUTSIDER ❖

by Bruce Leonard Jr.



LIKE RIDING A BIKE

“AS I WAS PLANNING AN EXTENDED TRIP NORTH THROUGH CALIFORNIA TO THE OREGON COAST, I DECIDED TO BRING A BIKE WITH ME ... SO I SECURED THE HYBRID AND A MOUNTAIN BIKE TO THE BIKE RACK THAT WAS AFFIXED TO THE FRONT OF MY RIG.”

Sixteen months before writing this column, I was riding my hybrid bicycle through Santa Monica, California, when — contrary to the lessons years of hyper-cautious riding had taught me — the passenger door of a car stopped in traffic suddenly swung into the bike lane. I had no choice but to hit both brakes. I was not attached to the bike, so though the bike stopped just short of the guillotine now in my lane, I did not. In all-too-vivid slow motion, I felt myself pivot over the handlebars, my feet then 10 feet above the blacktop, and as I somersaulted through that otherwise gorgeous January morning, I remember saying to myself: “This is going to hurt. Protect your back!”

I managed to accomplish this Pyrrhic victory by twisting and breaking my fall with my right arm. Unfortunately, this genius move also broke my right wrist. Of course, this indisputable medical fact had not been confirmed yet, though as I tried to regain the breath that had been knocked out of me and assess the damage to the hip that had actually left a dent in the blacktop, I had an accurate premonition that the news would not be good and that I would soon be donning fiberglass.

So for 16 months I did not ride: Other athletic activities elevated my pulse, but I’ll admit that a tickle of fear played a role in my riding hiatus. Yet enough was enough, and it was time to climb back into the saddle. As I was planning an extended trip north through California to the Oregon Coast, I decided to bring a bike with me. And if one was good, two would



Fuel Efficient Motorhomes You'll Love to Drive.



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Imagine what you could do with a vehicle that has the spacious comfort and convenience of a larger motorhome but with much better fuel economy and driveability. Whether driving cross-country or just cross-town, enjoy the convenience of having your own kitchen, bathroom, changeroom, family room and bedroom in a vehicle that fits in a normal parking space and can be used as a second car.

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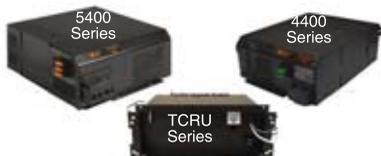
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THE OUTSIDER

be better, so I secured the hybrid and a mountain bike to the bike rack that was affixed to the front of my rig.

As I drove down the western slope of the Cascade Range, heading to Bandon, Oregon, I wore a new pair of foot-conforming shoes called Vibram FiveFingers for the first time. The shoes are minimalist, almost like socks dipped in rubber, and allow feet to move as they were meant to move, instead of the way feet are restricted and hampered by traditional, rigid-soled footwear. The salesperson strongly suggested that I wear my FiveFingers for short periods of time until the muscles and tendons of my feet and calves adjusted to the new shoes, and she sternly warned me against taking long walks, since I would undoubtedly regret those strolls for at least two days.

The shoes felt great while I drove, though, and when I arrived at Bullards Beach State Park, two miles north of the small town of Bandon, Oregon, along U.S. 101, I backed into my campsite, then decided to explore the campground by bicycle, while wearing my first-day shoes. As I had made the turn into what would prove to be one of the nicest state parks I've ever visited (including 104 full-hookup sites), I saw a sign stating that the lighthouse was three miles distant. Figuring that after a long drive, my body could use a bit of exercise, I lifted the hybrid, with its mangled taillight and abraded handlebars, from the bike rack, adjusted the seat and handlebars to their proper riding positions (from the lower settings that had given me maximum visibility while driving), then set off on two wheels.

And the ride was spectacular. A gentle downhill coast from the campsites led to a right-hand turn along a road that shadows the Coquille River. I passed a boat ramp and a horse camp, and I felt comforted by the easy pace I maintained and by the windswept dunes and the wild, untrammled terrain through which I rode. The river and scruffy vegetation adorned the landscape to my left, and the Pacific Ocean, though obscured by dunes, loomed to my right. Not a single vehicle passed me in either direction,

though seagulls swooped and cawed on both sides of me.

I dismounted when I arrived at the Coquille River Lighthouse. A forest of driftwood was strewn across the beach, so I carefully negotiated my way through it, wondering what it would be like to live in a lighthouse and contemplating how long it would take me, while living in a lighthouse, to start seeing mermaids.

The small town of Bandon sat across the river, and the whole scene — the lighthouse, the river, the ocean, the sand, the driftwood and the seagulls — combined to create a beautiful, lasting memory.

As I began my ride back, however, my handlebars jumped forward when I hit a dip in the road. I had obviously not tightened them enough, so I hopped off the bike, pulled out my hex wrenches, then made the fix. While I was at it, I figured I'd lower the seat half an inch. As I made this adjustment, the bolt that tightens the ring that holds the seat at the proper height broke, and nothing I tried could either remove the bolt or finagle a fix. The wind carried off my curses.

The rest of my stay in Bandon would surely have been compromised by a three-mile walk in the FiveFingers, and I was more likely to complete the trip walking on my hands than going barefoot — my feet are that tender. So I tried to ride while standing up, but that lasted only a couple hundred yards. I pushed the bike while I walked on the soft shoulder. Then I tried again to ride out of the saddle, but my legs were soon rubber. Swallowing my pride and hoping no one had a video camera, I rode the rest of the way back, uphill, into the wind, while sitting with the seat all the way down, swiveling back and forth with each downstroke, my knees pistoning up dangerously close to my chin, P.T. Barnum applauding. All I needed was a red nose and a seltzer bottle.

The next morning I wore Vibram FiveFingers while searching for a replacement part for my bike. ☹

**Oregon Parks and Recreation
Department: State Parks, (503) 986-
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THIS LAND

ATCHAFALAYA NATIONAL HERITAGE AREA

by **Len Cousineau**



It has no entrance gate, no admission fee and no specific tourist season. Yet these are not knocks against the Atchafalaya National Heritage Area. In fact, this 14-parish region in south Louisiana benefits greatly from the fact that it differs from the traditional “national park” experience: As a national heritage area, it is far more dynamic and alive than national parks that hang their fame mostly on geologic wonders. The Atchafalaya National Heritage Area certainly celebrates the bounteous bayous, the expansive marshes and America’s largest swamp that help define it, but it also showcases the culinary flair, the musical exuberance and the cultural influences of the people who have inhabited the region for hundreds of years and who continue to infuse the area with their unique energies: the Cajuns and Creoles.

Those travelers expecting to pull into a rest stop, snap a few photos, then claim they’ve experienced the Atchafalaya National Heritage Area will not have their expectations met here. The Atchafalaya Basin, after all, is approximately 150 miles in length, contains 85 species of fish, 200-plus species of birds and so much culture that visitors should educate themselves one bite, one note and one phrase at a time.

After they tour Vermilionville in Lafayette and some of the six sites that comprise the Jean Lafitte National Historic Park and Preserve, RVers should slip into establishments such as Café des Amis in Breaux Bridge on a Saturday morning for the Zydeco Breakfast or recline in the nostalgic comforts of the Liberty Theatre in Eunice for its Rendezvous des Cajuns, a vibrant musical and cultural celebration held every Saturday night.

Snowbirds who regularly prepare meals in their rigs should splurge and sample the local fare, since the Basin, as the region is often called, practically overflows with culinary magicians. Within steps of nearly any of the area’s numerous campgrounds, travelers can sample gumbo, jambalaya, étouffée, crawfish pie and a Cajun sausage called boudin. And although the region features abundant festivals year-round, visitors will likely want to tour the national heritage area during October, when Experience Atchafalaya Days takes place. 📍

Atchafalaya National Heritage Area, (337) 228-1094, www.atchafalaya.org.

GRAND TETON NATIONAL PARK DISPLAYS THE BEAUTY OF MOTHER NATURE UNDER A BLANKET OF PURE WHITE SNOW

by Donna Ikenberry

Grand Teton National Park is a wondrous place any-time of the year. Visit in summer, however, and you'll have to share the trails, campsites and views with hordes of other visitors. Spring and fall are especially nice, as there are fewer crowds, the wildlife is more visible and magnificent scenes abound. I've been to the park in all four seasons and must say that after my recent visit in winter it is definitely one of my favorite times to visit.

Why? Because I think the Tetons are even more gorgeous with a blanket of

snow. Also, there's nothing like skiing along a lonely trail and finding animal tracks in the snow. What better way to witness what happened earlier in the day or the previous day?

Once while skiing with my husband, Mike, we had proof in the form of footprints that wolves had strolled in the same path as we. On another day we saw two coyotes harassing a flock of a dozen trumpeter swans, but to no avail. And one day, while skiing the realms of frozen ponds at Swan Lake and Heron Pond we saw snowshoe hare tracks and a very friendly red squirrel.

We skied along the Snake River and saw a multitude of moose scat and tracks. In fact, during our five-day visit we saw a total of nine moose. Moose are one of my favorite mammals. The largest member of the deer family, moose are at home on land and in water. In the warmer months, the gangly animal plunges its big bulbous face underwater for aquatic plants that line the river bottom and banks. In winter, it often browses on antelope bitterbrush, willows and other vegetation.

Grand Teton National Park is home to the Teton Range, majestic peaks that



WINTER WO



Draft horses pull the sleigh, while riders keep warm with winter garb and blankets — all to see the elk's wonderful display with the Tetons as a backdrop.

PHOTOS BY DONNA IKENBERRY



NDERLAND



rise abruptly from the valley floor. The Teton Mountains — the result of sporadic earthquake-producing jolts — is an impressive range, one of the most dramatic of Rocky Mountain scenes. Foothills are nonexistent in this land; instead, the Tetons burst straight up from the valley known as Jackson Hole, piercing the sky with their jagged peaks. In addition to the mountains and valleys are lakes, rivers and see-forever skies all home to an abundance of plants and animals.

Humans have lived in the shadow of the Tetons for more than 12,000 years. Although no single tribe claimed the land, several Native American tribes — Crow, Shoshone, Blackfeet and Gros Ventre — used the Jackson Hole valley during the warm months. History books reveal that John Colter, who made his historic trek during the winter of 1807-1808, was possibly the first white man to enter the valley. Later, mountain men trapped in the region, the lure of abundant furs a constant impetus in the move west. Unfortunately, many species of animals were hunted to near extinction. Frontier settlers visited more recently and left behind more than 300 historic structures.

In addition to humans, a dozen 12,000-foot-plus Teton peaks oversee the park, which was established in 1929. The highest, Grand Teton, spires more than 7,000 feet above the valley floor, scraping the heavens at 13,770 feet. The abode to 12 or so mountain glaciers, the Teton Range is the youngest of the mountains in the Rocky Mountain system, yet it displays some of North America's oldest rocks.

Traveling around the park in winter is much different than

visiting in the summer months. Winter visitors should note that icy roads may exist. Call (307) 739-3682 for up-to-date road information. Also, be sure to carry a winter emergency kit, including a shovel. When visiting in winter be prepared — avoid frostbite and hypothermia. Bundle up! Layer clothes, wear breathable fabrics, stay well-hydrated and do not travel alone. Average winter high temperatures in December and January are about 26° F; lows are around 1° F. In February, the temperature jumps up to an average of 31° F for the high and 3° F for the low. Visit in March and you'll enjoy 39° F for the high and 12° F for the low.

The best way to see the national park in winter is to pilot your tow vehicle and drive the roads that are plowed — and watch for wildlife. If you like to get off the beaten path, you can do like we do and spend your days skiing or snowshoeing. Some park trails are marked. Outside the park you'll find groomed trails as well. Combine the national park with the nearby Jackson Hole area and you'll experience one of the largest backcountry skiing terrains in the lower 48 states. Remember, if you are snowshoeing, please be sure and respect groomed ski tracks by walking beside them. Snowshoers may want to check out the daily ranger-guided snowshoe walks that begin at the Craig Thomas Discovery and Visitor Center. In addition, visitors can enjoy snowmobile and winter tours, sleigh rides, snow coach tours and wildlife and nature tours as well.

One of the best places to look for beautiful scenes and wildlife is at Oxbow Bend, one of my favorite places. Here, you'll witness a dramatic view of massive Mount Moran, which



Backcountry skiing at Heron Pond is a winter experience nobody should miss. The snow doesn't stop the adventurous from enjoying the RV life. Framed by four arches made from hundreds of elk antlers, Jackson's Town Square is the picturesque centerpiece.



is reflected in the calm waters of the Snake River. Early morning is the best time for both viewing the scene and photographing the event. The peaks also tower over the mighty Snake River, which meanders its way through the park for 27 miles. The river begins life in the wilderness, born of heavy snowpack near Yellowstone National Park, and enters Grand Teton National Park where it integrates with Jackson Lake. The Snake then flows out of the lake at Jackson Lake Dam, continuing past Oxbow Bend where a cutoff of the river moseys along at a quiet pace.

The river at Oxbow Bend was frozen while we were there, but it was still a magnificent place for snapping pictures and observing wildlife. We saw several trumpeter swans lying around one small open hole of water. At another small hole we saw a river otter pop up onto the ice. It rested for a few minutes then dropped under the water — only to pop back up with a fish in its mouth.

All of the Grand Teton campgrounds are closed in winter, but you can park your trailer near the Colter Bay Visitor Center for a small fee. Primitive winter camping exists, which means you'll be camping on the plowed, yet still snow-covered parking lot. For full amenities, check out Grand Teton Park RV Resort (800-563-6469, www.yellowstonerv.com), which is open year-round and is located six miles east of Moran Junction.

During our recent visit we not only explored the park on a daily basis, we spent time at the National Elk Refuge, located just southeast of the park. Thousands of magnificent elk summer in the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem, which includes the Teton Range and Jackson Hole; it is the largest essentially intact natural area in the contiguous United States. In the winter, anywhere from 5,000 to 8,000 elk gather at the 24,700-acre refuge. Home to the largest elk herd in the world, the area also supports a large herd of bison as well as deer, bighorn sheep, pronghorns and coyotes, plus many small mammals and a variety of birds.

During the late 1800s and early 1900s, settlers began encroaching on traditional elk migration pathways and wintering areas. Severe winters, a reduction



Bighorn sheep (aka *Ovis canadensis*) dot the landscape at high elevations in Grand Teton National Park — a sight visitors won't soon forget.

in elk forage and shrinking habitat eventually meant the starvation deaths of thousands of elk in Jackson Hole. While the locals needed to protect their domestic cattle herds and haystacks, they also yearned to have healthy elk herds in the valley. Thus, in 1912, the refuge was formed and folks began feeding the elk via horse-drawn sleighs.

Although you can often see elk from the highway, your best bet for seeing them up close is to sign up for a National Elk Refuge Sleigh Ride. We did, enjoying every moment, even though it was a brisk -17° F that morning. We just bundled up in our ski clothes, including down, and smiled when we were given toasty-warm blankets to place on our laps. Two draft horses pulled the sleigh out into the refuge, with our personable guide telling stories along the way. It was an awesome experience to be so close to the elk — in our case, a herd of bull elk — with the magnificent Tetons in the background. Tickets are available at the Jackson Hole Greater Yellowstone Visitor Center. Open 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily, sleigh rides operate

from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. and are closed Christmas Day. For more information, call (800) 772-5386 or visit www.fws.gov/nationalelkrefuge/NERsleighRides.htm.

Being lovers of wildlife we just had to check out the National Museum of Wildlife Art, north of the town of Jackson, before leaving town. The museum is open Monday through Saturday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Sunday from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. This wonderful museum offers all wildlife-related exhibits. And like one local said, "The neat thing about the museum is that it doesn't stay the same. They often display something new."

Our winter experience at Grand Teton National Park was something new for us. It was an amazing experience and one we'll definitely enjoy again. 📷

For more information on the Tetons visit the Craig Thomas Discovery & Visitor Center. Open year-round (from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. in winter), it is closed Christmas Day. You can call (307) 739-3399 or visit www.nps.gov/grte. Park personnel can direct you to the best places to ski and snowshoe.

A WALK ON THE WILD SIDE

EXPLORING THE SMOKY MOUNTAIN REGION'S NATURE, MUSIC AND HERITAGE

by Lisa Halvorsen



PHOTOS BY LISA HALVORSEN

The woods are silent except for the crunch of boots on the thin snow cover as eight hikers, each clinging tightly to the lead line of a woolly llama, trudge single file up the narrow sloping trail.

Yahzi, the sweet, 3-year-old, doe-eyed llama I'm leading, eyes me curiously as we wind our way along the West Prong Trail near Tremont in the Tennessee portion of Great Smoky Mountains National Park. Although normally not the lead animal, today he is jockeying for position in the front of the pack.

I am trekking with Smoky Mountain Llama Treks and our guide, the "Llama Mama" herself, owner Sandy Sgrillo. The trek is one of dozens of free activities offered during Wilderness Wildlife Week in Pigeon Forge, a city better known for its dinner theater and comedy shows than for its wildlife. Yet its proximity to the national park — the most visited of all the parks in the U.S. National Park System — makes it the ideal location for this unique event held annually, early in the first month of the year (January 8-15, 2011).

RVers should have no problem finding a place to set up camp, as most of Pigeon Forge's 17 campgrounds, including Riveredge RV Park (877-881-7222, www.stayriveredge.com), Clabough's Campground and RV Resort (800-965-8524, www.claboughcampground.com) and River Plantation RV Park (865-429-5267, www.riverplantationrv.com) in nearby Sevierville, are open throughout the winter. Camping (no hookups) also is available in Great Smoky Mountains National Park at the Cades Cove Campground, which can accommodate RVs



Clockwise from left: Hikers cross a bridge while enjoying a guided hike. Birders search the sky for raptors on an all-day birding trip to Cades Cove. Area musicians entertain the crowd at Appalachia Fest, an annual event celebrating mountain music at Wilderness Wildlife Week in Pigeon Forge.

up to 35 feet — although most attendees find it more convenient to stay closer to Pigeon Forge.

Wilderness Wildlife Week, the brainchild of Ken Jenkins, a local photographer and naturalist, began 21 years ago as a Saturday afternoon session. Now sponsored by the City of Pigeon Forge, it has expanded to eight days of free seminars, musical performances, field trips and other outdoor activities, celebrating the diverse riches of the Great Smoky Mountains region of Tennessee and North Carolina from its flora and fauna to its people, places and history. Sixty guided hikes and more than 175 presentations by experts on a wide range of topics — from wildlife management, native wildflowers and area history to astronomy, dowsing and digital photography — are offered each year. The event also celebrates the region's musical heritage with Appalachia Fest, a showcase of traditional mountain music so toe-tappin', hip-slappin' good that audience members often can't resist the urge to get up and start clogging to the music.

The main venue for Wilderness

Wildlife Week is the Music Road Hotel and Convention Center on Henderson Chapel Road, just off state Highway 66. While easy to find, parking can be tricky for bigger rigs, so using your tow vehicle (or dinghy) is advised. However, free transportation to trailheads and sites is provided for all participants registered for the hikes, llama treks and other excursions.

My day-long llama trek begins on a crisp winter morning at the trailhead of the West Prong Trail, so named for the branch of the Little River, which intersects the trail. Our guide, Sandy, fills the packs, distributing the weight evenly. The llamas patiently stand, occasionally sniffing or snorting. I find them to be aloof, but curious, and as we start up the snow-covered slope, they quietly fall into line, one after another.

A small family cemetery, just a quick detour off the start of the trail, provides a poignant glimpse into local history, with many of the gravestones harking back to the time when the area was known as Walker Valley or sometimes Walker Fields. Some of the graves are those of relatives of the area's first settler, William Marion "Big Bill" Walker,

who was born in nearby Tuckaleechee Cove but moved here in 1859. A polygamist, he fathered more than 20 children with three wives, many of whose descendants still live in the area.

The 5.4-mile round-trip trail takes us through dense woods, through big patches of rhododendrons — toxic to our woolly companions if ingested — and over gurgling streams as we head toward Campsite No. 18, a backcountry tent site on the banks of the Little River, our lunch stop. Although many of the Smoky Mountain Llama Treks include a gourmet meal, for this hike we pack our own.

On the way back, Black Jack, a large charcoal-black llama with a penchant for keeping his feet dry, hesitates while crossing the first stream, which is little more than a trickle. The rest of the llamas start to hum, a form of llama-to-llama communication, I learn, indicating worry or concern. Although usually docile creatures, their unrest is palpable as they wait for the last of their social pack to rejoin the group. Sandy coaxes and cajoles him, and once across the water and back in line, the other llamas quickly settle down.

Earlier in the week on an evening Owl Prowl, I stood statue-still in the cold darkness, neck craned, looking upward in search of owls while our guide played calls of the barred and screech owls, the two species we were most likely to spot. This excursion also took me into the national park along a short stretch of trail leading to Cataract Falls not far from the Sugarlands Visitor Center, one of three official information centers in the park. Forty minutes of searching provided no sightings or even a distant hoot in response to our audio recordings, unlike the Owl Prowls on previous nights when the owls were more active.

Throughout the week I mix seminars by experts on topics as diverse as black-bear management, hiking safety, digital photography and attracting birds to backyard feeders, with easy-to-moderate hikes and birding activities, ending with an all-day birding trip to Cades Cove.

As the bus heads toward the national park, we make several stops along the roadside to observe birds. In Wears Valley, I add the American kestrel, Cooper's

hawk, belted kingfisher and hermit thrush to my field-trip list. In Townsend, I see my first Carolina chickadee, along with a red-bellied woodpecker, yellow-rumped warbler, northern mockingbird and several other species.

By the time we reach Cades Cove, a once thriving, although isolated, Appalachian community, my list numbers close to two dozen species. Our bus lets us off along the popular 11-mile loop road that winds through the postcard-pretty valley, a haven for white-tailed deer, black bear and other wildlife. A number of late 19th- and early 20th-century buildings — including log homes, churches and a grist mill — dot the landscape. A few days prior, back at the convention center, I attended a session on Cades Cove's past, just one of many talks during the week focusing on the history of various local communities, some long-gone.

As we walk along the dirt road, our birding guide points out three different hawk species — the red-shouldered hawk, northern harrier and red-tailed



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A WALK ON THE WILD SIDE



Sandy Sgrillo feeds one of her llamas during the lunch break on her llama trek during Wilderness Wildlife Week.

hawk — lined up on a fence, each perched on its own wooden post intent on hunting for mice and other small rodents. Their territories seldom overlap, so it's unusual, we're told, to see the three species in close proximity.

By day's end, we've spotted several dozen bird species, a few such as the Carolina wren and the red-shouldered hawk — new additions to my life list, and a fitting end to Wilderness Wildlife Week. I find myself making plans to

return again when the weather is warm to explore more of the region's natural treasures. 🐦

Wilderness Wildlife Week 2012 will be held January 7-14, 2012, at the Music Road Hotel and Convention Center. For more information, call (800) 251-9100 or visit www.mypigeonforge.com. **Smoky Mountain Llama Treks**, (865) 428-6042, www.smokymountainllama.com.

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IDAHO WINES AND WINERIES

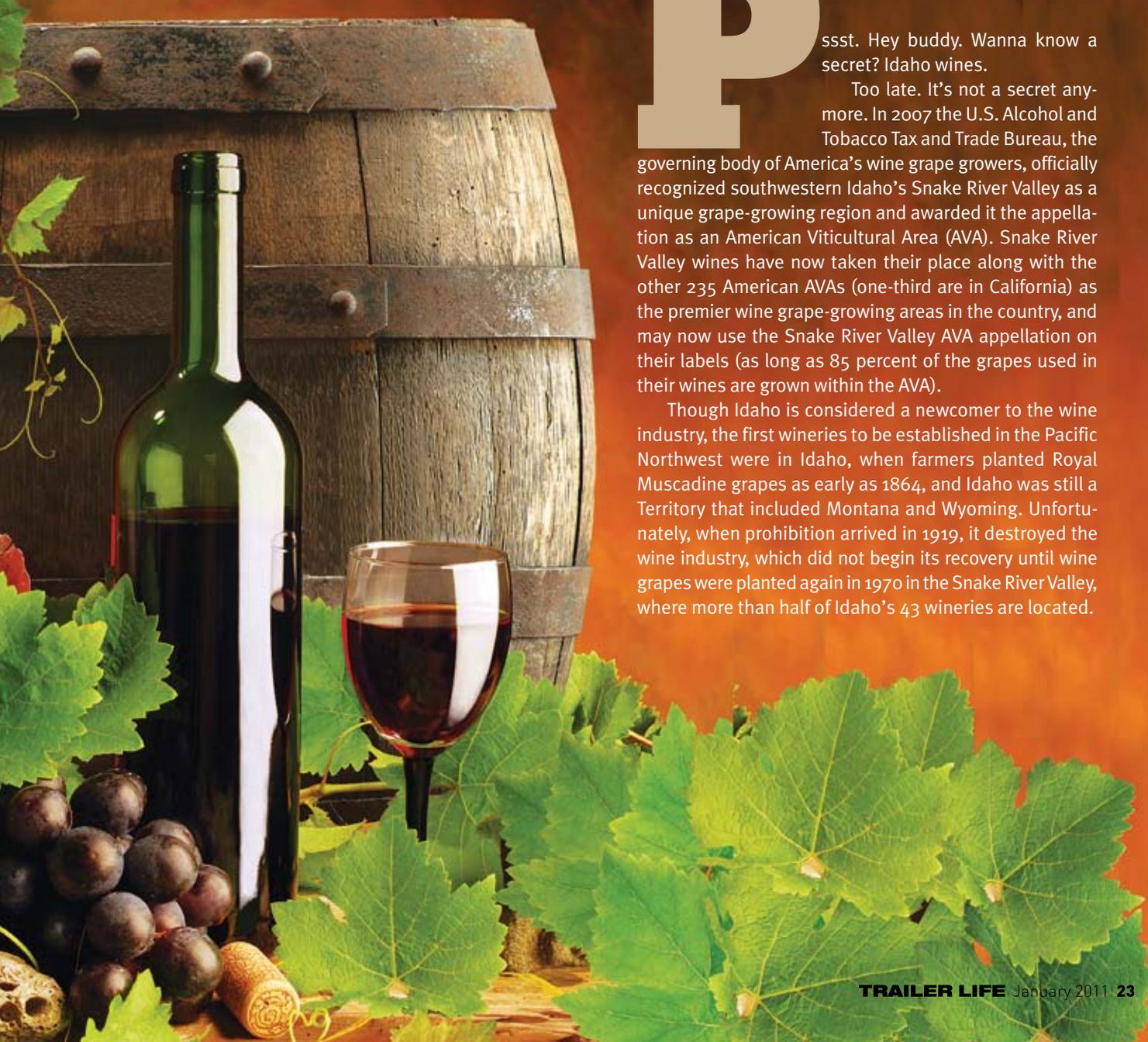
WELCOME TO THE NEW WINE COUNTRY

by Bob Difley

Pssst. Hey buddy. Wanna know a secret? Idaho wines.

Too late. It's not a secret anymore. In 2007 the U.S. Alcohol and Tobacco Tax and Trade Bureau, the governing body of America's wine grape growers, officially recognized southwestern Idaho's Snake River Valley as a unique grape-growing region and awarded it the appellation as an American Viticultural Area (AVA). Snake River Valley wines have now taken their place along with the other 235 American AVAs (one-third are in California) as the premier wine grape-growing areas in the country, and may now use the Snake River Valley AVA appellation on their labels (as long as 85 percent of the grapes used in their wines are grown within the AVA).

Though Idaho is considered a newcomer to the wine industry, the first wineries to be established in the Pacific Northwest were in Idaho, when farmers planted Royal Muscadine grapes as early as 1864, and Idaho was still a Territory that included Montana and Wyoming. Unfortunately, when prohibition arrived in 1919, it destroyed the wine industry, which did not begin its recovery until wine grapes were planted again in 1970 in the Snake River Valley, where more than half of Idaho's 43 wineries are located.



It's no surprise to the wine-grape growers, however, that Idaho is producing such quality wines. The cold winters encourage the grape vines to go dormant, when they rest and conserve energy for the growing season. The cold also destroys insect pests and discourages disease. Alternately, the long, hot and consistently dry sunny days of summer

produce a high sugar content, while the cool nights keep acids at desirable levels. The lack of summer rains inhibits molds and rot, a common problem in wetter vineyards.

But weather isn't everything. "A combination of the area's microclimates, soil and other growing conditions," says Ron Bitner, former director

of The Idaho Grape Growers and Wine Producers Commission and owner of Bitner Vineyards, "make the valley a premium grape-producing area." The future holds great potential for the Snake River Valley grape growers. This 8,263 square-mile "geologic basin," surrounded by high mountains, is larger than the states of Connecticut, Delaware

SELECTED IDAHO WINERIES

WOODRIVER CELLARS

3705 Highway 16, Eagle
(208) 286-9463, www.woodrivercellars.com.

TASTING ROOM HOURS: Varies depending on season.

This winery just west of Boise changed names recently from The Winery at Eagle Knoll to Woodriver Cellars. Established in 2003, it's one of Idaho's newer wineries with 10 varieties planted. The picturesque grounds feature a waterfall, gazebo, stream and garden that are used for outdoor concerts and social gatherings.



PHOTOS BY BOB DIFLEY

STE. CHAPELLE WINERY

19348 Lowell Road, Caldwell
(877) 783-2427, www.stechapelle.com.

TASTING ROOM HOURS: Monday-Saturday: 10 a.m.-5 p.m.; Sunday: Noon - 5 p.m.

Founded in 1976, Ste. Chapelle became Idaho's first bonded commercial winery and is now the largest winery in Idaho, producing more than 150,000 cases annually. All of its grapes come from the Snake River Valley AVA within 20 miles of the winery. Under Winemaker Chuck Devlin's direction, the winery has won numerous awards — especially for its ice wine and riesling. Visitors enjoy summer concerts and watching grape crushing during fall harvest. Guided tours are available by appointment only.



BITNER VINEYARDS

16645 Plum Road, Caldwell
(208) 899-7648, www.bitnervineyards.com.

TASTING ROOM HOURS: Friday-Sunday: Noon - 5 p.m.

Professional entomologist, bee expert and consultant, Dr. Ron Bitner, may not be typical of Idaho winemakers, but he has been growing wine grapes for 30 years. With 16 acres planted in wine grapes, he produces about 1,000 cases annually — all

from his own grapes. His late-harvest riesling, entered in a recent Florida State Fair wine competition with more than 1,500 total entries, won the blue ribbon for Best of Class in the dessert wine category over 200 entries. Though he distributes his wines to a handful of local restaurants, 80 percent of his wines are sold out of the winery's tasting room.



KOENIG VINEYARDS

20928 Grape Lane, Caldwell
(208) 455-8386, www.koenigvineyards.com.

TASTING ROOM HOURS: Saturday-Sunday: Noon - 5 p.m.

Brothers Greg and Andrew Koenig learned much of the Old World's brandy, vodka and winemaking traditions in their father's hometown of Lustenau, Austria. They combined that knowledge back home in Idaho to produce classic fruit brandies, hand-crafted premium varietal wines in small quantities and Idaho potato vodka. Pinot noir and riesling are their best sellers, with the syrah close behind, producing between 1,500 and 2,000 cases a year. In 2005 Koenig won the Idaho Winery of the Year award, and the gold medal for Best Idaho Wine for its Cuvee Amelia Reserve Syrah, which also won as Best Red Wine in the Northwest at the 2008 Northwest Wine Competition.



SAWTOOTH WINERY

13750 Surrey Lane, Nampa
(208) 467-1200, www.sawtoothwinery.com.

TASTING ROOM HOURS: Tuesday-Sunday: Noon - 5 p.m.

Named Winery of the Year in 2006 by *Wine Press Northwest* magazine, Sawtooth Winery uses only its own grapes in its wines, selling the excess production from the 450 acres of vines to other wineries. Formerly Pintler Cellars, the first wine grapes were planted in 1982 producing a first harvest of 2,000 cases in 1987. Pintler Cellars joined Corus Estates & Vineyards in 1998 and changed its name to Sawtooth Winery with Brad Pintler remaining as winemaker and general manager. With

and Rhode Island combined. Currently 1,600 acres are planted with commercial wine grapes and plenty of room remains for growth.

To be included in this article, wineries had to meet certain criteria, the first being RV-friendly. This means that they all had to have space enough to park a large rig and room enough to turn

around. They also had to be open to the public without appointment, have visitor facilities including a tasting room and on-site wine sales, and regular open hours. Additional wineries are available by appointment only and boutique wineries pop up as the popularity of Idaho wines increases. Check the Idaho Wines website for updates,

maps, a calendar of events and to subscribe to the newsletter. 📧

Idaho Grape Growers & Wine Producers Commission, (888) 223-9463, www.idahowines.org.
Ambassador RV Resort, (888) 877-8307, www.grapevine7.com/ambassador/index.aspx.

vineyards located in the warmer micro-climates of the Valley, varieties such as cabernet sauvignon, cabernet franc, pinot gris and syrah grow well. In tough competition, Sawtooth's 2005 Syrah and 2004 Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon each won bronze medals at the 2008 San Diego International Wine Competition. A large parking and turn-around area will be welcomed by RVers with large rigs, and the rose garden, gazebo and grassy lawn facilities with views of the Owyhee Mountains and Boise Valley provide a picturesque location for strolling and watching the sunset.



COLD SPRINGS WINERY

7853 W. Ringert Lane, Hammett
(208) 366-7993, www.coldspringwinery.com.

TASTING ROOM HOURS: Saturday-Sunday: Noon - 5 p.m., or by appointment.

After planting a test plot that thrived in the soil of the high desert near Hammett, Bill and Bing Ringert planted additional acres in 1999 and 2001. The tasting room and winery went up in 2002. The vineyard continued to expand and now includes nine varieties from 33 acres.

INDIAN CREEK WINERY

1000 North McDermott Road, Kuna
(208) 922-4791, www.indiancreekwinery.com.

TASTING ROOM HOURS: Saturday-Sunday: Noon - 5 p.m.

Bill Stowe bought what is now Indian Creek Winery in 1978 and farmed row crops like beans, corn and wheat on 50 acres, followed by grapes in 1982. But in this cooler micro-climate he lost all his vines in the freeze of 1986. He then replanted and produced his first vintage in 1987. Vintages in 1989, '91, and '97 were also lost to extreme winter cold. The winery is now run by his daughter, Tammy, and her husband Mike McClure. Today 16 acres are planted in grapes, producing good pinot noir and syrah. With a current annual bottling of about 5,000 cases, the winery supplements its own grapes with those of neighboring vineyards.



CARMELA VINEYARDS

1289 West Madison Avenue, Glens Ferry
(208) 366-2313, www.carmelavineyards.com

TASTING ROOM HOURS: Daily: 11 a.m.-9 p.m.

Founded in 1988, the traditional stone winery overlooks the Snake River adjacent to Three Island State Park and is unique among Idaho's wineries with a nine-hole, par-34 golf course winding through its 48 acres of vineyards. In addition to the variety of grapes and wines (cabernet franc is one of their most popular), you will also find a gift shop, lounge, restaurant and 15-site RV park (all pull-through, full-hookup, and tree-shaded), making Carmela Vineyards a popular choice for RVers.



NORTH IDAHO WINERIES

The Snake River AVA is not the only Idaho location with wineries. Two wineries are located outside the AVA in north Idaho. Both are in downtown areas of walkable small cities, so parking for your tow vehicle will be along the street or in lots.

PEND D'OREILLE

220 Cedar, Sandpoint
(208) 265-8545, www.powine.com.

TASTING ROOM HOURS: Monday-Wednesday: 10 a.m.-7 p.m., Thursday-Saturday: 10 a.m.-9 p.m., Sunday: Noon - 6 p.m. Having paid their dues in the wine regions of France and California, Steve and Julie Meyer opened their winery in Sandpoint in 1995. You can help them crush their grapes with your bare feet at their annual celebration of the harvest held in early September each year, complete with games, music, wine and food.

CAMAS PRAIRIE

110 South Main Street, Moscow
(800) 616-0214, www.camaspriariewinery.com.

TASTING ROOM HOURS: Monday-Saturday: Noon - 6:30 p.m. Stu and Susan Scott turned their winemaking hobby into a micro-boutique business in 1983, and today it's the oldest independent winery in Idaho. The tasting room and mezzanine wine bar are located in the middle of downtown, and *Wine Press Northwest* magazine named it 2007 Idaho Winery of the Year. "TEJ" Hopped Mead, (the national drink of Ethiopia), Sarah's Blush (named after their daughter) and a wine vinegar (with Andy, their dog, on the label) are just some of their specialty wines. 📧

SPORTS HALLS OF FAME

TOUR AMONG THE IMMORTALS OF PAST AND PRESENT IN THESE HALLOWED HALLS

by Bruce Leonard Jr.

The desire to become a professional athlete tickled many of our imaginations. To be paid handsomely to play games that many of us indulged in after school and on weekends — and long into middle age — can be a dream that dies hard for regular Joes with slow feet and for average Janes with limited hand-eye coordination.

Though we may never have slipped on the uniforms of the Yankees, Steelers, Celtics or Canadiens, never made the winning putt in the Masters nor caught a world-record fish, we still can make it into various sports Halls of Fame. We simply have to pay admission.

The roundup here will help RVers pursue a new sporting objective: to hop in their tow vehicles, then visit them all.



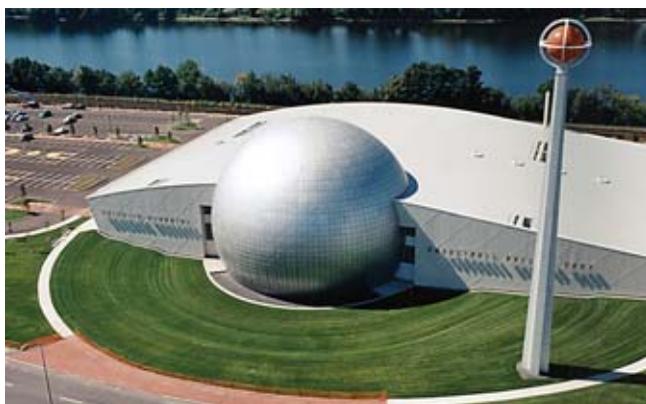
NATIONAL BASEBALL HALL OF FAME AND MUSEUM: COOPERSTOWN, NEW YORK

Situated between the Catskill and the Adirondack mountains 70 miles west of the state capital of Albany, Cooperstown has become synonymous with the Baseball Hall of Fame; to “make it to Cooperstown” is the objective of seemingly every player who has donned a baseball mitt. Annually, more than 350,000 tourists make it to Cooperstown to honor and celebrate America’s National Pastime. The village still dazzles with its simpler-days charm; buildings dating from the early 19th century overlook old-time streetlights adorned with orange geraniums, creating a setting that encourages a leisurely perusal of the game that many of us grew up playing.



The Baseball Hall of Fame had its first induction ceremony and “official” grand opening on June 12, 1939. The story of how this small village became the official and hallowed repository of baseball’s history, heroes and artifacts is complicated, involving a commission, a tattered baseball, a philanthropist and a centennial celebration. Ultimately, the Baseball Hall of Fame exists where it does today because, as the committee’s final report stated, “the first scheme for playing baseball, according to the best evidence obtainable to date, was devised by Abner Doubleday at Cooperstown, New York, in 1839.”

Today, after undergoing expansions in 1950 and 1980 and a renovation completed in 2005, the Baseball Hall of Fame houses 35,000 three-dimensional artifacts (including bats, balls, gloves, caps, helmets, uniforms, cleats, trophies and awards) and 130,000 baseball cards. The National Baseball Hall of Fame Library contains 2.6 million items, including half a million historic images. In addition to the artifacts that could engage the passions of baseball enthusiasts for weeks, the Hall also presents more than 300 special events a year, from gallery talks and roundtable discussions with Hall of Fame members to concerts, movies and plays. In other words, the Baseball Hall of Fame is as varied and vibrant as America itself. **(607) 547-7200, www.baseballhall.org.**



PRO FOOTBALL HALL OF FAME: CANTON, OHIO

Nearly every American has played touch football in the backyard, tossed the pigskin around at a pre-game tailgate celebration or scooped guacamole with a chip at a Super Bowl party. And then there are those who long ago fastened their chinstraps and who now spend every Sunday during the NFL season either braving the cold in their teams’ stadiums or shouting at their televisions. The Pro Football Hall of Fame in Canton, Ohio, caters to any and all football fans, no matter how they choose to honor the game.

The American Professional Football Association, which later changed its name to the National Football League, was founded in Canton in 1920. The Canton Bulldogs were the NFL’s first two-time champion, winning the league title in 1922 and 1923. And football’s first big-name athlete, Jim Thorpe, played his first pro football with the Bulldogs. So this Ohio city, located about 50 miles south of Cleveland, was a natural fit to be home to the sport’s Hall of Fame. The doors of the Hall opened in 1963.

Since its inception, the Pro Football Hall of Fame has undergone various expansions and renovations, and today in its 83,000 square feet of space visitors first encounter a bronze statue of Thorpe, then learn about the origins and development of the game in the exhibition rotunda. One gallery after another, like the Hall of Fame Gallery and the new Lamar Hunt Super Bowl Gallery, allows football aficionados and casual fans alike to view memorabilia and immerse themselves in the sport’s history. Fans can also enjoy the Hall’s interactive area. As die-hards who could spend a week admiring the busts of such enshrined football legends as Dick Butkus and Terry Bradshaw might already know, pro football has been America’s most popular sport for more than four decades.

(330) 456-8207, www.profootballhof.com.

NAISMITH MEMORIAL BASKETBALL HALL OF FAME: SPRINGFIELD, MASSACHUSETTS

Nearly every school kid who has ever dribbled a basketball knows the origins of the sport created by Dr. James Naismith: In 1891, a Canadian-born physical-education instructor in Springfield, Massachusetts, needed an athletic activity that his students could participate in while indoors, protected from the winter weather. He tacked two peach baskets to a balcony 10 feet above the floor in the gymnasium of the YMCA International Training School, then two teams tried to throw a soccer ball into the cylindrical baskets. Only one basket was scored that day, but from these humble beginnings sprang a sport that gave us the likes of Bill Russell, Bob Cousy, Kareem Abdul-Jabbar and Michael Jordan.

Originally established on the campus of Springfield College in 1968, the Basketball Hall of Fame celebrated the game but soon found itself unable to contain basketball’s bounty. The rivalry between Indiana State’s Larry Bird and Michigan State’s Earvin “Magic” Johnson, first began in the NCAA tournament of 1979, then sustained through their years on the Celtics and Lakers, respectively, greatly increased basketball’s national profile. And then Michael Jordan’s on-court heroics and off-court endorsements elevated the NBA still further, and basketball needed a larger arena in which to showcase its history and its stars.

A technologically advanced, highly interactive Hall of Fame opened to great fanfare in 1985, attracting fans from every state in the Union and six of the seven continents, yet this facility also proved to be too confining to accommodate the luminaries of the game and their fans.

Today, the Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame sits on the banks of the Connecticut River and celebrates the careers and lives of nearly 300 inductees within its 40,000 square feet. Skills challenges, live clinics and shooting contests encourage visitors to participate, and hundreds of interactive exhibits not only ensure that fans will engage with the game that has burgeoned around the world but also practically guarantees that they will leave smiling. Who would have thought that global hoops-fever could result from a P.E. teacher’s need to create an athletic distraction for a class of unruly students?

(877) HOOPLA, www.hoophall.com.

HOCKEY HALL OF FAME: TORONTO, CANADA

Bobby Hull, Bobby Orr, Gordie Howe, Phil Esposito and Wayne Gretzky. The names conjure up images of on-ice displays of grace, speed, quickness and force. The careers of these hockey greats — and of the many players who proved to be among the best ever to lace up skates — are described and celebrated in the Hockey Hall of Fame, in Toronto, Canada.

Similar to the journeys that other sports shrines have endured, hockey's hallowed Hall has suffered growing pains. The current state-of-the-art facility, however, located in what is known as Brookfield Place, captures the essence of the sport so fantastically that more than half a million people meandered through its exhibits during its first year of operation. As hockey's popularity has grown around the globe, so has the Hockey Hall of Fame, which added the World Hockey Zone in 1998, received a recent \$12 million renovation of most of its exhibits and completed the Hockey Resource Centre and Archives in 2009.

The memorabilia and interactive exhibits in the Hockey Hall of Fame could keep rabid fans fascinated for days, but even visitors who only have a casual acquaintance to hockey will likely feel a thrill while walking through the replica of the Montreal Canadiens' dressing room.

(416) 360-7735, www.hhof.com.



WORLD GOLF HALL OF FAME: ST. AUGUSTINE, FLORIDA

Perhaps the hallowed sports hall that best lends itself to the RV lifestyle, while honoring its game's brightest stars, is St. Augustine's World Golf Hall of Fame & Museum, located in World Golf Village. While partaking of Florida's mild winters, RVing snowbirds can pay tribute to their favorite golf heroes at the Shell Hall's 88-foot-long display of bronze reliefs called the Wall of Fame. Golf fans can then test their putting skills using a wood-shafted putter and a gutta percha ball on an 1880's-style green, then watch their modern golf balls zoom away on a replica of today's tournament-style greens. Visitors can stroll across a replica of the Swilcan Burn Bridge — a famous landmark from Scotland's Old Course at St. Andrews — then test their iron play on the Challenge Hole, which is reminiscent of the famous Island Green on the 17th hole at TPC Sawgrass. Yet if this island green only piques their golfing

appetite, golfers can play the two official golf courses of the Hall of Fame: The King & Bear, the only collaborative design in the world between Arnold Palmer and Jack Nicklaus; and The Slammer & Squire, a course designed by Bobby Weed, but consulted on by golf legends Sam Snead and Gene Sarazen. Golf aficionados will need no more inducement to break out their spikes.

(800) 948-4653, www.wgv.com.



INTERNATIONAL GAME FISH ASSOCIATION HALL OF FAME & MUSEUM: DANIA BEACH, FLORIDA

Since most RVers have cast a hook in a body of water somewhere along their journeys, snowbirds are likely to find a visit to the IGFA Hall of Fame & Museum intriguing. Angling enthusiasts, of course, may want to hang around the facility displaying pictures of their biggest catches in the hope that they will be nominated. Famous sportsmen such as Curt Gowdy, Zane Grey and Ernest Hemingway likely would have found the place fascinating, which is as it should be, since they have all been inducted into the IGFA Hall of Fame.

Opened in 1999, this \$32 million facility features a interactive exhibits that allow anglers to indulge in their sport in various ways, from watching fishing demonstrations to trying to land a giant brute via a video simulation. The onsite library houses the largest collection of books about fishing in the world, and the museum store grants travelers the opportunity to prove they visited by purchasing a souvenir.

(954) 922-4212; www.igfa.org.

Now that your competitive juices are flowing, check out *Trailer Life's RV Parks and Campgrounds Directory* for Hall-worthy RV parks near your favorite sport's facility. 📖

OTHER HALLS OF FAME

International Bowling Museum and Hall of Fame, Arlington, Texas; (817) 385-8215, www.bowlingmuseum.com.

International Tennis Hall of Fame, Newport, Rhode Island; (401) 849-3990, www.tennisfame.com.

NASCAR Hall of Fame, Charlotte, North Carolina; (704) 654-4400, www.nascarhall.com.

National Museum of Racing and Hall of Fame, Saratoga Springs, New York; (518) 584-0400, www.racingmuseum.org.

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It started with a lightning bolt. One strike set the African plains on fire and uncovered a secret that was buried for more than 585 million years. Tanzanite naturally occurs in only one place on Earth: Tanzania's remote Merelani Hills, in the shadow of Mount Kilimanjaro.

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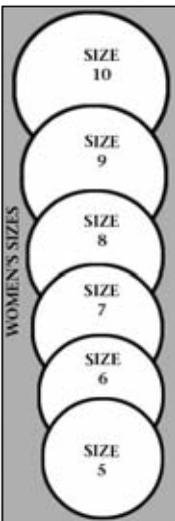
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Smart Luxuries—Surprising Prices
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With GM and Ford coming onto the scene with new diesels last year, it was inevitable that a three-way match up with the Ram would naturally come to fruition. We couldn't resist. We were able to come up with this trio of hot new products, featuring all the latest technology in $\frac{3}{4}$ -ton capacity, four-wheel-drive, turbodiesel-powered pickups from the top three American manufacturers. We matched them with three identical MVP RV Vortex SURVs that weighed 7,940 pounds each, and put them to the test.

THE PLAYERS

Chevrolet provided a Silverado 2500 4WD Crew Cab standard box configuration in the LTZ trim package, powered by the upgraded (about 60-percent of the engine hardware is new) 6.6-liter Duramax V-8 (LML) turbodiesel that produces 765 lb-ft of

torque at 1,600 rpm and 397 hp at 3,000 rpm. Backed by an upgraded Allison six-speed automatic transmission that allows the driver to manually select any desired gear, the Silverado offers a 13,000-pound tow rating.

Ford brought an F-250 4WD Super Duty Crew Cab short-bed in Lariat trim to the rodeo. It delivers 735 lb-ft of torque at 1,600 rpm and 390 hp at 2,800 rpm from its all-new 6.7-liter V-8 turbodiesel. This powerplant features an inboard exhaust and outboard intake design that helps improve low-end punch, and an advanced-design dual-sided compressor wheel in the turbocharger that acts like a twin, but retains the compact size of a single turbo.

A heavy-duty TorqShift six-speed automatic transmission backs the new 6.7-liter Power Stroke V-8 turbodiesel. It features a manual selectable gearshift system that allows the driver to use a toggle switch to shift gears up and down and hold that gear. In this configuration, the Ford has a tow rating of 14,000 pounds.



DIESEL SH

THE BIG THREE'S TOP $\frac{3}{4}$ -TON PICKUPS

The Dodge Ram 2500 Crew Cab 4WD shortbed in SLT trim was powered by the 6.7-liter I-6 High Output Cummins turbodiesel. Cranking out 650 lb-ft of torque at 1,500 rpm and 350 hp at 3,000 rpm, it meets 2010.5 EPA diesel emissions standards and is the only one of the three new engines in our review that does not require the new urea, or diesel emissions fluid (DEF).

Behind the Cummins 6.7-liter is the 68RFE six-speed automatic transmission with Electronic Range Select that allows the driver to manually select the gear that best fits the driving conditions. As equipped, this vehicle has a tow rating of 12,750 pounds.

VISIBILITY

Being able to clearly see your surroundings and the traffic to the side of you is key to safe towing. Good side mirrors and good line of sight out windows is important.

All three trucks offer excellent towing mirrors, but some are better than others. All are about the same size (the main

mirror glasses all measure approximately 7 × 7.5 inches). However, the Ford's mirrors were best overall with the main mirrors oriented horizontally and larger spot mirrors, plus they're powered, and are extendable and retractable from inside the cab.

Our Dodge featured folding mirrors that pivot so they can be rotated into a vertical or horizontal position, and they had the greatest outward extension of the group; however, the convex spots were small and didn't seem very effective, and when we rotated the mirrors into a vertical position, some drivers noted that the mirrors created a blind spot at the 10 and 2 o'clock positions.

The Chevy had nice big mirrors very similar in design to the Ford, except they are not power telescoping. We were divided as to whether Chevy or Ford had the better overall mirrors for keeping an eye on your neighbor in the next lane more easily, but we all liked how the Ford's mirrors offered the largest convex spots at the bottom.



OOTOOUT

GO HEAD-TO-HEAD

by **Stuart Bourdon**

CHEVY SILVERADO 2500 4×4 LTZ CREW CAB TD

The Chevy offers a good over-the-shoulder view from the driver's position, but has smaller rear-side windows than the other trucks, which cuts down on visibility a bit. The Ford also offered an unobstructed view over the driver's left shoulder, but huge headrests can block the driver's vision to the passengers' side of the vehicle. The Dodge suffers a bit from a huge C-pillar and a smaller rear window than the other trucks.

All three trucks also offer rearview cameras to help when hooking up trailers. These really come in handy. Ford's was the easiest to use, with helpful sight-depth guides in it. We also found that you can set the Ford rearview camera to stay on in forward or reverse at speeds slower than 25 mph.

ENGINE PERFORMANCE

All three trucks have plenty of power, and each would make a terrific tow vehicle, but we felt some differences. Impressions of the Ford by all were positive. Its true muscle was immediately apparent. The new 6.7-liter Power Stroke V-8 turbodiesel has massive towing power, and you don't have to stomp the throttle pedal to find it.

The 6.6-liter Duramax V-8 under the Chevy's hood is also a powerful engine, and our seat-of-the-pant's impressions agreed. In almost every situation, it felt like it had more power than the Ford. It was only at tip in where the Ford seemed to come on stronger.

The 6.7-liter Dodge Cummins, also recently upgraded, is the oldest design of the bunch and used to be the largest-displacement powerplant in the trio. Don't be fooled; it is still a potent and remarkable engine that could be worth 300,000 miles if properly maintained. And although it fared well and felt powerful at all throttle positions, especially off the line, it suffered during our towing acceleration runs on a 7-percent grade.

All three engines have exhaust-brake systems. Chevy has now caught up with Dodge by offering a driver-selectable system that engages with the push of a button. The Ford system is automatic and reacts to load, throttle position and a variety of other inputs. We found the exhaust brakes to be useful and welcome on all three trucks, but more pronounced in their onset in the Chevy and Dodge, more subtle in the Ford.

TRANSMISSION

The Chevy's Allison transmission is a real beauty and shifts as smooth as silk. It held the hills and controlled speed when towing on downgrades the best. It had by far the most easy-to-use manual-shift feature on the gear-shift lever. The Dodge lever operated similarly; however, we found the Dodge's shifting performance in manual mode to be somewhat sluggish. Ford's TorqShift six-speed auto performed very well, shifting smoothly; and like the Allison, following the brake pedal's lead in downshifting on a downgrade. We especially like that feature in both the Allison and TorqShift. All three trucks also feature tow-haul modes that are driver selectable.



MPG: SOLO: 22.2
TOWING: 11.9
0-60 MPH, SOLO: 8 sec
TOWING: 17 sec
40-60 MPH, SOLO: 5 sec
TOWING: 7 sec
ENGINE: Duramax 6.6-liter V-8 turbodiesel
HP: 397 @ 3,000 rpm
TORQUE: 765 lb-ft @ 1,600 rpm
TRANSMISSION: Allison 6-speed auto
AXLE RATIO: 3.73:1
FUEL CAP: 36 gal

TIRES: LT265/70R18
SUSPENSION (F/R): A-arm IFS/live axle, leaf springs
BRAKES: Four-wheel ABS disc
TOW RATING: 13,000 lb
GROSS VEHICLE WEIGHT RATING: 10,000 lb
GROSS COMBINED WEIGHT RATING: 24,500 lb
WEIGHT AS TESTED: 7,720 lb
LENGTH: 19' 8"
WHEELBASE: 153.7"
BASE MSRP: \$44,060
PRICE AS TESTED: \$60,120

**FORD SD F-250
4x4 CREW CAB LARIAT TD**



MPG: SOLO: 22
TOWING: 11.6
0-60 MPH, SOLO: 9 sec
TOWING: 17 sec
40-60 MPH, SOLO: 5 sec
TOWING: 9 sec
ENGINE: 6.7-liter V-8 Power Stroke turbodiesel
HP: 390 @ 2,800 rpm
TORQUE: 735 lb-ft @ 1,600 rpm
TRANSMISSION: TorqShift 6-speed auto
AXLE RATIO: 3.55:1
FUEL CAP: 26 gal

TIRES: LT275/65R20
SUSPENSION (F/R): Mono-beam axle, coil springs/live axle, leaf springs
BRAKES: Four-wheel ABS disc
TOW RATING: 14,000 lb
GROSS VEHICLE WEIGHT RATING: 10,000 lb
GROSS COMBINED WEIGHT RATING: 23,500 lb
WEIGHT AS TESTED: 7,600 lb
LENGTH: 20' 6"
WHEELBASE: 156.2"
BASE MSRP: \$44,410
PRICE AS TESTED: \$61,195

**RAM 2500 SLT
4x4 TD CREW CAB**



MPG: SOLO: 21.8
TOWING: 10.5
0-60 MPH, SOLO: 10 sec
TOWING: 20 sec
40-60 MPH, SOLO: 6 sec
TOWING: 11 sec
ENGINE: Cummins 6.7-liter I-6 turbodiesel
HP: 350 @ 3,000 rpm
TORQUE: 650 lb-ft @ 1,500 rpm
TRANSMISSION: 68RFE 6-speed auto
AXLE RATIO: 3.73:1
FUEL CAP: 34 gal

TIRES: LT265/70R17
SUSPENSION (F/R): Live axle, coil springs/live axle, leaf springs
BRAKES: Four-wheel ABS disc
TOW RATING: 12,750 lb
GROSS VEHICLE WEIGHT RATING: 9,600 lb
GROSS COMBINED WEIGHT RATING: 20,000 lb
WEIGHT AS TESTED: 7,320 lb
LENGTH: 19' 9"
WHEELBASE: 148.9"
BASE MSRP: \$38,480
PRICE AS TESTED: \$52,795



RIDE AND HANDLING

A tow vehicle's ability to securely maintain control of the trailer behind is of utmost importance. When it comes to towing ride and handling, the Chevy's suspension was softer overall than the other two trucks, but was nonetheless capable of easily handling the hitch weight and overall load without becoming upset or sloppy. The suspension never felt loose, and the trailer never felt like it had an influence over the truck. GM has done a lot of frame and chassis work to support increased loads. And the Chevy definitely had the top steering response, and overall ride and handling of the bunch.

Non-towing ride quality assessment for the Dodge 2500 ranges from feeling some skittering over rough roads to it being pretty tough on your back at times. It was, without a doubt, the stiffest ride when unladen. But it smoothed out considerably when towing. However, it didn't offer the same level of control — or bring the trailer back as promptly — after induced sway as did the Ford.

The F-250 always felt solid and sure when hauling the trailer. It was quick to bring the combo back in check after induced sway, and all agreed it offered a secure and stable towing platform. Its greatest detractor was that it, too, had a fairly harsh unladen ride quality — not as bad as the Ram, but enough to remind us how sweet the Chevy was.

CREATURE COMFORTS

This shootout is about tow vehicles, but towing is not all there is to life. You're going to drive a truck in many different situations. Interior comfort and layout — plus fit, finish and styling — are also important factors.

Styling is such a personal choice that we dare not make any judgments here, yet although all three trucks are well assembled and smartly painted, based on the comments heard in camp and around the office, the Chevy and Dodge fared better than the Ford in this department.

Opinions on each truck's layout were varied. Most thought overall seating comfort in the Ford and Dodge was tops in the group. All three test rigs offered driver-information systems that delivered everything from tire pressure to average fuel consumption (only the Ram lacked a navigation system). The Ford system was tops by far, offering a sophisticated depth of information that was almost to the point of overload. The screen for the Chevy's was set so low that it caused us to divert

our eyes too much from the road. In addition, the Chevy's HVAC system controls were small and hard to see at night.

The Ford's dashboard and instruments are easy to see at a glance and the HVAC system switches and knobs are larger and easier to use. But in general, the Ford's dash looks like a jumble of styles and design. All of the Dodge controls proved simple to operate, and the white-faced instruments were easy to read at a glance. The Chevy's instruments are also easy to see with just a quick glance down from the road, and the Chevy interior as a whole looks well styled and put together.

DECISIONS, DECISIONS

In the end, I suppose we must pick a favorite, but first let's just say that there are so many good things about each of these trucks to talk about.

The Ram is a powerful puller with a proven backbone and a dependable Cummins engine that may not be the fastest of the bunch, but will certainly get the job done well for a very long time and is the least expensive of the trio.

The Ford is an outstanding pickup with a stump-pulling engine, a stable suspension and data-laden information center that will make a great tow vehicle, too.

We would like to see better positioning of the navigation screen and larger HVAC systems buttons on the Chevy, but those are little nit-picky things we can live with in the long run. So, in an extremely close call, the Chevy takes our overall top choice of the three due to its blend of power, refined towing and non-towing ride and handling quality, steering response and braking control. Just don't ask us to choose again tomorrow. 🗣️

Chevrolet, www.chevrolet.com.

Dodge Ram Trucks, www.ramtrucks.com.

Ford Motor Company, www.ford.com.

NEW POWER NUMBERS

Ford recently announced increased power numbers (400 hp and 800 lb-ft of torque) for the 6.7-liter Power Stroke; the truck delivered for our testing was built prior to this new upgrade. However, the stronger tune (requires an update to the ECU) is available for free to existing Super Duty owners at their Ford dealer. (See page 52 for more information.)

TRENDING TOWARD 2011

RV MANUFACTURERS ARE UTILIZING INNOVATIVE FLOORPLANS AND TECHNOLOGY TO MAXIMIZE VALUE

by Bob Ashley

Less expensive towable RVs are taking center stage in 2011 from manufacturers cognizant that the American RV market is being transformed as the country slowly recovers from the worldwide economic slowdown. And some of these new towables tend to be smaller and lighter.

“Everybody has shifted down,” said Andy Baer, general manager of KZRV. “They have lowered their expectations. Where they may have bought a \$60,000 car three years ago, they’re now buying a \$50,000 car. The same mentality and desire to be more conservative applies to RVs. People are notching down to less-expensive alternatives.”

Many manufacturers also appear to be in line with the thinking of Richard Curtin, director of consumer surveys at the University of Michigan and forecaster of wholesale deliveries for the Recreation Vehicle Industry Association (RVIA), who says that RV manufacturers need to “right-size” their products.

“Right-sizing means delivering an optimal mix of size, convenience and features to meet the new realities facing consumers,” Curtin said. “This may mean smaller units with fewer features.”

Yet RV builders remain innovative. The following pages represent a sampling of these innovations.



Prime Time Manufacturing has introduced the Tracer Micro travel trailer, targeted toward minivan and small crossover tow vehicles. “The thinking behind the new Micro is simple,” according to Jeff Rank, president of the Prime Time division of Forest River. “We wanted a travel trailer that can easily be towed by a minivan with 3,500 pounds of towing capacity.” Tracer Micro is available in three floorplans, all with single slideouts and dry weights starting at 2,550 pounds fully loaded. Standard interior equipment includes cherry cabinet doors, automotive-styled leather-wrapped dinettes, microwaves, air conditioners and CD players. msrp: \$14,900. (574) 862-3001, www.primetimerv.com.



Starcraft RV has added the affordably priced AR-ONE travel trailer to the fully equipped Autumn Ridge towable series. “There literally are no options,” said Jim Jacobs, general manager of the Jayco subsidiary. “Air, awning, microwave, AM/FM, TV antenna, all are standard equipment.” Available in traditional 14- and 16-foot floorplans, a 15-footer has an “expandable sectionalized tent.” AR-ONE also is equipped with a 6-gallon gas water heater, a two-burner range, a 3-cubic-foot gas/electric refrigerator and a 54-inch booth dinette. msrp: \$8,495. (800) 945-4787, www.starcraftrv.com.



Komfort RV has introduced a new flagship towable series, the Pacific Ridge. “[Pacific Ridge] stands apart from the cookie-cutter products of today,” said Peter Kinden, vice president of sales for the Thor Industries subsidiary. Pacific Ridge is available in four travel-trailer and four fifth-wheel floorplans in 26- to 38-foot lengths, all with welded-aluminum superstructures, high-gloss gel-coat front caps and all-weather insulation. Equipped standard with solid-surface counter tops, halogen lighting, island queen beds and oversized skylights, msrps range from \$26,500 to \$48,000. (503) 722-5199, www.komfort-rv.com.



Dutchmen has introduced the Voltage high-end fifth-wheel SURV. “We wanted to build a toy hauler that is different than anything on the market,” said Nate Goldenberg, Dutchmen’s Voltage product manager. Available in four 35- to 43-foot wide-body floorplans with two or three 7½-foot-tall electric slideouts, the fiberglass-and-aluminum Voltage features pass-through storage with slam-latch doors and is equipped with amenities such as walk-in closets, large microwaves, four-door refrigerators, floor-to-ceiling pantries and stainless-steel sinks. The 14-foot-deep garage sports companion 30- and 20-gallon fuel tanks. msrps start at \$58,000.

(574) 537-0600, www.dutchmen-rv.com.



EverGreen Recreational Vehicles has expanded its offerings of all-composite travel trailers with the Ever-Lite Deep Slide series equipped with 42-inch-deep slideout rooms. The Ever-Lites are available in three 34- to 35-foot floorplans — two of which are rear-bunk layouts. The addition of the larger slideout rooms allows for larger U-shape dinettes, counter top extensions and large side-aisle baths. A fully featured Ever-Lite Deep Slide is said to have a dry weight of 6,500 pounds. msrp: \$33,442.

(574) 825-4298, www.goevergreenrv.com.



Carriage has introduced the Cabo fifth-wheel, the entry-level of the manufacturer’s luxury fifth-wheel lineup. The all-weather Cabo, designed for full-time living, is available in four 34- to 37-foot floorplans, one of which is a bath-and-half bunk layout with a large picture window at the back. Interiors feature a contemporary design with cherry accents, residential window treatments, solid-surface counter tops, freestanding kitchen tables and queen beds with wrought-iron headboards. msrp: \$53,000.

(574) 642-3622, www.carriageinc.com.



Redwood RV, Thor Industries' startup division, has debuted the luxury Redwood fifth-wheel for 2011. Available in three triple-slide, 39-foot floorplans, the division is calling the Redwood a "residential" RV equipped with 100-gallon freshwater, 90-gallon gray-water and 45-gallon black-water tanks. With a dry weight of 12,500 pounds, the Redwood is built on a Lippert Falcon integrated technology (FIT) chassis that is supplied with brakes, hydraulic leveling systems, suspension, turning gear and pin box installed. msrp: \$65,000.

(574) 457-7800, www.thorindustries.com.



Reviving a name from the past, **Forest River's** new Shasta Recreational Vehicle division introduced the Shasta Revere entry-level travel trailer at the recent Louisville Trade Show. "We are bringing a feature list to the table that is different from most [value-priced] products," said Brad Whitehead, Shasta division general manager. The wood-framed, aluminum-skinned Revere is available in a dozen 20- to 32-foot floorplans with up to two 42-inch deep slideouts, keyless entry and residential amenities. Shasta plans to develop a full line of wood-and-aluminum and laminated fiberglass travel trailers, fifth-wheels and Class C motorhomes during the next year.

(574) 389-4600, www.forestriverinc.com.



CrossRoads RV has redesigned its top-selling entry-level 2011 Zinger towable series with a more aerodynamic exterior, additional amenities, 7-foot interior ceilings and radius wall. "It's a fresh look at the higher end of the entry-level spectrum," said Dave Boggs, director of marketing for the Thor subsidiary. The wood-and-aluminum Zinger is available in 28 23- to 41-foot floorplans, including five new fifth-wheel layouts. msrps range from \$18,000 to \$30,000.

(888) 226-7496, www.crossroadsrv.com.



Earthbound Recreational Vehicles is offering seven 26- to 31-foot floorplans in the environmentally friendly 2011 composite-and aluminum Earthbound travel trailer. “There is absolutely no wood in our products and they are half-ton towable” said David B. Hoefer, vice president of sales and marketing. With clear-coat automotive aluminum side walls, Earthbound roofs and floors are vacuum-bonded seamless composite. Composites also are used in the interior, including cabinets and bed bases. Features include insulated and heated holding tanks, Thermo Pane windows, LED lighting and front and rear fiberglass caps. Base msrp: about \$45,000. **(765) 677-9090, www.earthboundrv.com.**



Peterson Industries has introduced the high-end Winslow travel trailer with 120 cubic feet of basement storage. The 34-foot Winslow quad-slide (tested in the November 2010 issue) is built on a drop-Z frame. “Our customers tell us the No. 1 problem they have with a travel trailer is storage space or the lack of it,” said Peterson president Bryan Tillet. A fully equipped Winslow with an outdoor utility center, fireplace, pullout pantry, wine rack, office nook pre-wired for a computer, Thermo Pane windows, electric awning and a -10-degree Fahrenheit guarantee retails for about \$70,000. **(800) 368-3759, www.excelrvs.com.**



TrailManor, known for its clamshell-fitting hard-sided camping trailers, has introduced a 22-foot floorplan in its traditional light-weight Elkmont series. Featuring a “cruise ship” interior, the Elkmont 22 is said to have a dry weight of 2,850 pounds, which allows it to be towed by most minivans, crossovers and SUVs. Amenities include walk-around queen beds, full-size dinettes, marble-look counter tops, woodgrain tile floors, full-size refrigerators, custom upholstery, maple cabinets and custom lighting. msrp: \$25,500. **(800) 707-7061, www.trailmanor.com.**



Gulf Stream has introduced the lightweight Visa travel-trailer series with two 19-foot floorplans and two 23-footers with single slideouts. Dry weights are said to be 2,802 and 3,502 pounds, respectively. Gulf Stream makes extensive use of CosmoLite and SymaLITE composites from TekModo LLC, both in the basic construction of the unit and in its interior amenities including walls, vinyl-wrapped cabinets and bed bases. msrp: \$15,421.
(800) 482-6456, www.gulfstreamrvtrailers.com.



KZRV has added a 36-foot walk-up rear-kitchen floorplan to the Stone Ridge fifth-wheel series to provide more basement storage. "It's a motorhome-style floorplan with plenty of storage; you walk up two steps to the kitchen," said General Manager Andy Baer, who described the wide-body aluminum-and-fiberglass Stone Ridge as a "near high-end" fifth-wheel. Features include gelcoat-fiberglass side walls with front and rear caps, fireplaces, 42-inch LCD TVs and Corian countertops. msrp: around \$60,000.
(866) 472-5460, www.kz-rv.com.



Heartland's new Prowler towable, a brand name that harkens back for decades as one of Fleetwood's towable mainstays, consists of wood-and-aluminum and laminated travel trailers and mid-profile fifth-wheels. In late October, the new Prowler brand was still in its infancy after a cameo trade appearance in September at the Recreation Vehicle Dealers International Con/Expo in Las Vegas. Prowler General Manager Nick Eppert said Prowler, one of several Fleetwood brands purchased out of the former Fleetwood's Chapter 11 bankruptcy, will be the only ex-Fleetwood line available in 2011. msrp: not yet available.
(574) 262-5992, www.heartlandrvs.com.



Keystone RV has redesigned the Montana fifth-wheel with a new curved roof that allows for 8-foot, 7-inch ceilings in the living area. "Not only does this increase the interior height, but also changes the look of the interior," according to a company spokesperson. Available in 11 floorplans (33 to 39 feet) with two to five slideouts, the Montana also features new front and rear caps, slide-room fascia and window treatments, sofas with integrated desks and all-new exterior graphics. msrp: \$41,835. (574) 535-2100, www.keystonerv.com.



Open Range RV has incorporated standard outdoor kitchens and entertainment centers into the new wide-body, all-aluminum Mesa Ridge travel trailer series. "The aluminum exterior has a smooth automobile look and will look new 25 years from now," said Gary Stanley, national sales manager. Mesa Ridge, the line's least expensive towable, is available in five 30- to 34-foot floorplans with one or two slideouts. Standard features also include heated and enclosed tanks, outdoor showers, queen beds, 32-inch flat-screen LCD TVs, ball-bearing drawer guides and two-tone knotty alderwood cabinets with hidden hinges. Base msrp for the 32-foot floorplans: \$25,871. (260) 768-7771, www.openrangerv.com.



Warrior Lifestyles, a West Coast towable manufacturer, is offering the new Luxury Liner fifth-wheel for 2011 with a side-aisle-bath floorplan. The vacuum-bonded fiberglass-and-aluminum Luxury Liner also features center-island kitchens, 21-inch convection ovens and 150 gallons of freshwater capacity. "The Luxury Liner is made for the desert crowd — somebody that has a long-rail (dune buggy) or a ton of motorcycles," said sales representative Justin Tracey. msrp: About \$90,000. (800) 500-9914, www.warriorlifestyles.com.



SURVs were the hot new trend several years ago, and it seemed every manufacturer was breaking its back to get a model introduced. As a result, many of the floorplans were similar across the board, and many ho-hum models were produced.

Now that SURVs are no longer a craze but an actual mainstay, it's refreshing to see manufacturers refine the amenities and interiors to match the demands of what can be a very particular off-pavement crowd.

MVP's Vortex 270FS is the result of such refinements. The manufacturer has clearly listened to its customers

and, with a nip here and a tuck there, produced a trailer featuring most everything an avid ATVer could want — with a touch of class added in.

Naturally, the main draw of the Vortex is the garage area. The Vortex 270 FS features a cavernous 13-foot, 3-inch (17-foot, 4-inch if you count the kitchen area) platform to store your ATVs, dirt bikes or toy of your choice. The floor boasts 11 tie-downs (including two in the kitchen), as well as two small shelf-type risers that allow you to strap down your toys. This arrangement means you can easily transport a few vehicles at a time (weight permitting), and they'll more than likely still be upright once

you arrive at your destination.

Once you set up camp, the garage area converts into a comfortable living area, complete with two Euro-style leather chairs, two jackknife sofas, a small end table and a removable dinette that can be taken outdoors for alfresco dining. At night, the electric-lift bed located at the rear lowers to reveal an extremely firm queen bed, and the bottom jackknife (\$544) converts to a rather comfortable sleeping position.

The galley features a three-burner stove top and a microwave convection oven. An AM/FM/CD/DVD provides the evening entertainment, and the TV is positioned up on the galley wall so it can



VORTEX 270FS

MVP RV PACKS ITS STYLISH SURV
WITH AMENITIES GEARED TOWARD
OUTDOOR ADVENTURERS

by **Kristopher Bunker**



PHOTOS BY RICH COX PHOTOGRAPHY

QUICK INFO

EXT LENGTH: 28' 3"

EXT WIDTH: 8'

EXT HEIGHT: 11' 4"

INT HEIGHT: 7' 9" (garage)/7' (bedroom)

FRESHWATER CAP: 100 gal

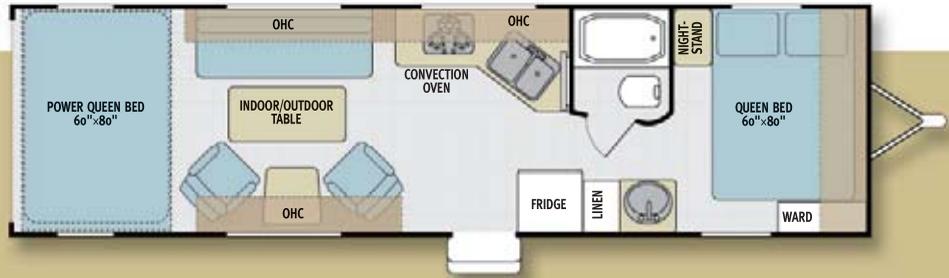
BLACK-/GRAY-WATER CAP: 40 gal/40 gal

LP-GAS CAP: 14 gal

HITCH WEIGHT: 1,560 lb

WEIGHT, AS TESTED: 7,940 lb (freshwater, water heater, LP-gas full; no cargo)

MSRP, AS TESTED: \$35,288



be viewed from anywhere in the living/dining areas.

The monitor panel is located in the garage area and features readouts for tanks, the standard Onan 4.0kW AC generator and the gauge for the fuel-fill station, which enables Vortex owners to fill up with fuel for their toys before heading to the dunes.

A larger than expected refrigerator reiterates the importance of keeping hydrated while being active outside, offering more than enough room for water bottles, soda cans, juice boxes and food.

The lav is located in a small room amidships, with a porcelain foot-flush

commode and shower with small tub. The tall ceiling means headroom is plentiful in the shower, a feature that's much appreciated. Across from the bathroom — and right next to the master bedroom — is a small sink for hand-washing duties.

The standard RV queen bed is comfortable enough, and there are his and hers wardrobe cabinets for hanging shirts and the like. One side of the bed features a small nightstand, which is a convenience often taken for granted until it's not there.

A thin curtain is all that separates Mom and Dad from the rest of the trailer, meaning anybody moving about after retiring for the night will have to tread

lightly so as not to disturb their slumber — or stumble into their room.

The Vortex does a nice job of toeing the line between Spartan and luxury; just enough is there to make you feel as though you're in a high-line trailer. In addition to the numerous tie-down points, standard AC-generator and fuel-fill station, thoughtful add-ons like a power awning (\$312), aluminum wheels (\$341) and large open shelves for helmets and gear show that MVP really gets to know its customers, and builds accordingly. 🚐

MVP RV, (951) 848-4288,
www.mvprv.com.





BREATHE EASY

INSTALLING A BANKS RAM-AIR INTAKE AND SUPER-SCOOP ON A DIESEL ENGINE IMPROVES PERFORMANCE AND MILEAGE

by Kevin Livingston

No matter what trailer you tow or where it's being towed, it seems that there is a significant focus on making the tow vehicle perform more efficiently — i.e. getting up the hill or to freeway speed faster. And while having more power is nice, improving mileage is also important. Nowadays it's common practice to simply upgrade your current tow vehicle versus buying the next link up the towing chain; it just makes good economic sense.

One of the most tried-and-true methods of gaining some solid horsepower and torque on any type of tow vehicle is by helping the engine to breathe easier and more freely. Without a doubt, the least expensive and most effective method of achieving more airflow is the addition of an aftermarket cold-air intake system. Looking into aftermarket cold-air systems will quickly reveal the two basic types available. Typically you'll find an oversized air filter element, usually pre-oiled gauze style, coupled to an oversize air box and associated ducting, which replaces the restrictive factory filter. The second kind is usually the bigger box and filter plus an air scoop of some sort to provide a true ram-air setup. Claimed results

from such products usually include extra horsepower, torque, quicker spooling turbos and even possibly mileage gains.

Companies like Gale Banks Engineering are producing a broad spectrum of power enhancers, such as its Ram-Air Intake System and the Super-Scoop. The Banks Ram-Air is a complete cold-air intake system designed to replace all the original hardware with minimal, if any, modifications. Contained in the Ram-Air kit are all the necessary installation implements, ranging from a precision-fit molded ABS plastic filter housing, reusable filter, cover and intake tube to every nut, bolt and clamp. The Super-Scoop is comprised of one massive ABS air scoop along with all the necessary brackets, screws and clips. We tested both these products as a package installed on a 2005 Dodge Cummins 2500 because of the potential for improvements in fuel economy and performance, but they can be installed individually if desired.

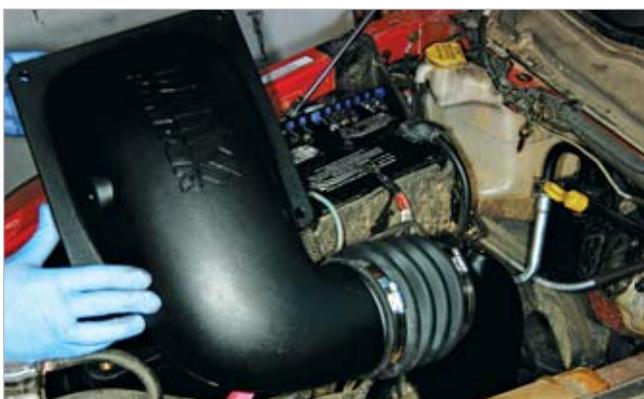
Although a bit deceiving by sheer box size, installation of both component kits is really simple and bolt-on perfect, largely because of the high level of engineering and research prowess exhibited by the Banks people. Once the required selection of hand tools has been gathered, the process starts by removing



The bottom 1-inch of material must be removed to allow attachment of the Super-Scoop. Use 1-inch masking tape to provide a ready-made cut line. Cut-off saw makes easy work of the process.



Once the Ram-Air box is in place, a new filter element is installed.



Intake tube and air-box cover are attached using the supplied bellows and clamps. Precision routing of the new hardware provides a very clean installation.



Filter minder and grommet are attached to the new Ram-Air box. This is also the time to reinstall the IAT and MAF sensors.



The right front fender liner is removed to allow access to the bottom of the Ram-Air box. After pre-assembling the Super-Scoop, it's connected to the box and holes are drilled to accommodate the attachment clips.



The Super-Scoop intake is bolted to the bottom of the bumper on the passenger side of the truck.

the original air box and air-intake tube, making sure to carefully undo and retain the original filter minder and grommet, intake-air-temperature (IAT) and mass-air-flow (MAF) sensors. As part of that first step, the rubber grommets are removed from the side of the battery tray. Banks provides more optimal well nuts with bolts in place of these grommets, which increases air-box stability; they need to be installed at this time.

Since we're installing both products at the same time, this is the point in the installation where the extra steps are required. To allow entry into the air box for the Super-Scoop, the

bottom 1 inch of material must be removed. We found it easiest to run 1-inch-wide masking tape along the bottom edge of the new air box to mark the cut line. With either a cut-off wheel or hacksaw, the lower edge is sliced off. From here, it is best to assemble the radiator support bracket to the box on the bench, reusing the stock grommet and bushing with the new bracket. Leave the bracket bolt on the side of the air box slightly loose and tighten completely once the box is placed into the truck again. Now it's simply a matter of bolting on the new Banks intake tube and air-box cover using supplied coupler, bellows

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*Always refer to your tow vehicle manufacturer's guide for recommended capacities

BREATHE EASY



Once installed, the plastic scoop is barely noticeable — except to truck aficionados who understand the value of pushing more air into the intake.

and clamps. This is also the time to set the new air-filter element in place. Once all the parts are lined up correctly the clamps and cover screws are tightened. Finally, reinstall the IAT and MAF sensors as well as the filter minder/grommet.

As far as the Ram-Air/Super-Scoop project goes, there are only a few more steps to get the job done. Start by removing the right front inner fender to gain access to the back of the new Banks Ram-Air box. Before going any further we found it easiest to pre-assemble the mounting brackets to the Super-Scoop utilizing push-type retaining clips prior to setting up and marking the holes to drill. Now place the Super Scoop over the bottom of the air box until it stops and install the mounting brackets to the lower right two bumper bolts, but do not tighten the nuts at this time; instead, leave them finger tight. With the Super-Scoop mostly attached you can either mark and remove the scoop or carefully drill the two holes in place. Put the included clips over the new holes, reattach the Super-Scoop, bolt the top of the scoop to the lower air box and secure the bumper brackets. This straightforward install should take less than two hours.

So, what about performance and what kind of numbers did these new parts produce? We're not going to give you the whole spiel about dyno this and

dyno that. Instead we'll throw some real-world results at you. We hooked up a 26-foot SURV travel trailer weighing around 6,500 pounds for a 98-mile round trip on a variety of hills and flats. Trip one, stock form, showed an average of 10.22 miles per gallon. Round two, post-Banks Ram-Air and Super-Scoop addition, resulted in 11.21 miles per gallon. That's an impressive full mile-per-gallon improvement over stock for a bolt-on package that sells for \$540 (\$400 for the Ram-Air and \$140 for the Super-Scoop) and is available for Dodge and Chevy diesel-powered trucks. In our acceleration tests, the combo went from 0-60 mph in 20 seconds flat before installing the Banks equipment. After the air-intake treatment the time was 17.7 seconds — very impressive.

Aside from numbers, an immediate seat-of-the-pants power jump was noticed during acceleration, thanks to less turbo lag and a faster turbo spool-up. There is a small increase in audible levels of turbo spooling, but I personally like the sound. Overall, the Banks Ram-Air and Super-Scoop married together provide a true performance advantage with mileage gains for relatively low cost and only a few hours garage time. 🚚

Gale Banks Engineering, (877) 227-5619, www.bankspower.com.

RESTORING AN OLD FRIEND – PART XI

STOVE & REFRIGERATOR

MODERNIZING ESSENTIALS FOR THE ROAD

by Gary Wescott

Surely one of the most enjoyable parts of traveling and camping in a fully self-contained RV is being able to take it all with you, including “the kitchen sink.” Being able to stop virtually anywhere and prepare a snack or a full gourmet meal is healthier than the junk food and burger huts that tempt you at the end of every exit, far more economical than even the inconsistently average steak and lobster chains and — if you like to cook — much more fun.

To enjoy the luxury of preparing your own food on the road, there are two essential pieces of equipment — you can hardly call them optional accessories. You need a good stove and refrigerator. The old Magic Chef stove in our 1981 24-foot Terry travel trailer had seen thousands of meals, including a few Thanksgiving turkeys and one memorable Christmas goose. We never did like LP-gas pilot lights, and lighting the oven was always an adventure.

Fortunately, with the merger of Magic Chef, Amana and Maytag, the standard RV gas range has seen some improvements. Also very fortunately, they have done so without changing the size. That made it easy for us to slide out the old cooker and slip in the new Magic Chef residentially styled RV gas range and cooktop.

The Magic Chef features a 9,100-BTU Superburner with infinite heat control plus two 6,500-BTU back burners, all of which are lighted by piezo-spark ignition. A slanted control panel with easy-to-read graphics, a heavy-duty one-piece grate and a deep-well spill-catcher cooktop are all great changes.

The large-capacity oven has a built-in broiler, non-tilt chrome oven racks and a color-matching glass oven door with a towel-bar handle. It's designed for easy cleaning, and uses Magic Chef's rattle-free Quiet Ride system. We can already smell the cookies baking.

The new oven and cooktop was a perfect fit. All we needed to do was cut the existing copper LP-gas line to length and make a new flare using a flare tool we bought at the hardware store. We first installed a new flare nut to assure a good seal.

A pressure leak-down test was performed to assure our LP-gas fitting was secure.



PHOTOS BY GARY WESCOTT

Now we had a place to prepare delicious meals. All that was missing was food, which brought us to the 29-year-old Dometic refrigerator. Actually, it still worked pretty well, but like other appliances, its age was showing and it lacked modern-day energy efficiencies. Dometic anticipates refrigerators have a life span, so a new and much improved model was available. The Classic refrigerator tops the list as the ideal replacement unit for RVs. It comes in two popular sizes, ensuring the right fit for existing cabinet openings. With its convenient features and clean, modern look, it was just what we needed to restore this old Terry.

An improved absorption cooling system provides consistent temperatures with an energy-saving adjustable thermostat. Removable door bins have Dometic's exclusive Magic Fingers that securely hold jars and bottles during travel, including a gallon container space and two crispers.

We had to trim a little off the top cabinet opening for a better fit. Some oak paneling was a good match to the interior. This was easily cut to size with a sharp drywall knife and fitted to the main door and freezer.

One feature we especially liked was the Auto Mode, which we didn't have in our old refrigerator, with its two-way power and automatic electronic LP-gas ignition. When 120-volt AC is available, the Classic automatically switches the gas off and uses shorepower. Hooking up



1



2



3



4



- (1) We used a new flare nut to assure a good seal before flaring the end of the copper tube.
- (2) The shortened LP-gas supply line was connected, tightened and tested for leaks.
- (3) The four screws that secure the stove and oven were an exact match to the original holes.
- (4) The heavy-duty one-piece grate is rattle-free, but a two-piece grate might actually be easier to handle in the small Terry sink.



to power and LP-gas was straightforward. The existing LP-gas line needed no modification, and 120-volt AC and 12-volt DC were a simple plug in and two screws.

Dometic recommends a drain tube, which again our previous unit did not have. To avoid drilling a hole all the way down through the bottom, we simply fashioned a plastic drain tube and fed it out through the refrigerator side access door. We may change this later when we see how much moisture really needs to drain.

Keeping small items in place on the road has always been a problem in any RV refrigerator. The handy adjustable RV Fridge Brace by Camco clamps onto any shelf rack and captures that jar of jam or pickles, or a bowl of leftovers.

It seems like all the basics have been restored and often upgraded on this Old Friend except an essential we don't think about until it gets dark. Most of the trailer's interior lights had been changed once already, and others had just died of age. We wanted something more stylish, a bit brighter. While we're at it, we'll add a few smaller reading lamps. Watch for "Restoring an Old Friend — Part XII: Let There Be Light." 📺

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

Dometic, (800) 544-4881, www.dometicusa.com.

Magic Chef, (800) 688-1120, www.magicchef.com.

5



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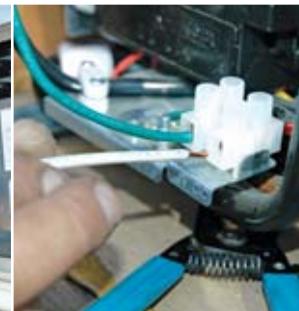
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8



9



- (5) Mounting screws at the rear are the main points of attachment for this refrigerator.
- (6) Always use two wrenches to tighten LP-gas fittings.
- (7) We connected the wires for the inside refrigerator light, the piezo-spark ignition and the control panel.
- (8) The 12-volt DC wires were simple to connect.
- (9) Dometic recommends a drain tube. Rather than drilling a hole through the bottom, we simply poked it out the side access door.

RVLOCK

ATTRACTIVE ENTRY-DOOR LOCKSET THAT CAN BE RETROFITTED IN MINUTES ADDS STYLE, FUNCTION AND KEYLESS OPERATION TO TRAILERS AND CAMPERS

by Dave Riggs

One thing almost all trailers, fifth-wheels and campers have in common is the handle/lockset used on the entry doors. Most owners don't even give these mechanisms a second thought until they struggle with the key and/or have problems closing the door. When these locks failed, you had to replace them with more of the same — at least until the RVLock hit the market.

The RVLock A-25 series is a game changer for towable and camper owners, especially those who envy their motorhoming friends who have more sophisticated handles and locks, specifically those that are keyless. While the RVLock is designed to be retrofitted into the existing hole in the door, it can also be locked and unlocked by a remote key fob.

Installation of the RVLock is about as simple as it gets. You simply remove the old lockset, which exposes a universally sized hole (3¾ inches high by 2¾ inches wide and 1½ inches deep), and install the new. The process requires a few extra steps because of the electronic circuitry. Mounting the inside and outside handles takes only a few minutes, even after cleaning any sealant residue that may be present. Before the pieces are screwed together, the battery compartment is opened and four AA batteries are inserted; you also have to connect the wires terminating out of each section of the lock as the pieces come together. According to the manufacturer, the batteries should last an entire travel season.

Finally, the faceplate in the door is attached and the striker plate is adjusted for a smooth fit.

We struggled with the lockset that



PHOTOS BY DAVE RIGGS



New lockset fits nicely in place of existing hardware. Four AA batteries are installed before lockset is secured. The battery cover in the lockset handle is easily accessible after installation.

was replaced for years, always having to shoot lubricant into the keyhole to keep the keys from binding and holding the handle open so the door could close without slamming. Once the RVLock was installed, the door closed with one finger, the bigger handle provided a more comfortable grip and the dead bolt worked smoothly. Two colors are available: standard white and a sleek polished black.

The RVLock comes with two keys

and one key fob. You can order additional key fobs (or replace one, if lost) and train them to your code by using a button and light built into the circuit board. Millions of codes are available, so the chances of finding someone in camp who can open your dead bolt is nearly impossible. If the batteries fail, the key can be used to lock and unlock the handle.

The operating range of the remote is substantial, although we didn't test it



It's best to clean any residue left from the previous lockset. This can be done using a clean rag and mineral spirits.

outside of our campsite boundaries. We did find that it's easy to accidentally activate the unlock button while the remote is in a pocket. While we would like to see the unlock button be recessed into the remote housing, the audible alarm is a safety net that lets users know each time the dead bolt is opened or closed.

RVLocks sell for \$239.99 and additional key fobs are available for \$19.95 each. The lockset comes with a 90-day warranty, but a three- or five-year warranty can be purchased for \$49.99 or \$69.95, respectively.

Although the RVLock is a sizable investment — when compared to the lower price of a stock lockset — its



RVLock is also available in polished black. The key fob has simple lock/unlock buttons.



The new striker is included with the kit, and installation takes only several minutes.

classy looks, high-build quality, super smooth door function and keyless convenience are certainly worth the extra money. 📱

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PERFORMANCE CORNER

by Ken Freund

BULLY DOG

Bully Dog was formed in Aberdeen, Idaho, in 1998. The company founders — Daryl, Michael and Phillip Klassen — were heavily influenced by their father Harold's interest in improving vehicle performance.

Bully Dog now offers a variety of products designed to add horsepower and torque on many popular gasoline and diesel engines, including intake, exhaust and electronic modifications. One of its products that caught my eye is the GT, or Gauge Tuner. This unit serves as a downloader that adds power and allows multiple drivetrain adjustments. With its customizable gauge setup you can choose any four of 15 different vehicle parameters to monitor at once. Its Driving Coach software monitors wasted vehicle energy and then informs the driver how to change driving habits to increase fuel economy. The unit can read and erase trouble codes, calibrate the speedometer for larger tires or gearing changes and reset speed limiters. Also included is a performance-testing feature to measure a vehicle's acceleration.

On common-rail Dodge, Ford and GM diesels, Bully Dog reports gains of around 50 hp and 100 lb-ft of torque. Big Three gas pickups and some Nissan models can choose between regular and premium fuel tuning for increases of 10 to 30 hp (depending on application) and up to 49 lb-ft of torque.

The GT retails for \$470 for gas and \$700 for diesel. California Air Resources Board (CARB) approval is pending. There's also a Watchdog that sells for \$300 and the Performance Management Tool (PMT) that lists for \$1,175. Bully Dog Technologies, (866) 285-5936, www.bullydog.com.

LEGISLATIVE NEWS

MILEAGE STANDARDS EXPECTED FOR LARGE PICKUPS

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency released a Notice of Intent to Issue a Proposed Rule for 2017-2025 light-vehicle fuel-economy and emissions standards. This regulation could apply U.S. corporate average fuel economy (CAFE) rules to pickups with 8,500 to 10,000 pounds gross vehicle weight ratings (gvwr). These trucks have been exempt from CAFE since it began in 1975. Regulation of these trucks is slated for 2014, and the EPA expects a final ruling by July 30, 2011.



EPA EXPECTED TO APPROVE E15 IN 2011

The EPA has also given limited approval to allow pump gasoline to contain up to 15 percent ethanol (E15). The E15 blend is approved for vehicles of the 2007 model year or newer; the EPA is still considering the effect it may have on vehicles from the 2001 through 2006 model years. Vehicle manufacturers and others have warned that boosting ethanol content in gas is likely to cause older engines not designed to run on the mix to have drivability problems, corrosion in fuel systems and other maladies.

NEW REGULATIONS ON CHINESE TIRES

Many trailerists have complained about quality problems with Chinese tires. China's Ministry of Trade and Industry says it will take steps to improve the nation's tire industry, including product improvements. The regulations will require China's tire manufacturers to increase production of radial tires and encourage them to improve quality and eliminate lower-cost bias-ply tires by 2015.

FORD BOOSTS DIESEL POWER

Ford increased the output of its 6.7-liter Power Stroke diesel by 65 lb-ft only a few months after it went on sale. The engines are now rated at 400 hp and 800 lb-ft of torque, making the Power Stroke the most powerful production diesel engine ever installed in a pickup. Ford is offering a free power upgrade to all owners of early production 2011 Super Duty diesel models. The process involves reprogramming the powertrain control module software and owners should receive a letter describing the process, which should take around a half hour at their Ford dealer. The upgrade program began August 31, 2010, and will continue for one year.

NO 2011 RAM HYBRID

Two years ago Dodge announced it would introduce a Ram Hybrid Electric Vehicle (HEV), but after tracking consumer response to hybrid pickups on the market, Dodge cancelled the 2011 Ram HEV. However, Dodge was recently selected for a U.S. Department of Energy grant of up to \$48 million as part of the Recovery and Reinvestment Act and is planning to build 140 Ram Plug-in Hybrid Electric Vehicles (PHEV) for a three-year demo. The Ram PHEV uses a 5.7-liter HEMI V-8 with a two-mode hybrid transmission and a lithium-ion battery. Overall fuel-economy improvement of more than 65 percent is expected for average drive cycles. Several utilities, government agencies and universities will test the Ram PHEV. 🚚

Advice from our **Tech Team**

TIRE LIFE

I own a 31½-foot Sunnybrook fifth-wheel trailer that I've had since 2004. The first three years I owned the trailer, I stored it in an open storage place that only had a roof over the trailer. During the last year, I have stored the trailer in an enclosed place. I have been told that I should replace the tires on my trailer every four years regardless of where it is stored. Is that a general requirement or just a recommendation?

James Leo, Houston, Texas

There's no law or hard-and-fast rule on tire replacement, only guidelines, and most manufacturers recommend replacement in seven years. If the tires are left uncovered and exposed to the sun and weather most of the time, they will deteriorate much faster than those that are protected. I've heard from one tire expert that uncovered tires exposed to the sun deteriorate about four times as fast as the same tires with white protective covers on them. So the type of storage definitely makes a difference in rate of tire deterioration. Look for cracks in sidewalls and any signs of damage. Ultimately it's your call. — Ken Freund

GRAY-WATER SMELL

We own a 2009 North Country travel trailer. It has two gray-water tanks. The front one is exclusively for the kitchen sink. When we use it, we get a terrible smell — almost like a rotten onion. Is there anything I can do to remedy this?

Dan Schrier, Bluffton, Indiana

This seems to be a pretty new trailer, so this could be something the dealer takes care of under a warranty repair. Check to be sure you have a P-trap properly installed on the sink. This might seem



There's no hard-and-fast rule on tire replacement, only guidelines, and most manufacturers recommend replacement in seven years.

remedial, but a voice of experience whispering in my ear says "check the obvious things first."

Next, check to be sure the gray-tank vent tube isn't blocked, such as by a bird's nest or some other obstruction on the roof. Between the P-trap and vent tube functioning properly, gray-tank odor should not be a problem. Finally, check at

your local RV parts center for gray-tank liquid deodorant. You dump a bit in the drain between each tank empty and flush cycle, and it helps keep the gray-tank odors at bay, just as black-tank deodorant works in the sewage tank. — Jeff Johnston

FORD REAR-AXLE JERKING

I own a 2004 Ford F-250 Super Duty pickup that I purchased new. About two years later I was getting a jerk from a dead stop that felt like slippage in the rear end. I took it in to Homer Skelton Ford in 2006 and they serviced it under Technical Service Bulletin 05-26-10. This fixed the problem until about two years later. The problem was worse, and I convinced Ford Motor Company I had a faulty rear end from the factory, and it agreed to pay half the cost of putting a new one in. In 2008 Ford replaced the complete rear end. Now two years later I am experiencing the same problem again. It is a jerk from a dead stop, as if there is slippage in the rear end. There is no noticeable problem once the



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RV CLINIC

vehicle is moving, even under load while pulling my fifth-wheel. Are you familiar with this problem and should I take it back for servicing once again or just learn to live with it? If I am not doing any permanent damage to the vehicle, I can tolerate the problem.

Ford Moore, Olive Branch, Mississippi

To rule out the rear axle, have the inspection cover removed and the differential assembly checked carefully. It is likely that the slip-joint in the driveline is sticking again due to corrosion. Ford TSB 05-26-10, which you mention, covers 1997-2004 F-150, 1997-2006 E-Series and 1999-2006 F-Super Duty trucks. It notes that some of these vehicles may exhibit a driveline clunk or bump that occurs as the vehicle starts to move forward, following a stop. This condition may be caused by the driveline's slip yoke not sliding smoothly on the output-shaft splines. It says to remove the driveline and lubricate the slip yoke. Refer to the Service Procedure as per Workshop



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Manual Section 205-01. Be sure to index-mark the driveshaft during removal to maintain alignment during reinstallation. Lubricate the slip yoke with 0.25-0.46 ounces of Motorcraft PTFE Lubricant. Re-index and reinstall the driveshaft per Workshop Manual and verify repair. — **K.F.**

MDX SAG HELP

I have a 2003 Acura MDX with a factory-installed tow package that I bought used two years ago. Its tow rating on a non-boat trailer is up to 3,500 pounds. I have a 2002 Coleman Utah with a dry weight of 2,500 pounds. My problem is that my Acura's suspension doesn't seem quite strong enough for the trailer and all my weights seem to be within range. Even when I empty my trailer of all water and camping supplies it seems to pull down the back of the vehicle more than a few inches. I recently had to replace the rear coil springs as they had weakened after 120,000 miles. This last summer the weight of taking the trailer on a long trip (3,000 miles)

ruined the inside treads on both rear tires — the driver's side worse than the passenger side. I made the same long trip the summer of 2009 and didn't have this problem. The engine seems to pull the trailer without any issues; however, the suspension seems weak. I do not have a weight-distribution hitch, just a standard 2-inch ball and an anti-sway bar.

Tom Kroha, Littleton, Colorado

The last line of your note pretty much explains everything: You need a weight-distributing (WD) hitch. Your MDX is primarily a passenger vehicle with a soft, people-pleasing rear suspension. Although you may be within your car's weight limits, the trailer still produces a serious load on the car's aft end. If you also carry passengers or cargo in the car when camping, the load out back is even worse.

Several types of lightweight weight-distributing hitches are available that would be a good match for your car and trailer; Reese Products comes to mind as

*one such supplier. The single-bar-style WD model would be a bit light for the job, but a light-duty dual-bar type should do the job. Consult with Reese Products or another WD hitch maker and you should find one that helps bring your car back up to level. You made no comments about steering and handling with the trailer aboard, but I'd wager you'll find the lashup handles better with the WD hitch installed and properly adjusted. — **J.J.***

BRAKE-CONTROL BLUES TIP

As stated in "Brake-Control Blues" in the August 2010 issue, some controllers require a connection to a brake circuit, therefore they won't work with an electrohydraulic unit (EHU). This provides a constant monitoring system for electric brakes.

I have made a couple controllers like this work; one was a Jordan, which will work with one to three axles. One axle with two brakes will draw about 8 amperes at full application. So the DC resistance of two brake magnets is about 1.5 ohms.



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I wired a 1.5-ohm, 30-watt resistor across the Jordan controller output. This fooled the controller to thinking it was feeding electric brakes, and it works perfectly.

Robert Robinson,
Parkersburg, West Virginia

Thanks for providing your experience with a work-around solution. This should help some readers with EHU systems. — K.F.

SHADE CLEANING

We have a 2006 Alpenlite fifth-wheel. Any ideas how I remove the shades to clean the back side?

Mavis Rennie, Cle Elum, Washington

Most shades are hung via one of two methods. They can be screwed to the wall or valance via brackets on the shade assembly, or clips can be screwed to the RV with the shade assembly body snapped into the clips. A look under your valances will reveal which system is used. Unscrew or unsnap them for easy removal. — J.J.

DYING DURAMAX

I have a 2004 Chevy Silverado 2500HD 6.6-liter Duramax diesel with an Allison transmission that has a problem with shutting off while driving along; there's no warning at all — it just stops running. I had the truck towed to a Chevy dealer, and the mechanics had it for two days and then said it started up, and that it was the fuel-injection control module. It stopped again 14 days later and was towed to another dealer. The mechanics said it started up and that the same codes came up. And so they checked it on the diagnostic machine and could not find bad wires.

About six weeks later, it stopped again when I was parked at my house. I let it sit until the next day, unhooked the batteries and the wire plugs and sprayed them with WD-40. I connected everything and it started. I took it to my mechanic and he checked it on the test machine and found the same codes as the dealers had found. So I had my 3-year-old batteries changed, and now it's been running OK

for several weeks. Have you heard of this problem? It's as if I turned my key off while driving.

John Gorman, Citra, Florida

When the engine is running, it gets its power from the alternator along with the batteries. It doesn't make sense that both batteries and alternator would fail intermittently at the exact same times and then work again, unless there is a problem with loose battery-cable connections, such as at the ground end to the vehicle. To monitor power, I'd connect a digital voltage meter to measure voltage at the ECM so it can be monitored while driving and when it cuts out immediately look at this readout.

High-pressure fuel is regulated by the fuel-rail-pressure (FRP) regulator mounted on the fuel-injection pump. The engine control module (ECM) controls the FRP regulator, which has a relay supply voltage circuit and relay control circuit. The ECM monitors the current on the circuits

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to detect a failure. These models have a known problem with stalling, due to faulty wiring to the fuel injection control module (FICM). There is a factory TSB on the issue that notes if a Tech 2 scan tool is used; diagnostic trouble codes (DTC) U0100, U0101, U0105, and/or U0106 may be set. The ECM, transmission control module (TCM), FICM, and Glow Plug Controller communicate between each other on circuits 2361 and 2362 of the CAN buss, but the Tech 2 does not communicate on these circuits, which makes it more difficult to trace.

If all the DTCs are set, it could be caused by the Can buss circuits shorting to ground. Cases of either of these circuits shorting to ground at the FICM/alternator bracket have been reported. Before replacing any parts, perform a thorough visual inspection and wiggle test (while running) of the engine wiring harnesses, particularly near the alternator bracket for a pink (or other) wire. Repair as necessary if damaged or shorted. — K.F. 🚗

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10-MINUTE TECH

A compilation of tried-and-true tips **From RVers**

↓ HOLLOW-WALL ANCHOR

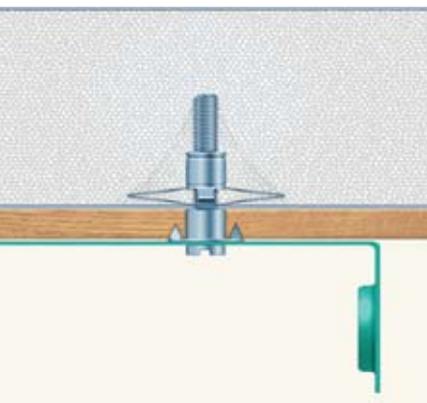
I wanted to mount a paper-towel holder to the inside of one of my trailer's basement doors, but the Foam-Core panels have nothing of substance to screw into.

I went to the hardware store and purchased a 3-inch-wide piece of 1/4-inch-thick poplar and a package of hollow-wall anchors designed for 1/8- to 1/2-inch thick walls.

Using the paper-towel holder as a template for mounting-screw locations, I drilled two 5/16-inch holes through the wood and the inner skin of the door. I then inserted the anchors and screwed them down tight. The anchor mushroomed securely against the combined thickness of the

wood and the panel. I then removed the screws and reinserted them through the towel holder. The total job took about 15 minutes and cost less than \$5, and now I have a convenient spot to get paper towels.

Terry Weymouth,
Livingston, Texas

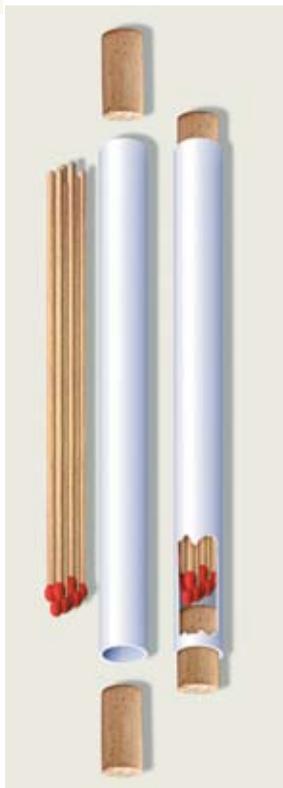


PVC USE NUMBER 3,528

To light the gas oven in my camper, I prefer using long fireplace matches. The problem is, the matches always scatter about the kitchen drawer, which is an inconvenience and a fire hazard.

My solution was to make a simple container using PVC pipe. I took a 13-inch piece of 3/4-inch PVC pipe and stuffed each end with a cork from a wine bottle. Now I always know exactly where my matches are.

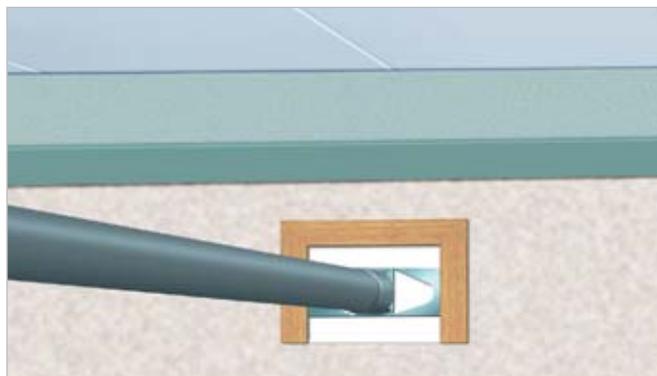
Fred Brugmans,
Warren, New Jersey



A NOT-SO-HOKEY POKEY

As I've gotten older, I'm constantly on the search for an easier way of doing things. To remove the jack pads from under the trailer without crawling underneath, I screwed a cabinet-door handle on a square piece of wood so I can retrieve it with a fireplace poker. It's simple, fast and affordable, and storage is a snap.

Bryan White, Dudley, Massachusetts



SLIDE-LOCK FRAME

When getting ready to break camp, one of my wife's jobs is retracting the slideout and putting the safety bar in place. This task requires her to stand on a footstool and use both hands to install the bar in the right spot and tighten it down.

I simplified this step by installing a three-sided, framed "end locator" on the inside wall of the trailer. I used 3/4-inch oak trim held in place with two-sided heavy-duty safety tape.

Now she can set the safety bar end into the bracket and not worry about it slipping — and she can tighten it with one hand.

Tom Scott, Webster, New York

Illustrations By Bill Tipton

To send a submission to *10-Minute Tech*, write to 2575 Vista Del Mar, Ventura, CA 93001. Please include an illustration if applicable.

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AMERICA'S OUTBACK

by Bill Graves

THE CABIN BY A STREAM

"AS YOU DRIVE THAT ROAD TO CALIENTE," MY FRIEND BOB LEE TOLD ME, "YOU'LL SEE AN OLD CABIN ALONG THERE THAT BELONGED TO LOUIS L'AMOUR."

Bob knew about such things. And he knew well the rolling, California ranch country around Caliente — at the foot of the mountains, east of Bakersfield. Bob was a student of the Old West. And he had read every book Louis L'Amour ever wrote.

I later drove that road to Caliente to see if the cabin was still there. It's there, by a stream. Still, that was almost 20 years ago.

I mention this now as it helps confirm a truism of a wanderer's lifestyle: The more we travel this country the more connected the journey becomes. New people and places become reminders of earlier-discovered people and places. The old and the new, all parts of a grand design, begin to fit together.

Names from the past pop up all the time in our travels, having a tie to this place or that. John Fremont, the explorer, is one. I keep running into him all over the West. For example, in Tombstone, the OK Corral is on Fremont Street.

Butch Cassidy is another one. Obviously, he and the Sundance Kid really got around. And the locals there today always brag about it.

I was in an RV park in Utah one time, chatting with a couple, when Cassidy's name came up. The wife went in their motorhome and returned with a book, which she laid on the picnic table in front of me — "Butch Cassidy, My Brother." She had written it. That's as close as I have ever come to meeting the real McCoy.

In my travels, the name Louis L'Amour comes up often. L'Amour, who died in 1988, was among the world's most popular writers. He wrote more than a hundred books that he called "frontier stories." Among them is a series of 18 novels that he



This cabin by a stream, off the road to Caliente, belonged to the great American storyteller Louis L'Amour — at least that's what Reese Hawkins said, recalling when he'd visit his friend Louis (left) years ago.

started in 1959 about the fictional Sackett family.

In the summer of 2000, I met a lady working at the Andrew Carnegie Library in Buffalo, Wyoming, whose maiden name was Sackett.

"He patterned those stories after the Sackett family — two sons who came here from England," she said. "Always wanted to meet him. I trespassed on his land in Colorado one time, hoping to bump into him."

In Quartzsite, Arizona — the site of the world's largest RV campout during the winter — Paul Winer runs a used-book store on the Business Loop of Interstate 10. "RVers don't keep books," Paul told me. "They don't have room. They bring them in here and we swap. From what I see every day, the books of Louis L'Amour are what RVers read the most."

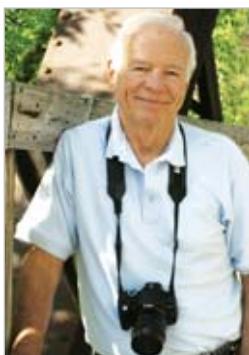
In 2007, I was in Jamestown, North Dakota, where L'Amour grew up. At the age of 15, halfway through the 10th grade, he left school. He later wrote, "that school was interfering with my education." The day his high-school class graduated, he was in Singapore, a merchant seaman.

"When he left here, he began a life-long quest for learning stirred by a passion for books," Barbara Pogue told me. She works as a volunteer at the Louis L'Amour Writer's Shack in Jamestown's Frontier Village.

Today, looking at the picture I took of that cabin in the woods, I was wondering about it. So I called Barbara. "You should call Reese Hawkins," she said. "He and Louis were good friends."

Reese, now 93, told me, "We visited Louis twice at his ranch near Caliente. When we hiked, I remember we always stopped at a cabin of his. It was on a little stream."

Welcome to America's Outback. 📧



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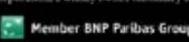
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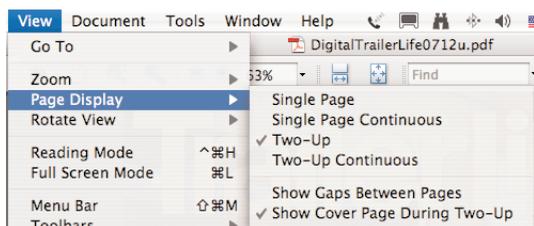


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