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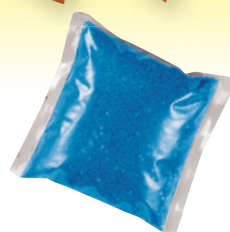
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North Platte, Nebraska



➤ Lifestyle's Alfa Gold side hauler offers a motorcycle garage, kids' room or storage. Page 12

On the cover: Forest River's R-pod, the Little Guy T@G and Airstream Sport 16 are just a few small towables that are big on livability.

Tiny Trailers Gain in Popularity

Small in stature, pint-size towables are spreading the passion for the RV lifestyle



There's a new trend building in the RV community, and it's all about diminutive trailers that are easy to tow. Small trailers, some barely longer than 16 feet, are becoming popular, and not just because they are affordable and easy to handle. Manufacturers are rushing to bring to market tiny trailers that are surprisingly livable, and buyers are gobbling them up in almost cultlike fashion. The roundup on page 36 is just a sampling of the variety of compact towables that are showing up in campgrounds across North America.

I can relate to the growing interest in these trailers. My wife, Lynne, and I bought our first trailer more than 40 years ago, a 13-foot Cardinal on a single-axle chassis. Inside was spartan by today's standards, but it had a huge bed (converted from the dinette) that occupied just about every inch of floor space. The galley was basic; we didn't even have a real refrigerator — instead, we had to feed the insulated box with block ice. No bathroom, but a closet that was large enough to squeeze in a Porta Potti.

We made a lot of memories in that little trailer before trading it for a model that was only 4 feet longer. At one time, a 17- or 18-foot self-contained trailer was a staple in the RV industry. Common layouts included a pullout gaucho-type seat/bed, overhead bunk and dinette/bed. Not having to buy ice and a nice shower were big luxuries. Those enthusiasts who were really styling had maybe a 25- or 27-footer. Interestingly, many of the trailers featured in this issue's roundup are smaller than our first trailer but have better livability and amenities. Credit more efficient designs, lightweight materials and compact appliances.

To some people, camping in a tiny trailer might be considered a sacrifice, but for many it's a blessing. It might be easy to tag this group of enthusiasts as "minimalists," but there's something to be said for communing with nature without having to worry about access in the more primitive — and beautiful — recreation areas. A friend with a teardrop hitched to a Subaru four-wheel-drive wagon crisscrossed the country for months and wouldn't have it any other way.

Not everyone buys a tiny trailer to get off the beaten path, and from the number of these rigs I see in commercial campgrounds, the popularity is destined to grow among tent campers looking to get off the ground as well as seasoned RVers wanting to downsize. While it's amusing to see one of these itty-bitty trailers sandwiched between two 40-foot fifth-wheels in an RV park, one thing is for sure: everyone gets to experience the lifestyle with equal passion and satisfaction. 🚐

— **Bob Livingston, publisher**

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AMERICAN ICONS

Henry Ford purchased a Stagecoach trailer in the 1930s to give to Charles Lindbergh as recognition for his solo transatlantic flights. After 10 years, Charles and wife, Anne, returned it to Ford, thanking him for the "loan." That trailer is on display at the Henry Ford Museum in Dearborn, Michigan.

TRAILER LIFE

FOLLOW THE ROAD TO ADVENTURE

Publisher Bob Livingston
Editorial Director Eileen Hubbard
Editor Valerie Law
Managing Editor Donya Carlson
Technical Editor Chris Hemer
Senior Art Director Rick Damien
Production Director Bob Dawson
Production Manager Brenda Hutchinson
Sales Administrator Katey Purgatorio

Consulting Editors Wes Caughlan, Ken Freund, Jeff Johnston

Contributors Kristopher Bunker, Bill and Jenn Gehr, Bill Graves, Donna Ikenberry, Kevin Livingston, Jan Napier, James Richardson, Pamela Selbert, Richard Varr

Vice President National Sales Terry Thompson
847-229-6759

RV Marketplace/Classifieds Katey Purgatorio
847-229-6756, katey.purgatorio@goodsam.com

Southwest Sue Seidlitz
530-268-3005, sue.seidlitz@goodsam.com

Southeast Kim Whitaker
919-412-6325, kim.whitaker@goodsam.com

Northeast Lou Cicirelli
954-297-9234, lou.cicirelli@goodsam.com

Northwest Scott Oakes
847-229-6758, scott.oakes@goodsam.com

Detroit Scott Crompton, Crompton Holdings
334-546-7243, scottcrompton@mac.com

Chairman Emeritus Art Rouse
Publisher Emeritus Bill Estes

Customer Service

Subscriptions (print and digital)
800-825-6861
trailerlife@cdsfulfillment.com

Editorial
info-tl@goodsam.com
www.trailerlife.com

GS MEDIA & EVENTS

President Mark Boggess
Senior Vice President/Group Publisher Bob Livingston
Vice President/Advertising Sales Terry Thompson



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Outback and Beyond

A customer dropped off a copy of February's America's Outback column, "Sweet Dreams." Well done! The customer was so impressed with how great Bill Graves made me sound that he asked to meet me.

**Liz Garvey, Owner, Wilmar Chocolates
Appleton, Wisconsin**

I love Bill Graves' monthly column, and America's Outback is generally the first thing I read. The topics over the years have covered nearly every subject, no matter how small, and Bill makes them all interesting. His column is like a long-anticipated and welcome letter from a favorite family member. The magazine overall continues to be well thought out and, most of all, helpful.

Glenn Cox, Monrovia, California

Majestic Math

I am not sure that anyone could put any more into a fifth-wheel than the New Horizons Majestic reviewed by Chris Hemer in the February issue — quite a "Majestic" palace. However, I am wondering about the stated weights. If the test weight was 21,800 and test hitch weight was 4,575 (more than 20 percent), then would it be reasonable to have the same percentage hitch weight at gross weight? At a GVWR of 26,250 pounds, and 20.9 percent hitch weight, would that not put the axle weight at 20,763 pounds? If that were so, and 3 x 7,000-pound axle capacity, that leaves a dismaying 763 pounds overcapacity on the axles. Why did they not, with a \$274,753 price tag, at least put 8,000-pound axles under it?

Joe Dobry, Burleson, Texas

Chris Hemer replies: *You're missing a couple of points, Joe. First, nearly all the cargo loaded into a fifth-wheel is in the large forward compartment and bedroom closet, meaning that a smaller percentage of this weight is carried over the trailer's axles. So, no, the percentage would not be the same. Even if it were, 3 x 7,000 equals 21,000*

Check Your Shackles

I enjoyed Bill and Jenn Gehr's February article, "Rolling Smoothly and Safely" — great advice about regularly inspecting RV components. The front pair of shackles on our 2010 Heartland Sundance 30-foot fifth-wheel completely broke and dropped the axle. It was impossible to load and haul away, so we jacked up the whole trailer and replaced the shackles. When we got home, I replaced the springs, hangers and equalizer, and went with wet bolts and brass inserts. Then I welded an angle iron brace between the two equalizers, per Lippert's recommendation. I now advise my fellow travelers to check their shackles often, or at least annually, when they repack their wheel bearings. I have included a photo from my experience, and it speaks for itself.

Rod Juranek, Sunriver, Oregon



pounds, not 20,000, so the axles would not be 763 pounds over capacity. They would, in fact, have 237 pounds of reserve capacity left.

In the Know When You Tow

I am a new subscriber to *Trailer Life* and have been enjoying your many articles. I recently received the 2015 *Guide to Towing* supplement with the February issue. I thought the articles did a good job presenting the vehicles in a fair and neutral way — kudos to the authors and editors. I especially liked the exhaustive list of models and options along with towing ratings. It was interesting to be able to do apples-to-apples comparisons on various setups from different manufacturers.

Norman Custard, Omaha, Nebraska

Very good write-up on trailer-brake controllers in the 2015 tow guide. I have a Tekonsha Prodigy P2 with the accelerometer. An additional advantage you might mention is that this allows the controller to be mounted on the dash at virtually any angle.

Regarding towing tips, almost everyone I know, and everyone I learned from, uses a check sheet to cover coupling and preparation for

getting underway. It's easy to forget or assume something. The most sage advice I got from anyone was from an 80-year-old who said, when you open the driver's door and are ready to go, take one more walk all the way around the rig. It's amazing how many times I find something I assumed got done on that last walk-around.

Jim Collins, Decatur, Alabama

I bought a new 4x4 Ram 2500 for towing a fifth-wheel to be bought next.



Now I am surprised that four different RV dealers have told me the bed is too high to properly tow a fifth-wheel. It could be done, all said, but could cause problems with stability, air drag, dragging the rear, overloading axles and extra overall height for some units. Your *2015 Guide to Towing* misses this very critical parameter.

Herb Trotter, Rockford, Tennessee

We've addressed this concern many times in Trailer Life, Herb. Today's 4WD trucks are usually not much higher in the rear than their 2WD counterparts. You can verify this by measuring the bed rail height of both trucks. We generally recommend that there be at least 6 inches of clearance between the truck bed rails and the underside of the trailer to allow for rough roads, undulating pavement, etc. As long as the clearance is 6 inches or more, you'll be fine. Having a slightly "nose up" attitude will not affect stability or wind drag and won't cause the trailer to drag the rear, unless there is a lot of overhang — in which case it would probably drag anyway. The concern about overloading the axles is completely inaccurate, and extra height, if there were any, is irrelevant unless bridge clearance in your area is unusually low. — Editors

Appalachian Errata

We were pleasantly surprised to see our beautiful state of West Virginia featured in Carl Calvert's "Appalachian Playground" in the February *Trailer Life*. There were a few discrepancies with the article, though. The photo labeled Wonder Falls on Big Sandy Creek is actually Blackwater Falls, and Cathedral State Park is located in Aurora, not Audra.

It is also helpful to know that Morgantown is home to West Virginia University and has many sporting, theater, dining and shopping opportunities. There is a lot to do in this part of our gorgeous state!

Angela and Scott Daley
Vienna, West Virginia

Real World RVs

Regarding Tom Hawkins' letter in the February issue, "RVing in the Real World," about limited kitchen access when slideouts are in, I purchased a Keystone Hornet Hideout 25RKS with a rear kitchen that has a single slideout in the dining area. Even with the slide in, there is ample access to the kitchen cabinets and fridge. I would suggest anyone considering purchasing an RV to do some window shopping and online searches on the models you're considering.

Ray Brooks, Spurgeon, Indiana

I went to the Indy RV show and viewed several RVs with a friend who is in the market to purchase, only to find that, with the slideouts in, access to the kitchen area and fridge is cut off. The other issue I noticed with travel trailers is that you have to crawl under them to open the waste

valves. Why can't travel trailers have a control center similar to fifth-wheels where valves, water and electric hookups can be accessed standing up or at least not having to lie on the ground to reach them?

Steve Smith, Lafayette, Indiana

The design of a trailer usually dictates where the utility center is positioned. In any case, you should not have to crawl under a trailer to access the dump valves — they should be reachable from a squatting position. Many trailers have water and power connections that can be made from the standing position. As Ray Brooks suggests in the previous letter, you just have to shop around. — Editors

RV manufacturers should stop putting beds in locations that require gymnastics to access. Walk-arounds and sofabeds that fold out to at least



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LETTERS

a double size should be the standard. I would willingly give up the space needed to accommodate larger beds. Jackknife sofas provide a terrible sleeping surface that won't accommodate even one person comfortably, and dinettes that are 34 x 62 inches are suitable only for a child. Having a trailer that is 20 feet long and "sleeps six" is of no use when each bed is cramped.

Paul Demarest, Santa Cruz, California

Positive Reactions

With all the negative stories concerning RV manufacturers and dealers, we thought you might want to know about our excellent experience with Scenic Roads RV Center of Manchester, Tennessee, and KZ RV. When a warranty claim became necessary due to a skylight damaged in manufacture and subsequent roof damage, we are pleased to report that both KZ and Thor

Industries were quick to act and more than fair with us. When purchasing this trailer, we went with KZ because of the company's reputation for customer service, even though it meant a four-hour drive from home to pick it up. Kevin at Scenic Roads was excellent to buy from and very thorough in dealing with the manufacturer when things were not quite right. We highly recommend both companies.

Jon and Rita Ellis, Memphis, Tennessee

In March 2012, my wife and I took delivery of our 2013 Heartland Bighorn 3070RL. We experienced issues with incorrect installation of the automatic leveling system components, certain plumbing fixtures and cabinet doors. My point in writing is to share the commitment to customer service we experienced with Heartland RV, which reimbursed us for all of the expenses we incurred. While the reimbursement doesn't negate the issues we had to deal with, I believe there is something to be said for a company that takes responsibility for its product and process of manufacturing and takes measures to improve and instill customer confidence. Additionally, my hope is that sharing our experience will heighten companies' awareness of just how critical consistent quality control is in the overall manufacturing process.

Gary Behr, Schnecksville, Pennsylvania

Thanks for the Tips

In the December 2014 issue, I read "Snug as a Bug in a Rug," a 10-Minute Tech tip to help with a cold RV bed. It advised installing a sheet of 1½-inch-thick foam-insulation board between the top of the plywood box and the mattress. We have a KZ Spree trailer with a rollout bed. Camping in cooler weather, the bed was cold. We purchased insulating board at Lowe's and installed it under the mattress — what a difference! Thank you, Gary Bradshaw and *Trailer Life*, for a wonderful tip.

Susan Smith, Pensacola, Florida

Regarding Alice Ricciardi's "Cabinet Items Stay Put" 10-Minute Tech tip in the December *Trailer Life* about adding



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a lip to RV shelves with quarter-round wood molding, I did this years ago and also found it helpful to put down nonskid shelving material.

Dennis Michael, Lewiston, Idaho

No Bikes on the Back

I recently bought a Flagstaff 2015 Microlite 25DS trailer and found out after I purchased it that nothing of any kind can be mounted on the rear bumper. There is nothing in the sales literature that makes this declaration. You find this restriction within the owner's manual. Be advised, if you plan on taking bikes with you, they must be stored inside the trailer or mounted to the tow vehicle, if possible.

Aaron Baker, China Township, Michigan

Prescription for Travel

For five fall seasons, my wife and I have enjoyed traveling across the United States to watch our two grandsons play college football — except for this past autumn. My wife suffers from chronic back pain, and no surgical procedures are available. She depends on prescribed painkillers.

On October 6, 2014, the DEA reclassified hydrocodone as a Schedule II controlled substance. Prescriptions written for those classified drugs will be filled only in the state they are written. There are no refills. Each state has its own regulations governing these drugs. This caught us totally unaware. We were in far-east Texas when my wife needed a refill. We were told she needed a new prescription from a Texas doctor. We tried five doctors, none of whom would see my wife. We finally went to an emergency room.

The new regulations effectively imprison RVers to the state where their painkillers are prescribed. Are we the only ones affected by this? If not, how have others coped?

Charlie Thompson

Santa Teresa, New Mexico 🚚

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Strumming the Blues

A shop where personalized guitars are designed and created is reborn in the heart of Memphis

article and photos by James Richardson

My hometown of Memphis, Tennessee, is one of blues, barbecue and guitar makers. Most everyone knows about the Gibson Guitar factory near historic Beale Street, but the St. Blues Guitar Workshop near another notable location, Sun Studio — one of the most famous recording studios in the world — also makes high-quality instruments. St. Blues was started in the late 1970s, operated for a while making popular pieces, then went into a slump and ceased production. But in 2005, St. Blues got financial support and began crafting its high-quality instruments again.

Today, St. Blues makes a variety of guitars including the Workshop series, the Juke Joint series and its unique Cigar Box guitars, and takes custom orders. Every instrument they make is designed and built here. Tours are offered Monday through Friday at 11 a.m. and 2 p.m. and are more personal than those at the Gibson Guitar factory. The difference is understandable due to the size and operation of each factory. Jeff Cox, St. Blues co-owner, usually conducts the tours and permits his workers to talk to visitors, and the tour is free. Gibson charges \$10 for the 45-minute tour, but visitors get a thorough explanation of the guitar-making process.

St. Blues is located a street behind Sun Studio, one of the most famous recording studios in the world,



(Above) Jeff Cox demonstrates how a guitar neck is attached to the body at St. Blues. (Right) Sun Studio, a Memphis landmark, where the Million Dollar Quartet had its impromptu jam session.



where the Million Dollar Quartet of Elvis Presley, Jerry Lee Lewis, Johnny Cash and Carl Perkins had an impromptu jam session back in 1956. Parking an RV is OK in the St. Blues lot at 645 Marshall Avenue or anywhere along Marshall. From there, it's an easy one-block walk to Sun Studio. Both guitar-making facilities are within walking distance of Beale Street, the heart of entertainment in Memphis with plenty of blues music and barbecue joints.

Several campgrounds near downtown Memphis accommodate RVs. Elvis Presley Boulevard RV Park and Graceland RV Park are located near Graceland, 7½ miles to the south.

Tom Sawyer's RV Park is 11 miles to the west across the Mississippi River in West Memphis, Arkansas.

For More Information

St. Blues Guitar Workshop

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Get a Lift with Lifestyle's Alfa Gold

Two-wheel enthusiasts will like Lifestyle Luxury's industry-first side hauler high-end fifth-wheel. Not only can you take a full-size motorcycle along, it can be loaded by one person and have its own private room. The Lifestyle Alfa Gold 3905SH (mentioned in December 2014's "New for 2015") offers three loading configurations to utilize a 36-square-foot slide room.

In the Motorcycle Garage option, a ramp lift is mounted inside the slide room that's operated by a remote control. The motorcycle is secured to the ramp, and the bike is lifted into the 4-x 9-foot room via a heavy-duty winch and cable.



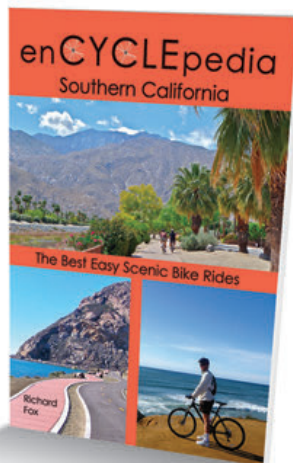
The second configuration is a Kids Room with fold-down HappiJac bunks, a flat-screen TV and wardrobe. And for those who just like more room to carry extra items, the Storage Room is the way to go. An outside door in the slideout makes for easy loading and unloading with access to the room from a door inside the RV. The Alfa Gold uses a specialized version of the Lifestyle's Titan structure frame that's engineered to endure heavy loads.

The 40-foot-4-inch-long 3905SH is designed for larger families, with a living room that seats seven and a sofa that converts to a queen-size bed. There are two recliners next to a freestanding table. The L-shaped galley features Corian countertops and a center island, and there's a spacious pantry with etched-glass doors. The kitchen has a 12-cubic-foot double-door refrigerator, a microwave, a three-burner range and oven, and stainless-steel appliances. Up front, the queen bed is nestled in a slide that allows walk-around space and includes two nightstands, a front wardrobe, storage shelves and a walk-in closet that's prepped for an optional washer and dryer.

MSRP on the Alfa Gold 3905SH starts at \$110,000. Lifestyle Luxury RV, 574-825-5578, www.lifestylelr.com

Bicycle Southern California

Author Richard Fox, who spends six months of the year in his RV and is an avid bicyclist, has compiled an "enCYCLEpedia" of scenic and easy bike rides in Southern California. His 376-page book lists more than 200 ride options from San Luis Obispo to Palm Springs and everything in between. Fox wrote the book while staying in Southern California RV parks and campgrounds and seeking out enjoyable bicycle rides. Included in the full-color paperback *enCYCLEpedia Southern California* are recommended RV parks as well as tourist attractions, historic places, bird- and whale-watching spots, dining options and other destinations. *enCYCLEpedia Southern California* is available at Barnes & Noble and Amazon.com for \$26.95.



Arkansas Butterfly Festival

Mount Magazine State Park in Arkansas is known for its unique habitat for animals, plants



and almost 100 different species of butterflies. Thousands of butterfly enthusiasts come from around the world to see the colorful creatures, including the orange and blue Diana fritillary (pictured above), the official state butterfly, which is seen only occasionally in other parts of the United States. This year, the 19th annual Mount Magazine International Butterfly Festival takes place June 26 and 27 with events at the fairgrounds, on the square in the town of Paris and atop Mount Magazine. A live butterfly observatory, seminars, craft and food vendors, photo contest, nature walks, music, a petting zoo, pony rides, helicopter rides, a kids' zone and a 5K run are all part of the festivities.

Butterfly Festival, 479-963-2244, email: pariscoc@gmail.com

Oregon's Fruit Loop

Acres and acres of pear, apple and cherry orchards line Oregon's Hood River Valley, with one tree after another in full bloom. Special events are planned across the region from April 11 to 26 this year, to celebrate the pink and white fruit tree blossoms that come with spring. The scenic 35-mile tour route takes you past more than 20 farm stands and wineries along the Fruit Loop that join the fun with special events and offers. Visit the riverfront and hike or bike to waterfalls, or stroll through downtown to shop, wine and dine.

Blossom Time kicks off April 11 with the Hood River Hard-Pressed Cider Fest from noon until 7 p.m. The event features more than 20 cideries, food, produce, arts and crafts vendors, a kids' area and music from bluegrass to classic rock. Entry is \$5 (ages 14 and under are free).

Hood River Valley Chamber of Commerce
800-366-3530, www.hoodriver.org



NEWSWIRE

INDUSTRY NEWS



Forest River's Expansion Plans

Forest River, manufacturer of fifth-wheels, travel trailers, pop-up tent trailers and park-model trailers, plans to launch three new lines of vehicles. The company will be breaking ground in White Pigeon, Michigan, on a \$7 million project that includes construction of three 100,000-square-foot buildings. Forest River currently has manufacturing facilities across the Midwest and is headquartered in Elkhart, Indiana. The project is anticipated to create almost 400 jobs. The Michigan Strategic Fund awarded the village of White Pigeon \$1.6 million in Community Development Block Grant funds for the Forest River project. The funds will be used toward on-the-job training for 264 employees at the new facilities. Daniel Czajowski, president of White Pigeon Village, said, "All of the state of Michigan and St. Joseph County will benefit from Forest River locating here."

PRODUCT TESTING



Torklift's StableLoad Challenge

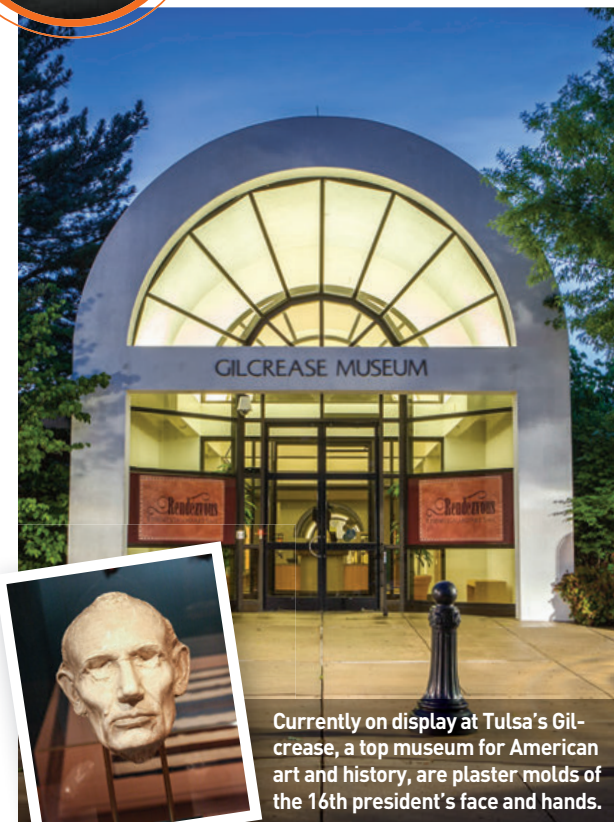
Sumner, Washington-based Torklift International, maker of aftermarket accessories for the RV and automotive industries, kicked off 2015 with its StableLoad Challenge. To put its product to the test, Torklift videotaped users' reactions when they drove loaded Ford F-150s with and without the StableLoad suspension stabilizer that attaches to the factory leaf spring. "When driving the Ford F-150 without StableLoads, the drivers were concerned about loss of control, side-to-side sway and an overall bumpy ride," said Torklift International General Manager Jay Taylor. "Once they drove the truck that had the StableLoads installed, they were blown away." The StableLoad works with all Ford, Chevrolet and Ram trucks, full-size vans, SUVs and any vehicle that has an upper or lower factory overload leaf spring.

RV ECONOMICS



Go RVing, Save Money

A study prepared for the Recreation Vehicle Industry Association (RVIA) by PKF Consulting USA, a member of an international travel and tourism consulting group, found that RV travel is 23 to 59 percent less expensive than other types of vacations for a family of four that owns an RV, even with fluctuating fuel costs. For empty-nester couples, the savings were slightly less. RV vacations offer greater savings than those of families taking a personal car or an airline, staying in a hotel or rental house, and eating in restaurants, according to the study. Said RVIA President Richard Coon, "With the opportunity for frequent getaways to spend quality time outdoors with family and friends, RV ownership is a great value." For years, we've been telling our readers that RVs are still the most economical form of family travel. Now there's proof.



Currently on display at Tulsa's Gilcrease, a top museum for American art and history, are plaster molds of the 16th president's face and hands.

Abraham Lincoln, Up Close in Oklahoma

article by Richard Varr

If you're in Tulsa, Oklahoma, in 2015, consider marking the 150th anniversary of Abraham Lincoln's death with a lifelike glimpse of the nation's 16th president. In 1860, only a year before the Civil War, then-presidential candidate Lincoln posed for a portrait bust in Chicago. In preparation, sculptor Leonard Volk cast a life mask of Lincoln's face. A plaster mold made from the mask now looks out upon curious visitors at the Gilcrease Museum, near downtown Tulsa.

Even a cursory look reveals the Great Emancipator's very recognizable sunken cheeks and large ears. As an added bonus, the exhibit contains plaster molds of Lincoln's hands from Volk's originals, cast in Springfield, Illinois, just a few months after he posed for the life mask. Equally compelling, this was Lincoln's first time sitting for a sculptor or painter.

The Gilcrease Museum, established by collector and oilman Thomas Gilcrease in 1949, preserves American art and history and hosts beautiful grounds (be sure to wear walking shoes). Doors are open Tuesday through Sunday (except Christmas) from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Gilcrease Museum

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The Clock Is Ticking

After a Texas reader's new travel trailer had been in the repair shop for several months, he wrote to RV Resolutions to try to speed things up:

► We purchased a Winnebago Minnie trailer from McClain's RV in Rockwall, Texas, on April 24, 2014. On our first night camping in it, the water from the kitchen sink ran into the cabinet below. When we stopped at another campsite with no water hookups, we realized that the freshwater tank had a leak. We took the trailer back to the dealership, and they said it would be at least two weeks for another tank to arrive. We had family obligations, so we went on our way, making sure to stop only at campgrounds with water hookups.

Several days later, a fellow camper pointed out that our Minnie's water heater was leaking. Shortly after that, the graywater meter stopped working. Adding to our woes, the tires were wearing unevenly due to an axle problem.

We arrived home on July 23 and promptly took the trailer to McClain's. Two weeks later when we inquired about progress, we were told that they had not even looked at the trailer. It's now several months later, and

we still have no firm estimate on when the repairs will be finished. What a disappointment.

If you could help expedite the repairs, it would be very much appreciated.

James DeJarnatt, Dallas, Texas

RV Resolutions contacted Winnebago Trailers and McClain's RV on James DeJarnatt's behalf. Not long after, we received a follow-up note from DeJarnatt:

► Thank you for the help. All issues with the trailer have been resolved, and we are expecting the remittance for new tires from the manufacturer of the axle.

J.D.

Sudden Weight Gain

After buying a new travel trailer to take their grandchildren camping, a couple from New York's Finger Lakes region learned that the trailer's maximum carrying capacity and operating weight were significantly less than the weights shown on the trailer's original labels. Concerned that the loaded trailer was too heavy to be safely towed, they sought help from RV Resolutions:

► In August 2014 we bought a 2015 CrossRoads Z-1 trailer from Camping World. Two weeks later, we received a letter from CrossRoads telling us to put new stickers on the labels already on the trailer. The letter stated that the trailer was built with the incorrect federal identification, tire placard and carrying-capacity labels. The originally stated GVWR was reduced by 1,600 pounds, and the carrying capacity was also

reduced by 1,600 pounds.

We contacted Camping World, and the salesman tried to help but eventually told us we would need to deal with CrossRoads directly. CrossRoads said it would give us an \$1,800 credit to put toward a different trailer, if we wanted to trade in the Z-1, but Camping World would subtract 15 percent from what we initially paid because we've used the trailer.

We'd prefer not to trade in the Z-1 under these terms but don't feel safe pulling it because the axles and tires aren't large enough to carry the

two of us, our grandchildren and our supplies. Can you help?

**Jack and Mary Arcangeli
Burdett, New York**

After RV Resolutions sent a petition to CrossRoads RV to try to resolve the matter, we received the following correspondence from the Arcangelis:

► CrossRoads has offered to give us money to replace the axles and tires, and we have accepted. Thank you for the time RV Resolutions put in on our request for help.

J. and M. A. 📧

NEED HELP? » RV Resolutions is a forum for the settlement of conflicts between consumers and RV dealers and manufacturers, accessory suppliers and service providers. After exhausting all other resources without success, please send a typed letter to *Trailer Life* RV Resolutions, 2750 Park View Court, Suite 240, Oxnard, California 93036. Include copies of appropriate bills and correspondence as well as a self-addressed, stamped envelope.

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ALASKA'S SW

Surrounded by mountains rising above 13,000 feet, the scenic port of Valdez is an outdoor paradise for cycling along Prince William Sound, cruising past calving glaciers, kayaking among marine animals and gazing at Alaskan wildlife

Valdez is a must-see, must-experience, must-visit place. Often called Alaska's Switzerland, it is nearly surrounded by the stunning snowcapped peaks of the Chugach Mountains. The Chugach Mountains are not only the most heavily glaciated peaks in the Northwest, they are some of the tallest coastal mountains in the world, rising from sea level to an elevation of 13,176 feet atop Mount Marcus Baker.

While traveling around Alaska during the summer of 2014, my husband, Mike, and I were often asked about our five-month-plus travels. What was your favorite place to visit? What was your favorite animal that you photographed? There's no doubt that choosing a favorite animal was difficult. Was it the photos I took of grizzlies mating? Brown bears clamming? A humpback whale breaching? A great gray owl hunting? Though it was difficult to

choose a favorite animal, it was not hard to choose my favorite place. It was always Valdez.

We stayed in Valdez for a week because there is so much to see and do. Most of all, we wanted to be there on a day when it was clear so we could see the views. Some days it was cloudy and rainy, and I could barely see the surrounding mountains. Other days it was clear and beautiful, and the mountains seemed to stretch forever.



WITZERLAND

article and photos by Donna Ikenberry



Beautiful scenery — Chugach Mountains, rocky islands and fishing boats — abounds in Prince William Sound.

ALASKA'S SWITZERLAND

Unlike some Alaska port towns that are accessible only by boat or airplane, you can drive to Valdez. We drove down Alaska's oldest and longest highway, the historic Richardson, through forests and past waterways, such as Willow Lake, where the Wrangell Mountains are mirrored on a windless day. Along the way we climbed up and over Thompson Pass, at 2,678 feet, the highest point on our way to Valdez, visiting Worthington Glacier en route. We found a nice place to dry-camp near the pass, and on a night when it never got dark, we gazed at 27 Mile Glacier out our RV window. It was so stunningly beautiful that we slept with the shades open so we could wake up and look at the glaciers that nearly surrounded us.

Continuing south from Thompson Pass, we slowly made our way to Valdez — and I do mean slowly. Why? Because we didn't want the views to



end! But there was no need to worry, as the awesome sights continued as we drove through 3-mile-long Keystone Canyon, carved by the Lowe River, and motored past some jaw-dropping waterfalls, including Bridal Veil and Horsetail.

Valdez has several RV parks, many of them close enough that you can walk to the harbor. We stayed at Eagle's Rest RV Park and walked to the harbor on many occasions, to book a boat tour, look for sea otters, eat a meal and just walk among the different boats. Near the harbor we found the trailhead for Dock Point

Trail, a 1-mile-round-trip hike with a view overlooking the Port of Valdez, where the 800-mile Alaska Pipeline ends at the Valdez Marine Terminal.

We spent time walking around town, and on a couple of rainy days we visited the local museums. At the Valdez Museum, we paid a small entrance fee to see the Remembering Old Valdez exhibit. We were educated on the history of Valdez, including learning all about the demise of Old Valdez with the devastating earthquake and tsunami that hit the area in 1964. One of my favorite museums, the Maxine & Jesse

Kayakers enjoy the natural beauty of Valdez Glacier Lake on a sunny Alaska day.



Beauty and the Bears

Mother Nature is out in full force in Valdez where waterfalls stream down from melting snow, stunning tidewater glaciers flow to Prince William Sound and wildlife is all around. If you're lucky, you may just see bears scooping salmon out of a river.



Whitney Museum, was free, but donations were welcomed. There, we found an extraordinary compilation of Alaska Native artifacts, including clothing and, though I'm usually not a fan, animal mounts.

Fishing is a popular activity in Valdez, and while we don't fish, we like to spend hours watching animals that do. Bald eagles squabble over plentiful salmon in June, while glaucous-winged gulls and black-legged kittiwakes do the same. We often moseyed along Dayville Road searching for wildlife, especially brown and black bears near the fish hatchery. Constructed in 1982, the Solomon Gulch Hatchery is licensed to incubate and release 230 million pink salmon eggs and 2 million coho salmon eggs annually. The best time for viewing is July through September. Self-guided walking tours are open from 8 a.m. to 7 p.m. daily during summer.

We love exploring small towns on our bikes, so some days we pedaled around Valdez and rode the paved trail along the Richardson Highway. We spent another beautiful day kayaking around Valdez Glacier Lake. Paddling our inflatable kayak, we marveled at ice caves and even got to touch the glacier. Cold winds swooped down, making us glad we had the sense to wear jackets. If you don't have your own kayak, check in town with Anadyr Adventures. No experience is needed.

We spent another day with Captain Fred Rodolf aboard the *M/V Lu-Lu Belle*. While going to and from the Columbia Glacier, we searched for wildlife from

(Above from far left) On a five-month-plus journey to Alaska, the author photographed bald eagles, humpback whales, Steller sea lions, sea otters, black bears and much more, as well as some serious calving at the Columbia Glacier (below) while sightseeing aboard the *M/V Lu-Lu Belle*.



On a rainy day in Valdez, boats cast reflections in a small harbor.



ALASKA'S SWITZERLAND

11 in the morning to 8:20 in the evening. We stopped within ¼ mile of the face of the largest tidewater glacier in Prince William Sound, the second-largest in North America. We visited on a very active glacier-calving day, and *oohed* and *aahed* along with others as a big hunk dropped into the sound with a powerful splash. Of course, one of the best things about a cruise in Prince William Sound is the wildlife you might see along the way, and we were not disappointed. Humpback whales, Steller sea lions, bald eagles, sea otters and so much more crossed our path, and Dall's porpoises rode the wake of the M/V *Lu-Lu Belle*.

Captain Rodolf talked and talked the entire tour, telling us all about the glaciers, the 1964 earthquake and the 1989 oil spill. We learned that the Columbia Glacier was the last of Alaska's tidewater glaciers to go into a retreat. Though he didn't have to tell us that Prince William



(Above from left) Seventy-four of Peter Wolf Toth's Whispering Giants sculptures can be found around the world, including this one in Valdez. The author's Lance trailer at Horsetail Falls.



Sound teems with wildlife — because it was quite obvious — he cheerfully told us anyway!

Another day we explored the Meares Glacier with the folks at Stan Stephens Glacier & Wildlife Cruises. This time we left Valdez at 10 a.m. and arrived back at 7 p.m. We saw some

of the same waterfalls and gorgeous scenery from the previous cruise, and saw more humpback whales, sea otters (some with babies) and bald eagles — but a person can never see enough wildlife, so we were happy with the cruise.

While many glaciers are in rapid

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retreat, the Meares Glacier is one of the few advancing tidewater glaciers in North America. It was amazing to see a glacier that is growing instead of getting smaller.

While talking to locals, we kept hearing about the lovely ferry ride to Cordova, a quaint fishing town on Orca Inlet, on the east coast of Prince William Sound. No roads lead to Cordova, so on a foggy afternoon we took the M/V *Chenega* ferry. While we could have paid to ferry our travel trailer to Cordova, we opted to ferry our pickup and stay at the Dragonfly Inn, storing the trailer in Valdez. We spent three days searching for wildlife, and though we saw only one skittish black bear, we observed thousands and thousands of gulls, and had fun looking for the moose we know live in the area.

Although we saw a couple of black bears during our stay in Valdez, we never stopped searching for brown bears. Bear watching is a favorite

Eagle's Rest RV Park and Cabins

Located across the Richardson Highway from Prince William Sound, Eagle's Rest has 184 RV sites with water, sewer, electric and cable hookups. Amenities include a 24-hour convenience store, a laundry room, unmetered hot showers, gas, diesel, LP-gas and a dump station. Back-in and pull-through sites are available for \$37 to \$49 per night (minus the 10 percent discount for Good Sam Club members), with weekly rates starting at \$230. 800-553-7275, www.eaglesrestrv.com

Alaska activity, beginning in May, when the bears can be seen grazing high up on the mountainsides, and extending through late October, when they start their annual hibernation. They are most often seen on Dayville Road after the salmon begin their runs in late June. Along with bears, you may also see sea lions, sea otters and many varieties of birds.

An important commercial fishing area, Prince William Sound is also a premier destination for sport fishing, as mentioned previously. Popular year-round, the sound offers some

of the most accessible halibut in Alaska. Valdez is also home to some of the oldest fishing derbies in Alaska, awarding thousands of dollars in prize money each year.

We were surprised to find that Valdez is also a popular winter destination. I figured most people would escape the cold, but folks flock to Valdez in winter where copious amounts of snow allow them to go helicopter skiing and participate in other winter sports.

So what's my favorite Alaska town? It has to be Valdez! 🐻

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HIGHWAY OF GENIUS



Route 36 through Missouri connects Kansas to Illinois and showcases small towns and the American innovators and inventors who lived there

Viewed on a road map, U.S. Route 36 across Missouri resembles a belt, spanning the state at its narrowest point, 200 miles of horizontal road connecting Hannibal with St. Joseph. When the road was laid out in 1914 — paralleling a railroad line that had come through more than half a century earlier, which in turn followed a much older stagecoach trail — it was to be part of the Pikes Peak Ocean to Ocean Highway, linking New York to San Francisco, and later to Los Angeles.

By 1925 the highway had other names, creating confusion: Hell's Gate to Golden Gate, Appian Way of America, Pershing Transportation Route and, inside Missouri, the Old Hound Dog, after the stagecoach trail. Similar problems with other highways

around the country prompted the federal government that year to assign numbers instead of names. Today, Route 36 runs 1,414 miles from eastern Ohio to Colorado's Rocky Mountain National Park, and highways with other numbers

continue the trek east and west from those points.

My husband, Guy, and I learned all this recently after we decided to follow the Missouri stretch, a divided highway that's as fine as an interstate but without all the traffic. With fewer cars and trucks than Interstate 70 to the south, the route courses over gently rolling hills, passing wide corn and soybean fields and showcasing a lovely rural landscape.

Besides being designated the state's VFW Memorial Highway in 2010, the route is promoted as



the Way of American Genius for “the innovative gentlemen of genius who have roots along it,” according to Beth Carmichael of the Convention and Visitor Center in St. Joseph, one of 27 member cities in the Missouri Highway 36 Heritage Alliance. These “gentlemen of genius” include retailer J.C. Penney from Hamilton; war hero General John “Black Jack” Pershing from Laclede; animator and filmmaker Walt Disney, who spent five years of his boyhood in Marceline and claimed they were the best of his life; Theodore Gary from Macon, heralded as the father of the Missouri road system; and Mark Twain, who immortalized his hometown of Hannibal (as “St. Petersburg”) in possibly the best of all American novels, *Huckleberry Finn*.

Our trip started in the Missouri River Valley in St. Joseph, famously known as the place where the Pony Express began and Jesse James’ life ended. By 1860 the Hannibal and St. Joseph Railroad had reached the town, farther west than any other line. Thus, when freighting firm Russell, Majors and Waddell created a 1,900-mile overland



Walt Disney never forgot the small town where he spent his formative years. Marceline hasn't forgotten him either, from its Mickey Mouse street signs to the Walt Disney Hometown Museum.



mail route to California, the company chose St. Joseph as the starting point. The first Pony Express rider galloped west on April 3, 1860.

The Pony Express National Museum tells the story of the 19-month endeavor (ended by the telegraph and railroad) and of the men who braved weather, wild animals and difficult terrain to unite the country, delivering mail

between Missouri and California in just 10 days.

Headquarters for the Pony Express was just up the street at the Patee House, built as a luxury hotel in 1858 and now a museum and national historic landmark. During the Civil War, the building served as Provost Marshal's office, then military headquarters for the Union general of

West to east on Route 36: Follow the St. Joseph Riverwalk to the Remington Nature Center (left) and step back in time at Hannibal's Mark Twain Boyhood Home and Museum (below and top left).



HIGHWAY OF GENIUS

northwest Missouri. It later was a women's college, then a shirt factory, before opening as a Western history museum in 1963, now recognized as one of the finest anywhere.

Next door is the house, moved here in 1977, where outlaw Jesse James was living with his family when he was shot dead by the "coward" Robert Ford, a member of the James gang, on April 3, 1882. The house is filled with artifacts including dozens of portraits of James and a cast of his skull, found broken into 32 pieces when his body was exhumed (to prove his identity) in 1995.

The town also offers the St. Joseph Fire Museum in one of the first (if not *the* first) fire stations with a sliding pole, as well as the Glore Psychiatric Museum in the former State Lunatic Asylum, the National Military Heritage Museum and the Remington Nature Center.

Take Route 36 east from St. Joseph, cross the Platte, and at Missouri Route 33, turn south for a 4½-mile side trip to Shatto Milk Company, "Milk at Its Finest." Owner Leroy Shatto came to work at the farm nearly four decades ago, he said. After marrying the boss' daughter, Barb, he "bought the cows." The Shattos began bottling milk just a dozen years ago but have already won numerous awards for their products, which include flavored milks (banana, strawberry, orange, chocolate, root beer, eggnog and cotton candy), aged cheese and cheese curds, butter and ice cream.

At Madison, Wisconsin's 2010 World Dairy Expo, Shatto root beer milk was named the best flavored milk, and the dairy won Best of Show for its Lily cheddar at the Missouri State Fair in Sedalia. Shatto's 40 employees milk 350 cows, mostly Holsteins, to fill some 14,000 glass bottles a day. The dairy, on 400 grassy acres, offers tours Monday through Saturday by reservation. There's plenty of RV parking.

Return to Route 36, and at Missouri Route 13, turn left to

In St. Joseph, visitors can board a vintage steam locomotive (top) in the Patee House Museum and step into a restored one-room schoolhouse (below) at the Pony Express National Museum, both built in the 1860s. At nearby Osborn's Shatto Milk Company (above), tour-takers get a taste of life on a dairy farm.



Hamilton, home of James Cash Penney. A startlingly realistic wax likeness of the famous retailer greets visitors at the J.C. Penney Memorial Library and Museum. Hundreds of photos and artifacts chronicle the story of Penney, who in 1902 founded the JCPenney chain of stores.

Continue east and drive north on U.S. Route 65 to Chillicothe, renowned as the Home of Sliced Bread and more recently for nearly two dozen colorful murals that decorate its downtown buildings. The murals, by local artist Kelly Poling, are of subjects historically important to the area such as Chillicothe Business College, Milbank Mills and, of course, sliced bread. A placard explains that inventor Otto Rohwedder's bread-slicing machine was first used in 1928 at Chillicothe Bread Company, "setting in motion the timeless comparison of ingenuity and innovation to 'the greatest thing since sliced bread.'"

Keep heading east on Route 36 and turn left at Danube Drive, then follow signs for 1½ miles to parking for Locust Creek Covered Bridge State Historic Site. From here it's an easy ¼-mile walk to the 151-foot-long bridge, the longest of the four remaining covered bridges in Missouri (there were once more than 30).

The bridge, built in 1868 and a state park since 1967, once spanned Locust Creek and carried "transcontinental" Route 8, according to Merlyn Amidei of the Macon County Historical Society. Route 36, with a slightly different alignment, replaced Route 8 in 1930.

Amidei added that because floods were common, the creek channel was straightened after World War II — which explains why grass instead of water now "flows" beneath the old bridge.

Just ahead off Route 36 at Laclede is General John J. Pershing Boyhood Home State Historic Site, which interprets the life of the highest ranking U.S. general during World War I. The family moved here when Pershing was six, in 1866, and lived in the two-story frame home until 1885, the year before he graduated from West Point.

Prairie Mound School, where Pershing taught before entering West Point, is part of the historic site. Exhibits detail his outstanding military career in the American West, Cuba, the Philippines, Manchuria, Mexico and Europe in World War I, where he was sent in 1917 as commander-in-chief of the American Expeditionary Forces.

Nearby is a heroic-size bronze statue of Pershing, who (the granite base reads) "earned the highest rank ever accorded in the U.S. Army." In 1919, by a special act of Congress, he was named general of the armies of the United States, one rank above five-star general.

Brookfield, home of the Great Pershing Balloon Derby, is ahead at Missouri Highway 11. The five-day derby, the longest-running such event in the country (38 years, so far) takes place over Labor Day weekend. We also recommend Brookfield for the lovely city campground (see "Route 36 RV Parks" on the right.)

Marceline, "Where Walt Found the

Route 36 RV Parks

RV parks can be found on either end of the Missouri stretch of Route 36 — in St. Joseph on the west side, and Hannibal and Monroe City on the east side. Brookfield, in the center of the route, is an ideal midway stop.

BROOKFIELD

South City Park

A large public park with a small municipal campground, South City Park has nine gravel campsites with 30-amp hookups and a bathhouse with showers. 660-258-5644, www.brookfieldcity.com

HANNIBAL

Mark Twain Cave and Campground

Open from April through October, the Mark Twain Cave complex includes 99 RV sites, most with 20/30/50-amp hookups, plus free Wi-Fi, a pavilion and two bathhouses. 800-527-0304, www.marktwaincave.com

MONROE CITY

Mark Twain Landing Resort and Water Park

Open year-round, big-rig-friendly Mark Twain Landing has 235 campsites, 20/30/50-amp hookups, Wi-Fi, three bathhouses, a laundry room and more. Discount for Good Sam Club members. 573-735-9422 www.marktwainlanding.com

ST. JOSEPH

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AOK, open year-round, has 53 RV sites with 30/50-amp hookups, among them 34 pull-throughs and some cable sites, plus Wi-Fi, picnic tables and fire rings. Discount for Good Sam Club members. 816-324-4263, www.aokcamping.com

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Much ado in St. Joseph (below from left): Re-enacting the first Pony Express ride from Pike's Peak Stables, entering the home where Jesse James was killed in 1882 and visiting the museum at old Fire Station Number Five, one of the first — if not *the* first — to use a fire pole.



Magic,” is 3 miles ahead at Missouri Highway 5. Driving into the town is to enter a Walt Disney world. Signs for Marceline’s Main Street USA — inspiration for the Disneyland thoroughfare of the same name — are adorned with Mickey Mouse ears.

The lobby walls of the old-fashioned Uptown Theatre on Main Street, where Disney held the Midwest premier of *The Great Locomotive Chase* in 1956, are festooned with Disney cartoon characters. Across the street is a small park with a fountain, showy flower gardens and two loud speakers high on a utility pole blaring songs from Disney movies.

Elsewhere in town, there’s the Walt Disney Post Office (a Walt Disney commemorative stamp, with more than 153 million printed, was issued here in 1968), Walt Disney Municipal Park and Pool (which Disney dedicated in 1956) and Walt Disney Elementary School, for which Disney had murals of his cartoon characters created. A

Famous for introducing the world to sliced bread, Chillicothe is also renowned for the Victorian-era buildings in its Courthouse Square Historic District.

locomotive and caboose at the town’s E.P. Ripley Park bear the name Santa Fe & Disneyland Railway.

There’s also the Walt Disney Hometown Museum in the cavernous, restored 1913 Santa Fe Railroad Depot (the restoration was paid for by Disney’s grandchildren). The museum, which opened in 2001 (Disney’s centennial), tells his life story in dozens of photos, artifacts, placards and a two-hour film, *The Man Behind the Myth*.

Tour guide Inez Johnson explained that the Disneys — Elias and Flora and their five children — moved from Chicago to a 45-acre farm outside town in 1906; Walt was four at the time. The family moved to Kansas City when he was 10, but the years in Marceline had a profound influence on his life and career. Sketches of what would become Disneyland were based on Marceline’s



PHOTO BY PAMELA SELBERT

downtown, and his films featured the barnyard animals he loved, said Johnson.

She smiled, noting a personal connection. In 1956 when Disney came to Marceline with his brother Roy and their wives for the premiere and to dedicate the pool complex,



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Johnson and her husband had the only air-conditioned house in town. The Disneys stayed there, and thus began a friendship that continues today with Walt's descendents (he died in 1966), she said. Johnson's daughter, Kaye Malins, director of Marceline Tourism and the museum, now lives in the house the Disney family had long ago occupied, she added.

Along a grassy lane near the farmhouse is Walt Disney's "dreaming tree," a "venerable old cottonwood where as a boy he would daydream and observe nature around him," said Johnson. A decade ago the tree was struck by lightning and now "clings to life," but its "son" flourishes nearby. Farther along the path is an antique-looking barn, a replica of the one Disney built as a studio in California, his "happy place," which in turn was patterned after his family's Marceline barn. Signatures, tributes and sketches by visitors from around the world cover its walls. A placard outside reads: "To tell

the truth, more things of importance happened to me in Marceline than ever happened since or are likely to in the future. — Walt Disney."

Continue east to Macon, home of Theodore Gary, first chairman of the Missouri State Highway Commission. He also held a patent on a dial telephone and in 1905 paid to have one placed in every Macon residence for a year. After that, the phones could be rented for \$1 a year. The project was a success, and 70 percent of the families kept the phones.

Drive on to Hannibal, where the genius of one of the world's best-loved authors can be explored on self-guided tours of the Mark Twain Boyhood Home and Museum, an eight-building complex. We discovered that Twain was an inventor as well, with several patents to his credit, including one for a history trivia game.

Other attractions we recommend include Mark Twain Cave, which plays a role in five of Twain's books and

can be toured; *Mark Twain Riverboat*, offering sightseeing and dinner cruises on the Mississippi from April through November; and *Mark Twain Himself*, a stage show featuring Richard Garey as Twain at the Planter's Barn Theater. The show, which re-creates Twain's famous performances of more than a century ago, has appeared all around the country but is now headquartered here.

From Hannibal, Route 36 continues into Illinois. But for us, the west bank of the Mississippi was the end of the line, the last stop on this Way of American Genius. 🚗

For More Information

Hannibal Convention and Visitors Bureau
866-263-4825, www.visithannibal.com

Missouri Highway 36 Heritage Alliance
816-233-6688
www.americangeniushighway.com

St. Joseph Convention and Visitor Center
800-785-0360, www.stjomo.com

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BLAZING THE TRAIL IN NOVA SCOTIA

In Canada's second smallest province, a larger-than-life demigod, over-the-top scenery and the world's highest tides set the stage for RV travels on a grand scale

Climb Five Islands Lighthouse for panoramic views of the Bay of Fundy, Minas Basin and the quintet of islands created by the mythical Glooscap.

Look up, way up, because Glooscap is a giant in Atlantic Canada's Mi'kmaq culture. This almighty being was of such gargantuan proportions that the province of Nova Scotia was his bed and Prince Edward Island his pillow. Ancient legends of the mythical creator live on, and there's no better place to explore them than the spectacular Glooscap Trail in northwestern Nova Scotia. The trail stretches 227 miles, all told, but our itinerary focuses on a 125-mile segment between Truro and Joggins. It's a laid-back, mostly coastal drive, beloved by those in the know.

The Mi'kmaq (pronounced *Meeg-mah*), an indigenous people native to Canada's Maritime Provinces and the Gaspé Peninsula of Quebec, once lived freely in this region. Silas Tertius Rand, a Baptist missionary who traveled among the Mi'kmaq in the mid- to late-1800s, documented their stories featuring the heroic Glooscap. He "lived like other men ... but he never died, never was sick, never grew old," wrote Rand. "He could do anything and everything."

Traveling RVers can learn more about Mi'kmaq myths and culture, and stand — dwarfed — beneath the demigod's towering bronze likeness, at the Glooscap Heritage Centre, less than 5 miles from Truro in Millbrook. If you're lucky, Program Director Gordon Pictou or a heritage interpreter will be on hand to share some of the Mi'kmaq creation stories, like the one about Five Islands.

The tale begins with a giant beaver building a colossal dam, which eventually flooded the region, Pictou told me. In anger, Glooscap threw handfuls of mud





PHOTO BY WALLY HAYES/NOVA SCOTIA TOURISM

and boulders at the gushing water. He swung his huge paddle into the dam, causing the timber to fly and allowing the river to flow once again. "On the other side of the bay," Pictou explained, "the rocks that were thrown as the beaver made his getaway began to sprout roots and grass, and they are known as the Five Islands."

Heading west from the Glooscap Heritage Centre, make a pit stop at Masstown Market. You can stock your RV's larder and refrigerator with fresh produce, meats and baked goods at this local landmark. It's hard to resist the fabulous fresh fish and take-out seafood at the market's Catch of the

Bay. They serve huge portions in a fun outdoor boatlike setting.

Carrying on to the town of Bass River, pay your respects at Veterans Memorial Park and stop in at the Dominion Chair general store. Although the company no longer manufactures wooden chairs, it's worth a visit to all three floors of the unique furniture and gift store.

At the Glooscap Country Bazaar in Economy, a local cooperative sells fresh food items, baked goods and handmade jewelry, crafts and gifts. Time it right and you'll meet the T-Shirt Lady wearing one of her many witty tops with sayings like "Heaven



(Left) The world's highest tides ebb and flow at Old Shipyard Beach Campground on Spencer's Island. (Above, top to bottom) Take a breathtaking hike at Cape Chignecto Provincial Park, stand in the shadow of mighty Glooscap in Millbrook and browse the Glooscap Country Bazaar in Economy.





FUN TIMES ON THE BAY OF FUNDY

This watery stretch of the Glooscap Trail travels west from Truro along Cobequid Bay and Minas Basin, then heads northeast along Chignecto Bay to Joggins.

Doesn't Want Me, and Hell's Afraid I'll Take Over." She's a survivor of cancer, heart attacks and car accidents.

A must-stop in Economy is That Dutchman's Farm (big rigs can use the Brown Road entrance). Take a walk on Willem van den Hoek's meandering trails to see the delightful collection of heritage farm animals. Of course, you won't want to leave without sampling the gouda and Dragon's Breath Blue in the cheese shop.

Five Islands Lighthouse Park is a piece of paradise where you can see all five islands that Glooscap created: Moose, Long, Diamond, Egg and Pinnacle. The highest tides on the planet happen here (not a legend, this

part is true), and Glooscap magically controlled them (OK, that part might not be true). Here in the Bay of Fundy's Minas Basin, high-tide waters can reach 52 feet above low tide.

The town of Five Islands is a great place to explore, and you'll want your fishing rod and reel to drop a line for striped bass. "Most of my regular visitors come here to fish," said Nita Carson, owner of Diamond Shores Campground. She'll be happy to fill you in on local folklore and a ghost tale or two.

Clam digging on the expansive mudflats at low tide is likewise popular, and noncommercial diggers can take up to 100 clams a day. For fishing and clamming paraphernalia, check out Five Islands Fish Market and Bait and Tackle Shop.

Like Five Islands, Parrsboro is a good destination to set up base camp for RVers who like to take day trips in their tow vehicle and leave their trailer behind. A whimsical little arts-and-theater town, Parrsboro offers plenty to do, and there's a tourist office at

IN THE BAY OF FUNDY'S MINAS BASIN, HIGH-TIDE WATERS CAN REACH 52 FEET ABOVE LOW TIDE

HEY, SOUL SISTERS ▶

The legendary Glooscap made more than the Five Islands. He was said to have turned a trio of bothersome dogs into stone, creating the Three Sisters sea stacks. The best way to see these towering natural wonders is from the water. For those who don't travel with a sea kayak on board, NovaShores Adventures in Advocate Harbour provides watercraft and guides to take novices and seasoned paddlers alike to Cape Chignecto Provincial Park and the Three Sisters.

NovaShores Adventures

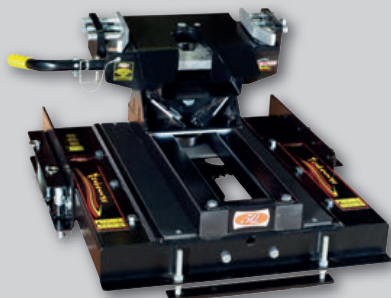
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BLAZING THE TRAIL IN NOVA SCOTIA



Walk the trails, pet the sheep and sample the award-winning gouda at That Dutchman's Farm in Economy, all while drinking in magnificent views of the Bay of Fundy.

the local Fundy Geological Museum. Park on the beach near Harbour View Restaurant where you can eat in or take out — be sure to try the deep-fried clams. Partridge Island, the fabled home of Glooscap's grandmother, is a great spot for beachcombing or a hike.

Cape d'Or is a must-do for breathtaking views of the Bay of Fundy and across to where Glooscap made his home at Cape Blomidon. Then visit Driftwood Beach on Advocate Harbour, laden with a bizarre array of flotsam in a beautiful panoramic setting. All along the Fundy shore, each tide cycle exposes new treasures, from sea glass and fossils to semiprecious stones like amethyst and agate.

The RiteStop in Advocate Harbour is a friendly place to gas up and grab a bite. Owners Mike and Sarah Berry are more than happy to answer your questions. If you want a really great

meal, head across town to Wild Caraway Restaurant and Café where Chef Andrew Aitken and Sarah Griebel serve a locally sourced menu "for everyone, everyday."

Then follow the coast up to the famous Joggins cliffs, a UNESCO world natural heritage site where rock and fossil finds are world-renowned. Here, the history of 300 million years gone by comes to life. Visit the museum, watch the film and make your own geological discoveries.

All along the Glooscap Trail, you'll find plenty of other places worth a stop: museums, craft and antique shops, galleries, the new Fundy Ocean Research Centre, golf courses, restaurants, hiking and horseback trails, waterfalls and no shortage of beaches.

If your travels take you to the other side of Truro, try the roller-coaster river-raft ride on the tidal bore of the



GETTING TO THE GLOOSCAP TRAIL

For RVers visiting from south of the Canadian border, a first-class ferry, the *Nova Star*, makes the 10-hour crossing from Portland, Maine, to Yarmouth, Nova Scotia, in style.

Nova Star Cruises

866-864-6295, www.novastarcruises.com

Shubenacadie River as the tide rushes in. When you're not busy hanging on, watch the eagles soar overhead. You'll experience the power of Glooscap like nowhere else. 📍

RV CAMPING IN GLOOSCAP'S SHADOW

Because of occasional sharp turns, one-lane bridges and rough patches along the Glooscap Trail, some owners of large travel trailers and fifth-wheels prefer to unhitch at an RV park and take day trips in their tow vehicle. Others tow their RVs along the entire trail. Plenty of campgrounds for big rigs can be found on or near the stretch between Truro and Joggins, a sampling of which appears below. Most are open from late spring through early fall. Check the websites or call directly for dates and rates.

ADVOCATE HARBOUR

ADDA Fundy Tides Campground
902-392-2816 (seasonal), 902-392-2124 (winter), www.advocateharbour.org/campground

FIVE ISLANDS

Diamond Shores Campground
902-254-2903 (seasonal)

Five Islands Ocean Resort and RV Campground
877-454-2824, www.fiveislands.ca

Five Islands Provincial Park
888-544-3434, www.parks.gov.ns.ca/parks/fiveislands.asp

GLENHOLME

Hidden Hilltop Family Campground
866-662-3391
www.hiddenhilltopcampground.com

PARRSBORO

Glooscap Campground and RV
902-254-2529

SPENCER'S ISLAND

Old Shipyard Beach Campground
902-392-2487 (seasonal), www.oldshipyardbeachcampground.com

MORE CAMPGROUND INFO

Nova Scotia Tourism
www.novascotia.com/places-to-stay/campgrounds

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Little Big Trailers

These towables may be small in size, but they're big on livability

Although I don't make it a habit to heed the words of cinematic puppets, the adage "size matters not" from the wise old Jedi Master, Yoda, is true in many ways, and is especially apt when it comes to the towable RV market. Sure, it's nice to own a 45-foot-long, 13-foot-tall tricked-out toy hauler that can accommodate you and the rest of the neighborhood, but it's probably not necessary and, in many cases, not practical. It all depends on what is important to you, your family and/or your RVing group.

Sometimes, a smaller, easy-to-maneuver trailer is all that's needed to enjoy your favorite outdoor recreation. Getting off the grid means just that, and an electric fire-place, washer/dryer and, in some cases, indoor plumbing, are all luxuries that many RVers can do without. Indeed, "living large" can be more a state of mind than a literal

translation, so a departure from the standard 30-foot hard-sided travel trailer may be in order for some RVers.

It's for those folks that we've selected a number of outside-the-box towables, which run the gamut from tent-trailer extensions to teardrops to more compact units that contain exactly what you need to enhance your RVing experience. Did we mention that they often come in at a fraction of the price of their behemoth brethren? How about the fact that they are likely towable by one of the vehicles already parked in your driveway?

Now that we really have your attention, check out the following pages to learn more about these little big trailers. To once again paraphrase the lovable green guy of *Star Wars* fame, these towables cannot simply be judged by their size.

The SylvanSport Go trailer takes tent camping to new heights, combining a canvas-type dome enclosure with the off-the-ground convenience of a traditional RV. The material extends beyond the trailer for a great covered-patio effect.





Airstream

Proof that compact need not mean a sacrifice in quality (or cool factor), the Airstream Sport 16 is a single-axle trailer that sleeps up to three and contains all the comforts of home. The eye-catching "Silver BB" features Airstream's signature monocoque construction with pop-riveted aluminum skin, lower-profile shape and chassis design, all of which are designed for improved towing efficiency. Inside, a queen bed is flanked by dual hamper/storage units with a closet nearby, while a two-burner cooktop, roomy refrigerator, convertible dinette and wet bath handle the day-to-day living activities. Buyers can choose from standard

Mocha Blue or Sharkskin decor, or opt for the plusher Golden or Black Ultra-leather options.

Sport 16

Exterior Length	16' 4"
Exterior Width	8'
Interior Height	6' 4.5"
Exterior Height	9' 3"
Freshwater Cap.	23 gal.
Black-/Gray-water Cap.	21 gal. combo
LP-gas Cap.	10 gal.
UVW	2,860 lbs.
Hitch Weight	350 lbs.
GVWR	3,500 lbs.
MSRP, base	\$42,334
Airstream 877-596-6111, www.airstream.com	

Aliner

Anybody who has towed a trailer knows that, generally speaking, the lower the profile, the better the fuel economy (not to mention the easier it will likely be to tow). Aliner has been manufacturing fuel-efficient A-frame pop-ups for more than 40 years, and the Expedition shown here represents the manufacturer's largest offering, at 18 feet and less than 2,000 pounds. The true victory, of course, is the scant 68-inch towing height, which makes it easy to forget you're towing a trailer — especially one that pops up to 8 feet 6 inches (in 30 seconds, according to Aliner) and can handle a family of four. The trailer features a low-maintenance fiberglass and aluminum exterior, tubular steel construction and sturdy PerformMax 500 flooring. Inside, you'll find a dual-burner stove, microwave, sink and refrigerator. Options include a toilet or wet bath, LED interior lighting, water



heater, 5,000-Btu air conditioner, stereo, dormer windows and an off-road package.

Expedition

Exterior Length	18'
Exterior Width	7'
Interior Height	8' 6" (peak)
Exterior Height (open)	10' 1"
Freshwater Cap.	11 gal.
Black-/Gray-water Cap.	N/A
LP-gas Cap.	5 gal.
UVW	1,800 lbs.
Hitch Weight	240 lbs.
GVWR	3,000 lbs.
MSRP, base	\$21,050
Aliner 724-237-5227, www.aliner.com	



American Teardrop Campers

We've all seen teardrop trailers heading down the highway, often towed by classic cars or perhaps even a Harley-Davidson. But you don't need to be a collector of big-dollar tow vehicles to enjoy the benefits of what American Teardrop Campers (ATC) owner Bud Hausman calls "a lifestyle, not an RV." ATC offers a variety of teardrops, including the popular 5.1- x 9-foot Merlin shown here. The trailers are a great way to bring along the essentials wherever you go, and include plenty of storage room and a place to sleep out of the elements. Options are seemingly endless and include a mattress, an air conditioner, AM/FM/CD/DVD player, 12-volt DC solar charger, sink module and even tent attachments for dressing or living space. ATC offers custom graphics and paint schemes to match your tow vehicle (check with the manufacturer for availability) so you can be comfortable and stylish.

Merlin

Exterior Length	12'
Exterior Width	6' 8"
Interior Height	4'
Exterior Height	5' 7"
Freshwater Cap.	N/A
Black-/Gray-water Cap.	N/A
LP-gas Cap.	N/A
UVW	860 lbs.
Hitch Weight	80 lbs.
GVWR	N/A
MSRP, base	\$6,747 (factory direct)

American Teardrop Campers

530-718-0046, www.americanteardrop.com

Camp-Inn

Camp-Inn trailers are high-end teardrops designed with marine-grade woods, finishes and components. The manufacturer offers an extensive list of options and accessories that make extended living possible in an abbreviated 8-foot package, to the extent that Camp-Inn models are referred to as teardrop travel trailers. Models feature an aluminum exterior, stainless-steel fenders and all-birch interiors for retro looks and extended durability. Options include air conditioning, a TV/DVD player, furnace, bunk beds, a couch, a side-entrance tent, a dining table and much more. "Some teardrop manufacturers focus on filling the needs of the entry-level market," said Cary Winch, co-owner at Camp-Inn. "Our models are geared toward the final solution product for most customers."

Camp-Inn 550

Exterior Length	8'
Exterior Width	5'
Interior Height	N/A
Exterior Height	5' 3"
Freshwater Cap.	8.5 gal.
Graywater Cap.	8.5 gal.
LP Cap.	2.5 gal.
UVW	1,250 lbs.
Hitch Weight	130 lbs.
GVWR	2,000 lbs.
MSRP	\$20,500 (on average; units are built to order)

Camp-Inn www.tinycamper.com

Escape

The Escape is an aptly named trailer that offers features not expected for a seemingly no-frills RV of its size. The 21-foot Escape featured here has it all, though, from a wet bath to a two-burner cooktop range, and from a large 6.7-cubic-foot refrigerator to sleeping space for up to five. Outside, the Escape features a seamless two-piece molded fiberglass body, which protects against water penetration while maintaining a strong, long-lasting, lightweight trailer. The Escape is framed with tubular steel, and a rubber-ride torsion-axle suspension helps smooth out the ride. The interior offers natural oak cabinetry, large windows, high-grade linoleum flooring and an insulated vinyl headliner/wall covering. Each Escape is backed by a full two-year warranty.



Escape 21'

Exterior Length	21' 4"
Exterior Width	7' 4"
Interior Height	6' 5"
Exterior Height	8' 7"
Freshwater Cap.	30 gal.
Black-/Gray-water Cap.	22 gal. / 30 gal.
LP-gas Cap.	10 gal.
UVW	3,140 lbs.
Hitch Weight	360 lbs.
GVWR	4,500 lbs.
MSRP, base	\$21,905

Escape Trailer 855-703-1650, www.escapetrailer.com

Forest River R-pod

The R-pod is a great addition to this roundup, not only because it looks great and lives large, but because the manufacturer has made no secret that the primary goal of building it was to offer potential owners a trailer that could be towed by a vehicle already in the driveway. Standards include a one-piece fiberglass roof, 20,000-Btu furnace, 6-gallon water heater with quick recovery, independent torsion axles, aluminum wheels, LED lighting inside and out, solar-panel prep, black-tank flush kit, four stabilizer jacks, tinted safety-glass windows and a detachable power cord. The 179 shown here features a roomy galley with top-shelf Euro styling that spans the entire width of the trailer, handy storage cabinets and sleeping accommodations for a family of four.



R-pod 179

Exterior Length	20'
Exterior Width	8'
Interior Height	6' 6"
Exterior Height	9' 7"
Freshwater Cap.	36 gal.
Black-/Gray-water Cap.	30 gal. / 30 gal.
LP-gas Cap.	5 gal.
UVW	2,630 lbs.
Hitch Weight	285 lbs.
GVWR	TBD
MSRP, base	\$15,975

Forest River 574-642-3119
www.forestriverinc.com/rpod





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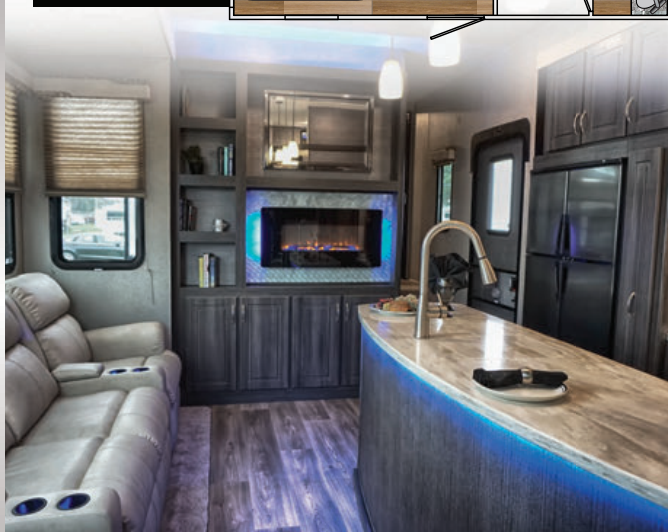
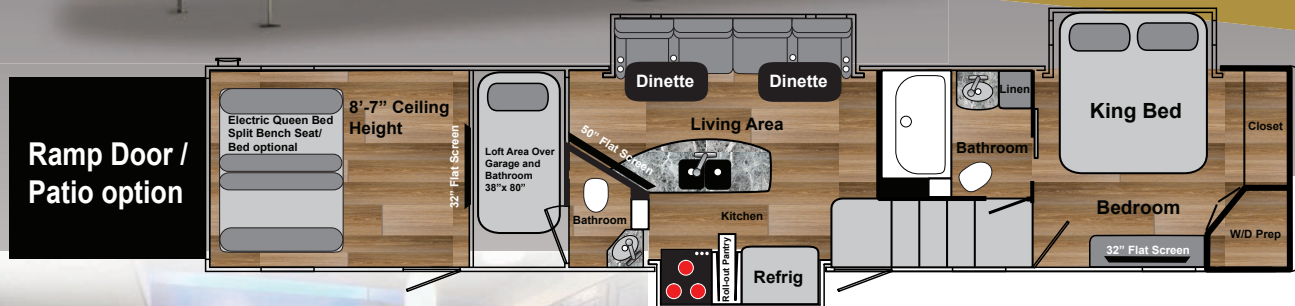


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Little Big Trailers



Little Guy Trailers

Little Guy has been making compact and teardrop trailers since the early 2000s, so the company knew a good thing when it saw one. Once Dutchmen discontinued its T@B lineup in 2009, Little Guy leaped at the chance to purchase the brand, and it has been going strong for several years. The T@B B@sic S (above left) is anything but basic. The trailer's styling alone is sure to turn heads, while owners are offered a "basic" template of a sink, two-burner stove, Fan-Tastic Vent fan, awning rail, screen door, alloy wheels,

and black and gray tanks. From there, options include windows, an air conditioner, a three-way refrigerator and an entertainment center and/or a stereo, to name a few. There's plenty of sleeping for up to five close family or friends, a lavatory and a galley area that ensures fine RV dining for all.

T@B B@sic S

Exterior Length	15'
Exterior Width	6' 8"
Interior Height	5' 9"
Exterior Height	7' 5"

Freshwater Cap.	11 gal.
Black-/Gray-water Cap.	6 gal. / 19 gal.
LP-gas Cap.	5 gal.
UVW	1,760 lbs.
Hitch Weight	165 lbs.
GVWR	2,800 lbs.
MSRP, base	\$16,768
Little Guy T@B 877-545-4897, www.tab-rv.com	

Little Guy also offers the T@G (directly above), a combination of the T@B and the classic teardrop trailer from the 1940s. The T@G features modern amenities, doors and windows, and

EXHAUST BRAKES

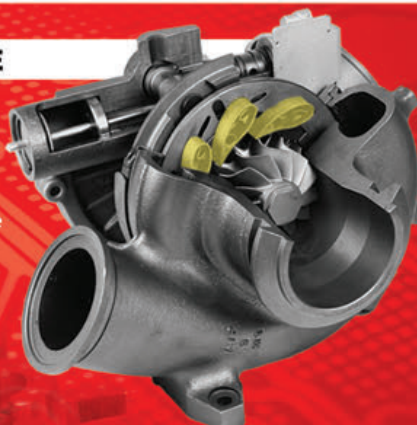
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borrowing styling cues from the T@B. The aluminum-framed trailer sports a silver or white fiberglass exterior with colored graphics. The mini T@B doors are double locking and feature a portal window with circular blind. The trailer also features two mini T@B windows with screen/shades, a full galley in the rear with a sink and stove, and a queen bed so owners can sleep in classic retro style.

T@G B@sic

Exterior Length	13' 7"
Exterior Width	6' 8"
Interior Height	3' 11"
Exterior Height	6'
Freshwater Cap.	N/A
Black-/Gray-water Cap.	N/A
LP-gas Cap.	5 gal.
UVW	995 lbs.
Hitch Weight	90 lbs.
GVWR	2,100 lbs.
MSRP, base	\$10,143
Little Guy Worldwide	877-545-4897
www.littleguytrailers.com/tg/tagbasic	



Starcraft

The AR-One 15RB is a hybrid version of the popular AR-One hard-sided travel trailer. The 2015 15RB features bolder graphics, a two-year limited warranty and new touches such as Honey Glazed Cherry wood cabinetry and upgraded quilted bunk mats. The AR-One has plenty of standard amenities to ensure an enjoyable camping experience, including a two-burner range, 3-cubic-foot refrigerator, 5,000-Btu air conditioner and exterior flush-mounted stone guard. With the addition of the optional Extreme Package, users can enjoy 15-inch off-road tires with 5 inches of extra clearance, an enclosed underbelly, double entry step, upgraded graphics and six-sided FlexFoil insulation. The



galley, tub and lavatory make this a nice choice for RVing families, and the tip-out rear bunk offers an extra 60- x 70-inch sleeping position.

Starcraft AR-One 15RB

Exterior Length	17' 6"
Exterior Width	85"
Interior Height	73"
Exterior Height	103"
Freshwater Cap.	26 gal.
Black-/Gray-water Cap.	9 gal. / 15 gal.
LP-gas Cap.	5 gal.
UVW	2,550 lbs.
Hitch Weight	220 lbs.
GVWR	3,200 lbs.
MSRP, base	\$12,084
Starcraft RV 574-825-6094, www.starcraftrv.com	

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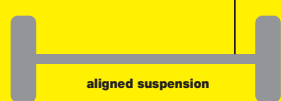
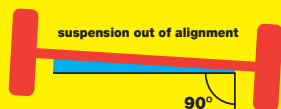
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SylvanSport

SylvanSport Go trailers are designed for adventurous RVers who have more fun in a Mother Nature setting than an RV park. The Go is a multifunctional product that can be towed by virtually any properly equipped vehicle and is designed to easily transform from its compact traveling profile to rugged toy-hauler mode to spacious tent-camping configuration in one integrated unit, according to the manufacturer. The Go is a great way to easily carry loads of bikes, kayaks, coolers or any combination of outdoor gear. The Go comes standard with a large rear awning, spare-tire kit, two bed and table panels (to configure the interior in multiple ways) and two additional self-inflating air mattresses (to configure the interior), additional straps and small accessory items.

SylvanSport offers an extensive lineup of optional accessories at www.store.sylvansport.com.

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Little Big Trailers

One option in particular we found of interest is the Solar Ready package, the result of a collaboration between SylvanSport and Goal Zero, the premiere solar-power company in the outdoor industry. The package is available in two configurations: The Goal Zero Go 400 solar power kit (\$739.97) and the Goal Zero Go 150 solar power kit (\$439.97).

SylvanSport Go

Exterior Length	11' 8"
Exterior Width	6' 3"
Interior Height	6' 5"
Exterior Height	8' 9" (in camp)
Freshwater Cap.	N/A
Black-/Gray-water Cap.	N/A
LP-gas Cap.	N/A
UVW:	840 lbs.
Hitch Weight	70 lbs.
GVWR	840 lbs.
MSRP, base	\$8,495
SylvanSport	828-883-4292
	www.sylvansport.com



Weis Craft

The Little Joe trailer has garnered quite a reputation among RVers for its easy-on-the-driver diminutive size and long list of amenities. These trailers are instantly recognizable by their smooth, lightweight fiberglass bodies wrapped around a lightweight steel frame and are a great getaway for two (or three close-knit RVers). Creature comforts on the Ponderosa include a two-burner stove, microwave, air conditioner,

cassette toilet and a water heater. There's even a shower head/removable shower pan for the ultimate in off-the-grid comfort. The interior also offers plenty of room to rest your head when the sun goes down once the large 54- x 76-inch bed is deployed. Options on Little Joe trailers include an 8-foot box awning, electric brakes (mandatory on a trailer of this size in many states), a furnace and a roof rack, among others.

Little Joe Ponderosa

Exterior Length	12' 6"
Exterior Width	5' 8"
Interior Height	6'
Exterior Height	7' 4"
Freshwater Cap.	30 gal.
Black-/Gray-water Cap.	Portable
LP-gas Cap.	5 gal.
UVW	1,480 lbs.
Hitch Weight	180 lbs.
GVWR	2,999 lbs.
MSRP, base	\$18,755
Weis Craft Trailers	720-540-4542
	www.weiscrafttrailers.com

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Stk. #TPA526707 NEW 2015 Forest River

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Olive Green #82044

Black #82046

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Olive Green #82041

Black #82043

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NEW!

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White #82088 Black #84070 ♦

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Smarttote² Deluxe 4-wheel Waste Tank, 27 Gallon #82132
Empty tanks into this portable holding tank. Rolls easily to the dump station by hand or can be towed with a vehicle's trailer hitch. |



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Brown

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NEW! USA Dogworks Pop Up Kennel #81268
Twist to fold for storage. Stands 18"W x 22¹/₂"H x 27¹/₄"D, folds to 1¹/₂"H.



NEW!

CLUB SALE
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Reg. \$8.99

NEW! USA Dogworks Rectangular Dog Bed #77696
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NEW!



20,000 BTU cooking power

NEW!

Uses disposable propane cylinders

Easy-rolling wheels for portability

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Reg. \$199.99

NEW! Coleman® RoadTrip™ XCursion Grill #75018
20,000 BTUs of cooking power under porcelain coated cast iron grates. InstaStart™ ignition. Heavy-duty side table holds grilling accessories. Sturdy aluminum frame rolls easily on rugged, off-road-ready wheels. Uses disposable propane cylinders or connect to a refillable cylinder with adapter hose (sold separately). CSA listed. | |

Streets of Laredo

Keystone's new 274RB takes on a sleek look and a number of improvements



Keystone RV is known for producing a fleet of towables that are built for the masses — not too extravagant or ultra-luxurious, but livable and affordable. The manufacturer offers many dollar-friendly options, which means more people can get into the RV lifestyle, and many of Keystone's more than 20 brands follow certain patterns in floor planning and exterior design. While Keystone hasn't changed its business model, the Laredo brand, one of the leading and most established names under the Keystone banner, has undergone a number of changes that take this trailer to a higher level.

A good example of this new direction is the 2015 Laredo 274RB, a travel trailer with sleek, flowing exterior lines and a concealed LP-gas cylinder compartment. The exterior design works in harmony with an Air

Glyde front fiberglass cap that can be followed visually all the way to the flattened-off back end. On both sides, the Laredo is gray with a mix of white and charcoal shades that contrast and complement each other. This splay of color is laid on full gel-coated Filon exterior walls that have been tied together on an aluminum frame. The result is a lightweight structure that sits on a steel I-beam frame with E-Z Lube axles, unique-looking aluminum wheels and radial tires.

The standard Glacier Package completes the build of the Laredo, providing rigidity and insulation. Beginning with the lower half of the trailer, a three-layer floor-decking system is packed with fiberglass insulation and heat ducting, all wrapped in a special moisture barrier that makes this fully enclosed underbelly ready for all-weather travel.

The bedroom of the 274RB is fairly snug but includes a 60- x 80-inch queen bed and plenty of overhead and adjacent cabinets.

Also housed in the lower enclosure are heated holding tanks and gate valves, which further improve four-season livability. The Glacier Package extends to the upper half of the trailer with the walls filled with high-density block foam insulation and a roof rated at R-11. All of this insulation works to control the temperature in combination with the 15,000-Btu ducted air-conditioning unit and the large 30,000-Btu furnace.

Outside, there's a generous list of favorites as well, including an electric A-frame jack, oversize lighted pass-through storage, exterior marine-grade speakers and a 120-volt AC power/cable connection center, to name a few.



Smoother lines and concealed LP-gas cylinders enhance the aesthetics of the 2015 Laredo. Flowing graphics, gray colors and stylish wheels energize the exterior look.

The interior is nicely appointed — using sunset decor elements and colors — and smartly arranged, seeming more like a small condo that just happens to be on wheels.

The kitchen slideout contains about 75 percent of the appliances, including an 8-cubic-foot refrigerator, a carousel-equipped microwave and a high-output range with a hood and light. The remainder of the kitchen is really all about the island sink. Here, conveniently mounted in a freestanding island, is a single basin with a cover and a high-rise faucet with a sprayer. The island offers 120-volt AC power outlets and a fair amount of workable counter space.

Across from the kitchen is the large living room slideout, which houses a plush leather-style couch for two with a sofa bed and a dining table with four chairs. Finishing off the impressive living quarters are the AM/FM/CD/DVD home-theater system with Bluetooth capability and a 39-inch LED TV, residential-grade carpeting and eye-appealing Trekk flooring, a vinyl material manufactured by IVC in Georgia.

The massive living room and kitchen area is made possible by the Laredo's standard Life Size Package, which incorporates 6-foot 3-inch slideout heights, an arched ceiling and LED ceiling lighting. And let's not forget the generous cabinetry throughout the trailer.

Up front, a relatively standard bedroom lies past the entertainment



(Clockwise from top left) A large sink and high-rise faucet are mounted in an island across from the appliances, storage drawers and cabinets housed in the galley slideout. The rear bathroom is large enough to spread out and has plenty of storage. The living room slideout is fitted with a plush couch and a dining table with four chairs.

center. The bedroom is fairly tight, typical of this type of trailer floorplan, which now has become common in the RV industry. It includes a 60- x 80-inch queen mattress surrounded by overhead storage compartments and opposing wardrobe cabinets. A couple of mirrors are integrated into the wardrobe doors, and conveniently placed reading lights are installed beneath the overhead cabinets.

All the way down the bowling-lane-length floor (yes, it feels that long) at the tail end of the trailer is a fit-for-royalty bathroom. Inside this spacious retreat is a foot-pedal-operated porce-

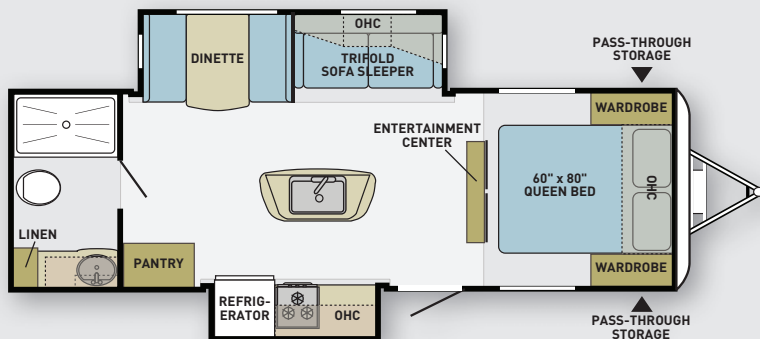
lain toilet beside a 50-inch residential-proportioned shower. The rest of this expansive space is outfitted with cabinets that provide more than ample storage for toiletries, including a well-constructed medicine cabinet designed to hold supplies securely.

If the idea of a travel trailer that is well-equipped, ultra-roomy ready for nearly any climate, with admirable fit and finish, and even a touch of luxury sounds good to you, you'll want to take a look at the new Keystone Laredo 274RB. It's pretty impressive, especially considering that the price tag is \$37,600. 🚐

QUICK INFO



Exterior Length	30' 8"
Exterior Width	8' 0"
Interior Height	7' 0"
Exterior Height	11' 11"
Freshwater Cap.	43 gal.
Black-/Gray-water Cap.	30 gal./68 gal.
LP-gas Cap.	14 gal.
UVW	6,310 lbs.
Hitch Weight	780 lbs.
GVWR	7,800 lbs.
MSRP, base	\$37,600



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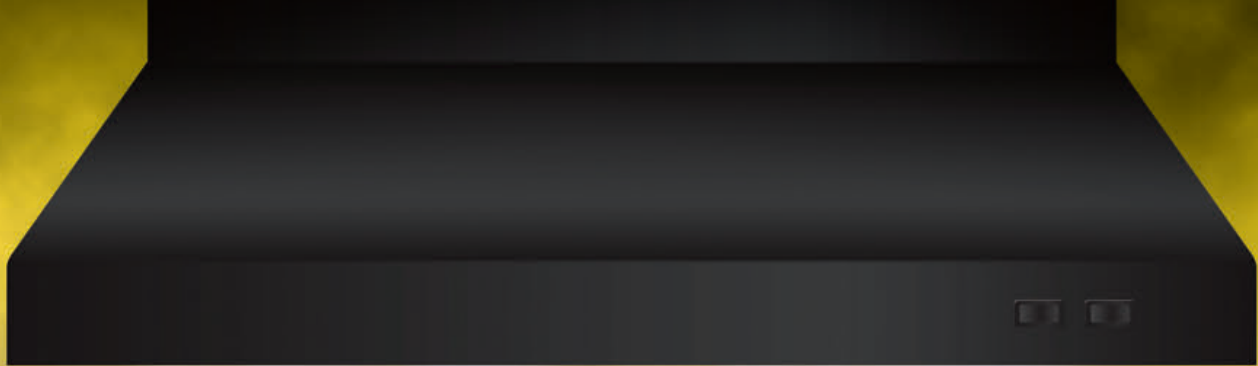
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article by Bill and Jenn Gehr photos by Bob Livingston

OVERHEAD OVERHAUL

Truth be told, most RV range exhaust hoods do not live up to expectations. While an exhaust hood is an important complement to any stove, the noisy fan provides little in the way of ventilation performance — and the single overhead light, often clouded by years of grease and smoke, offers barely enough illumination.

The good news is, a relatively new company on the scene, Fabulous Operating Products, is offering a range hood upgrade kit, model SAM-1, that will no doubt put a smile on the face of even the most seasoned (pun not intended) chef.

The universal upgrade kit will fit all OEM 12-volt DC direct-vent exhaust range hoods with a 12- x 9½- by 4-inch tin box insert. The specially designed three-speed fan uses a 3- x 6-inch

Fabulous Operating Products' Range Hood Upgrade Kit clears the air and lets there be light



Breathe Easy

The Fabulous Range Hood Upgrade Kit installed in an hour and includes thorough instructions. [A] The high-speed fan and LED light-box assembly. [B and C] Black and white plastic exterior vents. [D] A specially designed wall gasket. [E] Tin box wiring harness cover. [F] Screws and electrical connectors for installation.

OVERHEAD OVERHAUL

[1 and 2] Remove the existing stove exhaust vent assembly and cut the positive and negative wires. Cutting the wires and removing the stove exhaust vent makes installation of the SAM-1 kit easier to install on the workbench. **[3]** The original plastic fan blades are not very effective and can be extremely noisy.

squirrel cage attached to a heavy-duty motor that provides five times more airflow than the blade fans used in stock stove exhaust hoods.

Typical range hoods use an exterior vent (mounted in the wall) that requires the user to go outside and unlatch the flap from the travel position. In many cases, a step stool or ladder is needed to even reach the flap. Consequently, most RVers don't even latch the flapper, and in doing so, the exhaust vent damper gets blown off during travel, requiring the entire vent to be replaced. When upgrading with the Fabulous Range Hood Upgrade Kit, the damper is built into the unit and is opened or closed via a simple lever that's accessed from the inside, eliminating the need for an exterior vent flapper. A nice looking exterior grille covers the hole left by the stock flapper housing. There are even optional custom exterior grilles available to match exterior design and paint.



To say that we were pleased with the transformation of the range hood would be an understatement. The three-speed fan provides the ventilation versatility needed for all types of cooking and in the low mode is barely audible. Even on this setting, you can actually feel the air being pulled over your hand when it is held near the filter. The powerful fan removes smoke, steam and odors instantly, which helps maintain the integrity and look of surrounding

woodwork and backsplashes. Need a little extra ventilation? Open a window and use the medium and high speeds for a large volume of air exchange to control temperature in the galley area.

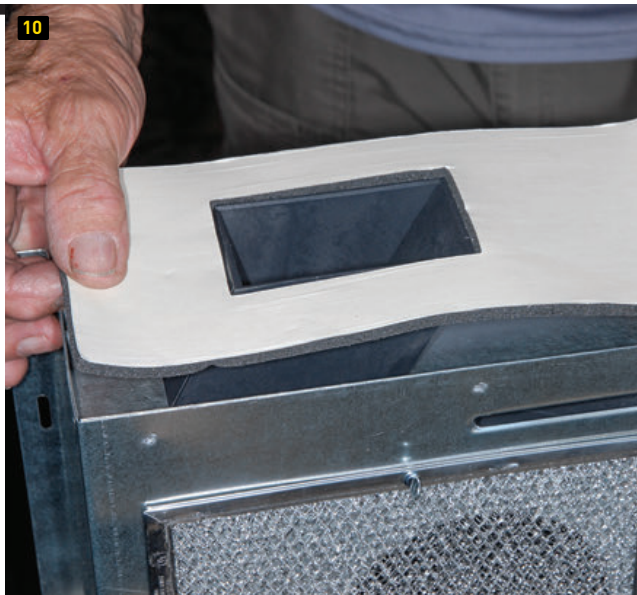
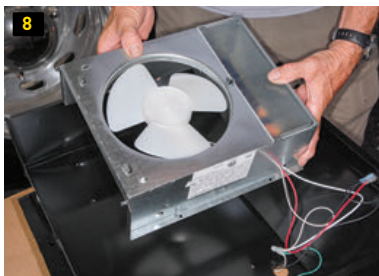
The high-intensity LED light is incredibly bright, allowing the chef to see important details when cooking meals; it was even brighter than we expected. Of course, the side benefit of using LED lighting is low current draw, which means there's little impact on



[4] Removing a single screw that holds the tin box in place exposes all of the wiring needed for modification. **[5]** Remove the four screws holding the original fan box assembly in place and set them aside for reinstallation; discard the box assembly. **[6 and 7]** Depending on the model of the stove exhaust vent assembly, one or two tabs may need to be straightened to remove the fan assembly.



[8] After removing the fan box assembly, follow the directions for the wiring process. **[9]** Carefully follow the wiring schematic in the instructions for connecting to the original fan and light switches on the new Fabulous vent fan assembly. **[10]** Temporarily fit the wall gasket over the SAM-1 kit with the paper side facing the wall. **[11]** Check the alignment of the fan kit into the exhaust opening before removing the protective paper and installing. **[12]** After installing the SAM-1 assembly and the tin box, double-check all wiring before using.



batteries when staying in areas without hookups. The LED fixture used in the kit consumes 1 amp hour over a period of 100 hours of operation and will last thousands of hours before replacement is necessary. There's even a soft nightlight feature, which is perfect for adding just the right amount of light to help those who wander into the galley for late-night snacks. The ability to open and close the damper from the inside means there will be no more temper tantrums when forgetting to open the flapper before cooking meals and smoking up the area.

MSRP for the Fabulous SAM-1 upgrade it is \$199, and the kit is made in the USA. Installation time was approximately one hour. The five pages of instructions were very thorough and are illustrated with color pictures. If you run into a problem, there is a help-line phone number available in the instruction manual. To make installation easier, the upgrade kit even utilizes existing switches for the fan and overhead light.

Basically, it's just a matter of removing the existing exhaust hood, cutting some wires, and removing and replacing a few components. Tools required are a Phillips screwdriver (or screw gun and bit), a wire cutter, stripper and crimper. Before starting the project, cover the stove with a towel or a thick blanket. This not only keeps debris from infiltrating the stovetop but can also serve as a workbench.

Preparing an ambitious meal in your RV is a big enough challenge on its own. With the Fabulous Range Hood Upgrade Kit, you'll be able to breathe easy, see clearly and cook confidently in your RV — and that can only mean better meals for you and your guests. 🚐

Fabulous Operating Products

810-969-4450, www.fabulousoperatingproducts.com



[13 and 14] The Fabulous Range Hood Upgrade Kit utilizes a gasket on the exterior vent, eliminating the need for butyl tape. Do not overtighten the screws, as damage to the plastic may occur.



CENTER OF ATTENTION

Husky's Center Line TS hitch system combines weight distribution and sway control to keep trailers on a straight and level path in all driving conditions

Pound for pound, dollar for dollar, nothing improves the overall towability of a travel trailer more than a high-quality, properly installed and balanced hitch assembly. The most sought-after features of any hitch system are ease of use, the ability to keep the duo on a level plane and the effectiveness of sway control. Husky Towing Products recognized these requirements when crafting its new Center Line TS series of weight-distribution/sway-control hitch systems.

Husky's lineup of Center Line TS hitches incorporates sway control into the system using two principles:

clamping force and friction. Sway control is achieved in the ball mount and via the spring bars. Clamping force and continuous friction are created by bolting the ball-mount trunnions between the rigid top plate and semirigid bottom plate during the manufacturing process. This creates side-to-side resistance for the trunnions.

On a second front, friction created by the spring bar ends sliding in the specially designed frame brackets resists movement, thus limiting sway. It's a one-two punch that not only distributes the weight evenly but keeps sway under control without additional

hardware. Hitches are segregated into three part numbers, offering packages to handle 400- to 600-pound, 600- to 800-pound or 800- to 1,200-pound hitch weights. Tapered spring bars are matched by weight and secured to the trailer A-frame using a cleverly designed bracket system that eliminates the need for chains.

Each of the three hitch packages is nicely presented as a virtually ready-to-use structured system, which includes an all new multi-position shank and head assembly, plus matching spring bars, frame brackets, necessary hardware and even a ball. Of course,



[1] Before setting up the Center Line hitch for the first time, position the trailer so it's level and measure the distance from the top of the A-frame coupler to the ground. **[2]** Measure the distance from the top of the tow vehicle's rear wheel well to the ground. **[3]** Do the same for the front of the truck. Record all the measurements, which will be used when adjusting ball height and spring-bar tension. When hitched up, there should be equal drop at the front and rear of the truck.

there's still a small degree of installation required, but it's limited to a handful of bolts and nuts, taking a few measurements and following an incredibly well-illustrated and -written step-by-step instruction manual.

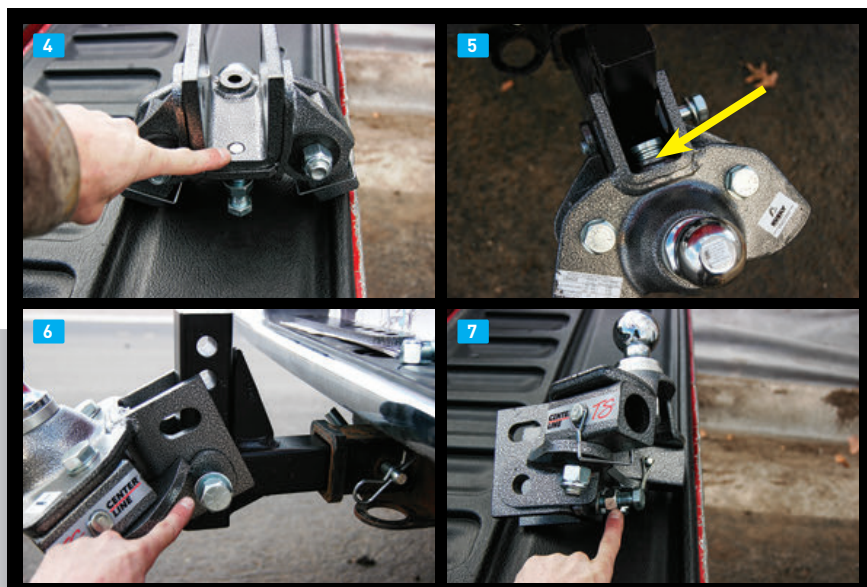
Installation for the first time will require the most work. Before starting the process, the trailer and tow vehicle must be parked on level ground, leaving about 4 to 5 feet between the two, so there's some room to assemble the components. To complete this task, the following tools will be needed: $\frac{1}{16}$ -inch and $\frac{1}{8}$ -inch combination wrenches, $\frac{1}{16}$ -inch and $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch sockets (at least $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch drive), a tape measure, torque wrenches capable of 260 ft-lbs, and a big $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch drive or large breaker bar for added leverage and torque when tightening the hardware. This is also a good time to assemble the lift tool (which helps you position the spring bars) using two small bolts.

You'll have to take a number of initial measurements before starting the assembly, one from the top-inside edge of the coupler to the ground and one from the top-center point of the front and rear

tow vehicle fender wells to the ground. Make sure to record these reference numbers in the provided spaces in the instructions; you'll need them later. Proceed to determine what position, either up or down, will provide the required hole location to attach the head to the shank. Husky offers a number of shanks in lengths from 10 to 14 inches with various rises and drops to accommodate just about any hitch receiver/coupler height. When using a shank with a longer drop, it's important to make sure there's sufficient ground clearance under the shank to allow for negotiating driveways and fuel-stop entrances. To help plan the shank positioning, subtract 8 inches from the final ball height noted in the instructions. This number should

provide the bottom $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch mounting-bolt-hole-to-ground measurement.

Before assembly of the head, make sure the $\frac{5}{8}$ -inch bolt in the bottom of the channel is all the way out with the threads flush to the inside of the channel. Using the $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch bolt with a washer to hold the head on the shank, you'll need to continue with the assembly by adding three of the hardened washers marked F436 to the large head pin as a starting point to find the appropriate ball angle. The large head pin is simply placed into the allotted bushing that's welded to the inside of the channel, located right in front of the ball. We found it easiest to just place one $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch bolt into position, after sliding one of the conical tooth



[4] Make sure the $\frac{5}{8}$ -inch bolt in the bottom of the ball mount channel is all the way out and flush with the surface. **[5]** Washers (arrow) are used to establish the ball angle. **[6]** Inserting one $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch bolt will make the job of assembly easier. **[7]** Once the proper ball angle is attained, the bolt can be tightened and the lock nut set.



washers onto the end. The two supplied conical tooth washers are intended to bite into the channel of the head assembly to establish the proper head angle and lock it in place.

At this point, any needed J-shaped shims to close the gap between the ear of the bottom plate and the U-channel can be put in place. Don't focus on equalizing the number of shims per side versus simply filling the gap. Now the remainder of the washers and nuts can be threaded on and properly tightened, but only after using a $\frac{1}{16}$ -inch socket to adjust the lower $\frac{5}{8}$ -inch bolt against the shank until it bottoms out, followed by about a quarter- to a half-turn, and then securing the locknut.

The hitch head bolts are torqued to 260 ft-lbs, which means having a professional-grade torque wrench or incredibly high-powered air-impact driver at your disposal. Since these are usually expensive tools and not common for a home garage, most people just use a more typical 3-foot $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch drive breaker bar to get the nuts as tight as possible. If you're unsure or don't have

[8] J-shaped shims are used to close the gap between the bottom plate and the ball-mount U-channel. **[9]** Spring bars fit into the ball-mount trunnions and are locked in place with pins. **[10]** Spring-bar brackets are mounted on the A-frame from 28½ to 30½ inches from the center of the coupler. This gives some flexibility for clearing the LP-gas cylinder plate.

the brute strength to tighten the nuts properly, check with a dealer who has experience assembling weight-distribution hitches. Before any final tightening, double-check the angle on the ball (after hitching up) to determine if adding or subtracting the F436 washers is mandatory. The ball is included with the package and is already installed in the hitch head and torqued to the proper value.

Once the ball mount is fully assembled, attention can be directed to the trailer A-frame brackets. A measurement is made from the center of the coupler to 28.5 to 30.5 inches back on the A-frame and marked. Hopefully, the LP-gas cylinder plate is not mounted in the location where the brackets must be located. If so, modifications will have to be made before continuing. The brackets are mounted to the frame using the $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch carriage bolts, one at the very

top and the other in whichever hole best lines up with the bottom edge of the frame. From this point each spring-bar lift bracket can still be adjusted up or down as needed by quickly using the two $\frac{5}{8}$ -inch dog-point screws. Before the correct spring-bar support surface height can be attained, one more easy measurement must be taken, which is best described by the drawings in the instructions.

Adjusting the spring bars requires a little trial and error using the measurements taken at the beginning of the installation process. As with any other weight-distribution hitch, the trailer must be raised with the coupler locked on the ball in order to preload the spring bars to make them safe to work with. Once the spring bars are nearly level with the spring-bar support surface, the lift tool is used to guide the



[11] White lithium grease is used to lubricate the hitch ball. **[12]** The hitch ball is supplied with the kit and torqued to specifications from the factory. **[13]** The spring bars are mounted in the trunnions with the label up. Spring bars are available to handle 400- to 600-pound, 600- to 800-pound and 800- to 1,200-pound hitch weights.

bar end onto the its resting position, which is then locked in place with the L-pins and clips. The trailer should sit level and measurements should be checked again to confirm that any drop in the front and rear height of the tow vehicle is equidistant from the top of the wheel wells and ground. The instructions provide superior details on how to achieve proper adjustment.

Assembling the Center Line TS was surprisingly quick and painless, with attribution to the CAD-designed components and easy-to-follow instructions. About the only suggestion we can make is to inform the user that the trailer needs to be lifted considerably to facilitate the positioning of the spring bars onto the brackets. The effort required to lift these bars seems excessive, which means a lot of cranking if the A-frame is not fitted with an electric jack. As part of the installation, we'd recommend installing an electric A-frame jack.

In use, the Husky Center Line TS did

[14] Once the brackets are mounted, the spring bars are lifted into position using the lift tool. **[15]** The second part of the sway-control system is the result of friction created by the spring-bar ends sliding against the brackets.

a nice job providing a stable, comfortable and stress-free towing experience. The technology Husky uses in manufacturing this hitch results in very quiet operation without disconcerting squeaks and groans. This technology allowed the company to come up with a solid sway-control system without the use of additional friction-type equipment, which not only looks nicer but eliminates another step, one that's difficult to ascertain without getting on the road and finding the sweet spot when adjusting. It also means that there's no equipment to remove when making super-tight maneuvers.

Towing a trailer can present challenges, especially for newbies.



Relying on a hitch like the Husky Center Line TS can take most of the anxiety out of the process. The complete hitch, with the standard 12-inch shank, retails for \$425. 🚚

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THE TV4RV TRIPOD SYSTEM MAKES IT EASY TO FIND A DIRECT VIEW TO MULTIPLE SATELLITES

It's not uncommon for an RV to be fitted with multiple TVs that have high-definition capability. To maximize the viewing experience, satellite companies have developed high-definition receivers with digital video recorders (DVRs) that are designed to save your favorite shows. To successfully record these programs, a more complicated satellite antenna is necessary in order to capture multiple satellite signals at the same time. For those who prefer using a freestanding dish, a stand is needed that allows for more intricate aiming at the satellites. One that has all the bells and whistles — and is fairly easy to use — is the TV4RV heavy-duty satellite dish tripod stand featuring the eZee-Aim system.

After years of hands-on experimentation, H&G Enterprises created the TV4RV, a heavy-duty satellite dish tripod designed to provide a solid foundation for any satellite antenna. The tripod's aluminum legs are infinitely adjustable and adapt to the most challenging terrain. Each leg can be adjusted for height and spread in almost unlimited increments. And H&G's well-thought-out accessories make all the difference when setting up a dish.

High winds can create a serious problem with all portable dishes. If not weighted or tied down properly, satellite stands subjected to stronger than usual wind can sometimes crash to the ground and quite possibly bend or damage the long Low Noise Block (LNB) arm just enough to render the dish inoperable. H&G has designed a

high-wind kit that works with its tripod that will withstand some of the worst wind events you'll likely encounter and are tested to 50-plus MPH.

The optional satellite aiming scope will enable users to look for a clear path to the satellites in the sky, over or between trees and bushes. This cleverly designed option ensures that the signal will not be missed when rotating for the optimal azimuth setting by eliminating the four- to five-second delay before the signal reaches the receiver. In addition, using the aiming scope eliminates the need for someone to stand in front of the TV inside the motorhome, wait for the signal and relay that information to the person aiming the dish. Can you say "marriage saver"?

Why are portable HD satellite dishes sometimes cumbersome and challenging to use? HD antennas utilize



The heavy-duty tripod made by H&G Enterprises is designed to support any style dish. The combo package comes with a sturdy nylon bag for easy storage.

a triple LNB and a large oval dish to find the multiple satellites needed to produce a top-quality picture. Nailing down three or more satellites is tougher than aiming a small round dish with a single LNB that only needs to find a single satellite.

Unfortunately, dome-type automatic satellite dishes and automatic portable dishes that are easier to use will not support a high-definition DVR. Winegard's roof-mounted Trav'ler series TV antenna is fully capable of supporting an HD DVR as well as multiple TVs, but it takes up quite a bit of real estate. And, while these automatic dishes work very efficiently, they still have to combat a common nemesis: trees. It may be possible



(Above from left) H&G's cleverly designed high-wind kit will help the tripod withstand a 65-MPH wind, even when set up on hard surfaces. The compass is custom-made to fit into the head assembly of the tripod for easy azimuth settings.



to drive around and find a space that has a clear view of the satellites, but this task would not work well in a full campground.

This is where the TV4RV tripod really shines. It can be easily moved to a remote location beyond obstructions that block the view to the satellites. It's almost impossible to aim large oval dishes with triple LNBs with a basic tripod with no markings for coordinates. Thankfully, the TV4RV directions are well thought out and easy to follow, especially for the critical initial setup. Optimal signal strength during this process will ensure quicker setup in the future.

To test the TV4RV tripod, we found a suitable location through a thick stand of trees using the compass set at 135 degrees (the azimuth coordinate for the area where we were parked). The tripod was set on the dirt and grass terrain and adjusted using the bubble level supplied in the kit. Next, the optional satellite aiming scope was set at the required 35 degrees of elevation. Checking for obstructions, the scope was rotated 10 degrees left or right on the eZee-Aim scale mounted on the top of the tripod. Satisfied that the line of sight for the satellite signal was clear, the tripod was leveled while spreading the legs to the required 30- to 36-inch diameter. After rechecking the compass for azimuth (making sure there were no metal objects nearby that could affect the reading), the metal tripod leg spikes were driven into the ground using the



(Above from left) Set the degrees of elevation, and this custom aiming scope will enable you to check for obstructions in the line of sight. A solid aluminum machined mast is designed to fit a 1½- or 2- inch bracket as well as supporting up to 35 pounds. The tripod has an infinite amount of adjustment for each leg, thus making the leveling process fast and easy.

foot pedal.

The next step — tying down the tripod — can be done using several methods, depending on the terrain or surface. For this application, the ground screw stake and the supplied chain or a bungee cord can be used to tie down the mast assembly. H&G has a kit for concrete as well. The index line on the mast was then aligned to the centerline of the eZee-Aim scale. Lastly, the dish assembly was placed on the mast.

After setting the skew/tilt at 90 degrees and rotating the center of the LNB arm over the index mark line on the mast, the elevation is set for the location. This process allows for signal fine-tuning from the main satellite (101 for DirecTV or 119 for Dish) by rotating the dish left or right on the mast assembly. Once the maximum signal is indicated on the signal finder,

the bolts can be tightened to secure the dish to the mast assembly. The dish and mast assemblies will remain clamped together as one unit when removed from the tripod.

The signal finder is then disconnected and the skew set. This will allow you to read the signal strength of all satellites on the receiver. We easily dialed in a signal strength of 94, which provided fantastic HD picture quality — in an area that would have been problematic for a rooftop dish.

The portability of this system is certainly convenient, but that also means it's portable for the bad guys. Consider using a locking cable of some type that you can attach to a tree, water pipe, chain-link fence hardware or some other secure object. It's good to be able to move the unit to a spot with a great satellite view, but that may also be a distance from your RV, so security is a consideration.

There is no question that the TV4RV satellite dish tripod system and accessories will make finding a signal easy and efficient, whether you have a basic dish with a single LNB or a large oval dish with multiple LNBs. TV4RV's website includes a newsletter link that contains many helpful suggestions and modifications to aid in setting up a satellite dish. With a little practice, it's easy to become proficient using this high-quality portable system. The heavy-duty combo package retails for \$159.95 and comes with a carrying bag. 🚚

(Below from left) The heavy-duty bungee cord and tie-down stake secure the tripod in even the softest of dirt. Carefully set the dish onto the mast for the initial setup and follow the directions. H&G's custom signal finder eliminates the need for the help of another person during the aiming process.



TV4RV, 541-244-0250, www.TV4RV.com



Razor Sharp

Sea Eagle has just introduced the first-of-its-kind 393rl RazorLite kayak to its line of inflatable kayaks, boats and standup paddleboards. Constructed with high-pressure drop-stitch technology, the 393rl RazorLite measures 12 feet 10 inches long and 27 inches wide, and weighs only 28 pounds. With a tapered hard-nose bow and stern, this kayak cuts through the waves cleaner, straighter and sharper than any other inflatable kayak on the market, according to Sea Eagle. Made of 1,000-denier reinforced PVC with quadruple overlapping seams and rigid drop-stitch construction, the RazorLite is built to last. The included backpack allows you to take your lightweight RazorLite to the most remote locations.

MSRP: \$1,099

800-748-8066, www.seaeagle.com

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Able Cable

In many trailers 50-amp service is a nice luxury, but that big, heavy cable can be hard to handle. Conntek's new 50-amp RV cord (part number 15455-LA1) is designed to be simpler to grab, lock and remove at both ends. The connector's 45-degree angle not only allows the inlet hatch to close more completely to keep out rain, dirt and debris, it also offers a measure of strain relief, reducing the chance of damage to the cord or inlet. Meanwhile, the plug side features Conntek's Ergo Grip, with the handle and prongs positioned at a right angle to the cord, increasing leverage and reducing hand fatigue. Finally, two blue LEDs on the Conntek illuminate to let you know when the power is on.

MSRP: \$194.99

877-267-3788, www.conntek.com

Circle 142 on Reader Service Card



Clear Eyes

After years of UV exposure, the standard coatings on polycarbonate headlights on your tow vehicle can eventually break down, becoming yellow and hazy. It's not only unsightly, but it also reduces headlight effectiveness, posing a potential safety hazard. The car care experts at Meguiar's have developed a simple solution for this problem with the innovative two-step Perfect Clarity headlight restoration kit. The easy-to-use kit quickly restores clarity while preventing reoxidation and yellowing for up to one year, according to the company. Meguiar's Perfect Clarity headlight restoration kit has been designed for hand use but may also be used with Meguiar's DA Power System (available separately) for even faster headlight cleaning.

MSRP: Around \$20

800-347-5700, www.meguiars.com

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Fuel Your Fun

Increase the fuel capacity and driving range on a 2015 Ford F-250 or F-350 diesel pickup with a larger fuel tank from Transfer Flow. For the Ford standard box crew cab pickup, Transfer Flow offers a 50-gallon fuel tank that replaces the stock 26-gallon tank. For the long box crew cab and extended cab pickups, a 57-gallon fuel tank replaces the stock 37.5-gallon tank. Made from black powder-coated 12- and 14-gauge aluminized steel for superior corrosion resistance and strength, Transfer Flow tanks are baffled for extra support and to reduce fuel slosh, and come with straps and mounting hardware. A high-end polymer spray-on coating for a more durable finish is optional.

MSRP: Starting around \$909 800-442-0056, www.transferflow.com

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Onboard Diagnostics

When everything works properly, driving can be a smooth, easy and seamless process. However, there's a lot of complex engineering and development required to make it seem so simple. In the late 1970s, as regulations for vehicle emissions were becoming stricter and fuel injection was being phased in, computers were in their infancy. The early computer systems had very limited computing power and possessed only rudimentary diagnostic capability. The various brands and manufacturers used their own systems, which were incompatible with each other and required unique test equipment that constantly changed.

A need for compact, lightweight and inexpensive computing power drove innovation rapidly in the fields of vehicle controls and diagnostics. (It also spawned a flood of acronyms.) Soon, diagnostic scan tools were available with adapters to fit the different brands, but still the test procedures were cumbersome and limited in scope.

The federal government, through the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Society of Automotive Engineers (SAE), wrote regulations that required vehicle manufacturers to standardize the diagnostic protocols and test connections so the various brands could all be tested with one type of device. The result was On-Board Diagnostics 2

(OBD-II), which constantly monitors the operation of vehicle systems via the computer or powertrain control module (PCM). OBD-II has been on all light-duty vehicles (less than 8,500 pounds GVWR) since 1996, medium-duty vehicles (8,500- to 14,000-pound GVWR) beginning in 2005, and heavy-duty vehicles (more than a 14,000-pound GVWR) starting in 2010. Some 1995 light-duty models also have OBD-II. These systems are still being installed in new vehicles, including diesels.

SAE J1979 (ISO 15031-5) is a standard that outlines the communication protocols between test equipment and vehicle OBD-II systems. This SAE standard also defines many generic trouble codes common to all models, while manufacturers can develop additional codes specific to the special needs of their vehicles. Over the years, these proprietary codes have expanded to cover transmissions, antilock brakes, airbags, climate control and many other functions. Special professional-grade scan tools are required to delve into these systems in depth.

Check Engine Lights

Although the driver's only visual indication of the OBD-II system's operation is the Check Engine light,

which is also known as the malfunction indicator lamp (MIL), there's a lot constantly going on within the system. The MIL comes on typically for problems that may have an effect on vehicle emissions systems. When the computer finds a problem it cannot adjust, the OBD-II system switches on the MIL warning lamp and stores one or more trouble codes in its memory. These diagnostic trouble codes (DTC) can be used to find the source of the problem. When the engine is started, the MIL comes on briefly just to test the bulb and then should go out.

A blinking MIL indicates a severe engine misfire or other condition that may allow excess unburned fuel into the exhaust system, where it may overheat the catalytic converter(s) and cause expensive damage to occur. If this happens, it's best to stop driving as soon as it is safe to have the vehicle checked and repaired.

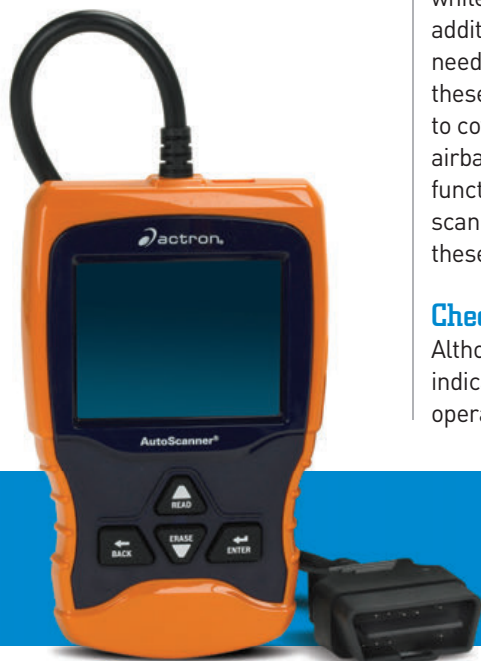
If the MIL is lighted steadily, the problem is not urgent, and no damage is imminent. The vehicle can be driven but should be repaired as soon as possible. Vehicle computers may try to compensate for the problem, and a loss of performance may be experienced, along with higher fuel consumption and increased levels of hydrocarbons and other pollutants.

Don't confuse the MIL with a maintenance reminder or service-interval light. These illuminate when routine service is due and are activated by mileage, amount of fuel used or various other measurements.

Smog-test rules vary according to region and state, with some performing an OBD-II plug-in, instead of the more expensive and laborious tailpipe emissions test, and some requiring both.

Trouble Codes

The DTC stored by the PCM for generic OBD-II purposes consists of a letter followed by four numbers. Powertrain-related codes, which we are concerned with here, start with P,



The AutoScanner from Actron is compatible with all 1996 and newer import and domestic vehicles as well as 1994 and 1995 OBD-II compliant vehicles.

and the following numbers indicate the system and subsystem component involved. Each numerical code has a test procedure that accompanies it, and following the test steps can lead to the source of the problem. Skipping steps or performing steps out of sequence may invalidate tests.

Scan tools are required to read DTCs, erase stored codes and interact with the OBD-II system through the diagnostic port, which is typically located under the dashboard on the driver's side. Various devices have been developed for this task, from low-cost basic code readers designed for consumers to elaborate machines costing thousands of dollars designed for professionals.

Among the states that have smog-check programs, most require that the OBD-II system be checked for MIL operation, stored codes and monitor status. If the MIL is illuminated, the vehicle may fail. Some have found that briefly disconnecting the battery or ECM fuse shuts off the light, but the vehicle will still fail.

An OBD-II system runs a number of self-diagnostic checks (called "readiness monitors" or "monitors") to test the performance of the engine management system and emission controls. OBD-II systems run one test (readiness monitor) for each applicable vehicle emission-control component. When that test is completed, the relevant component is said to have a "Ready" or "Set" monitor. Until completed, the component is said to have a "Not Ready" or "Unset" monitor.

An OBD-II system can't report a component's emission-control status until its monitor is set. Some monitors are run each time the engine starts, others such as the catalyst and EVAP monitors are run only during certain conditions. This is why erasing codes or resetting monitors just prior to a smog test won't allow a vehicle to pass. It is also why it sometimes takes a while for the MIL to come back on after codes are erased.

Monitor Descriptions

To understand and troubleshoot OBD-II, it's helpful to know what the various monitors do. Basic OBD-II monitors and the components and systems they oversee are as follows (not all vehicles have all monitors):

Misfire: Looks for engine misfires that occur when the air-fuel mixture in the engine's cylinder does not ignite. This can damage the engine and catalytic converter(s).

Fuel System: Constantly checks the amount of fuel used by the engine via the oxygen sensor(s). The OBD-II system can determine if more or less fuel is needed, and fuel mixture adjustments are performed many times per second to reduce fuel consumption and harmful emissions.

Comprehensive Component: Checks switches and sensors used in the engine management. Voltage, resistance and other conditions are compared with programmed values of normal readings, and, if they differ by a certain amount, the component may set a DTC.

Catalyst (or Catalytic Converter): Uses oxygen readings before and after the catalyst(s) to determine catalyst efficiency.

Heated Catalyst: Checks that the catalyst heater is working. Some vehicles have electrically heated catalyst(s) that heat a cold catalyst faster so it starts working sooner, reducing harmful emissions.

Evaporative System: Tests the evaporative system to minimize the release of fuel vapors. Typically, this is done by pressurizing the system with a small air pump; a loose filler cap can cause it to fail the test.

Secondary Air System: Tests components, switches and solenoids in the air-injection system. Some vehicles are equipped with a secondary air system, or air injection, which directs extra air into the exhaust system to allow more-complete combustion and reduce exhaust pollutants.



Also from Actron is the U-Scan vehicle diagnostics system that integrates your smartphone. Just download the free app, plug the U-Scan unit into the vehicle's OBD-II port and instantly connect your smartphone to your vehicle.

A/C (Air-Conditioning) System: Checks for leaks in the A/C system in pre-1994 vehicles using the old R12 refrigerant. This monitor displays "Not Supported" on newer vehicles.

O₂ (Oxygen) Sensor: Tracks performance of the oxygen sensors, which are used to adjust the amount of fuel fed to the engine. When an oxygen sensor fails, fuel consumption and emissions increase.

Heated O₂ (Oxygen) Sensor: Verifies that the oxygen sensor heater is working. Some oxygen sensors have an electric heater that warms the sensor up and starts it operating faster. For those that don't, the monitor displays "Not Supported."

Exhaust Gas Recirculation (EGR) System: Reduces oxides of nitrogen by



The Craftsman OBD2 Scan Tool includes CodeConnect with 4.3 million verified fixes as well as Asian/domestic powertrain and ABS coverage for GM, Ford, Chrysler, Toyota, Honda, Nissan and Hyundai, plus a component locator and other features.

reducing combustion temperature. The monitor tests EGR components to verify operation and sufficient exhaust gas flow through the system.

Each component must operate under a specified set of conditions, known as enabling criteria, before its monitor will become "Ready" or "Set," and the vehicle can pass a smog test. Most commonly, a component hasn't set its monitor for the following reasons:

- The vehicle has not completed a manufacturer-defined drive cycle.
- Recent vehicle repairs have cleared diagnostic trouble codes.
- The battery was recently disconnected.
- The ECM requires a software update or is subject to a recall or technical service bulletin (TSB).
- The component is still identifying a problem that has not yet illuminated the MIL.
- The fuel tank was less than one-quarter full or more than three-quarters

full and might not run in very hot or cold temperatures.

- The vehicle was operated with a fuel-alcohol content over 11 percent (non-flex fuel vehicles).

The problem has to be diagnosed and repaired before the vehicle will pass. If your vehicle failed OBD-II testing, it may be that required OBD-II monitors had not completed their self-tests. Completing a catalyst monitor may require driving for miles at various speeds and under varying loads.

Modifications, such as unapproved equipment that disables or removes emission-control devices, must be taken off to pass the visual part of the test.

Diagnostic Tools

Many scan tools are designed and priced for do-it-yourself use. They vary from simple code readers to full-featured scan tools that not only can read codes but interpret them, and provide troubleshooting procedures

and more. These are available in tool and auto-parts stores, as well as online. Generally speaking, the higher the price, the more features offered. Pro models are far more sophisticated and can read other information and settings in the computer system, view proprietary codes, provide advanced troubleshooting information and more.

In addition to scan tools, various software programs allow a laptop computer to interface with the PCM through the OBD-II diagnostic port. With these OBD-II diagnostic software programs, you can communicate with your vehicle's systems and turn your computer into an automotive scanner. Depending on the software, you can view engine data in real-time, check monitors, troubleshoot or reset the Check Engine light.

Trouble codes and information related to them are included with most scan tools and are also widely available online. A simple Google search for "OBD-II trouble codes" will bring up many sites that offer helpful information for troubleshooting and repair.

Final Thoughts

The people who came up with the OBD-II system produced a very adaptable system that has been able to stay relevant for more than two decades — a millennium in computer years. Eventually, other systems will be phased in, but this one will likely be with us for a long time. 🚗

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Tools

Actron/Bosch Automotive, www.actron.com
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Stay Connected

Permanently attached RV power cords are easy targets for thieves looking to cash in on copper, and Torklift's Fortress PowerLock levels the playing field

The world we live in today doesn't exactly represent the images many of us retain from the good ol' days, when petty theft in campgrounds and storage facilities was a rarity. Things like generators, propane cylinders, batteries and, yes, even power cords are easy targets for thieves looking for quick cash. A power cord may seem valueless from the outset, but it contains a large amount of copper wire. In case you haven't noticed, copper commands a high price these days, and thieves will take it from any place that offers easy access — including campgrounds and RV parks. While it would seem that only detachable power cords would be vulnerable, permanent cords are just as easily stolen, since all the thief has to do is open a flimsy plastic door and cut the cable.

Thankfully, the clever minds at Torklift International have come up with a theft-deterrent device designed to protect permanently mounted 30-amp power cords, which, incidentally, can cost upward of \$150 (including labor) to replace. The Fortress PowerLock is designed to cover the access point to an RV's shorepower cord and helps prevent theft by eliminating exposed screws and doors. Constructed of rugged 1/8-inch-thick aircraft-grade aluminum plate, the Fortress PowerLock is assembled with rivets — not bolts — which further discourages breaches. Aside from rugged construction, the



(Above from left) The original power cord hatch cannot be locked. The Fortress PowerLock is designed to prevent access to the cord by completely covering the hatch.

Fortress PowerLock is protected from the elements and road debris via its durable white or black high-impact powder-coat finish.

Installation of the Fortress PowerLock will require a drill equipped with either a 1/4-inch driver or socket, plus a Phillips bit, an 1/8-inch drill bit, butyl putty tape, silicone and about 20 minutes of your time. Once the small shopping list of tools and supplies is assembled, remove the three screws that secure the original hatch, and place them and the hatch aside. Using a plastic putty knife, remove any existing putty tape or sealer from the exterior wall and original hatch. Once the surfaces have been prepped, line the hatch and the perimeter on the backside of the PowerLock with fresh butyl putty tape (works better than gray putty tape). Next, place the original round hatch inside the new PowerLock. With the three holes aligned, reattach the hatch and

secure the screws. Having the three hatch screws in place lines up the location of the four new holes to be drilled with the 1/8-inch bit. All that's left is to tighten the four new Phillips screws to the body and run some rubber silicone around the edges after some minor putty tape trimming.

The Fortress opens and closes easily using the keyed lock, and even looks nicer than the original hatch. The product is made in the USA and is protected by a lifetime warranty. It retails for \$108 and comes with two keys. 🚚

Torklift International

800-246-8132, www.torklift.com



LOCK IT UP » Torklift's Fortress PowerLock makes it harder for thieves to access the RV's power cord, a highly desired item due to the price of copper. Once in place, a solid door must be unlocked before opening the original hatch.

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WHERE TO LEVEL?

Q We recently purchased a 2015 Forest River Sierra fifth-wheel that has the kitchen in the rear. My understanding is that the unit should be leveled at the refrigerator for optimum efficiency. Since the refrigerator is in the rear of the RV, the slideouts have to be extended to access it. I have been told that damage can be done to the slideouts if the RV is not level prior to their extension. If this is the case, how would you recommend I level the RV at the campsite?

Jim Monforte, Phoenix, Arizona

A Any flat surface inside the trailer that runs parallel to the floor can work for leveling, Jim. That includes the floor. In theory, the refrigerator has been installed such that it's perpendicular to the floor, so measuring directly at the refrigerator is not required. You can place a bubble level or regular carpenter's level on the floor inside the entry door, for example, or set it on a flat surface such as a kitchen counter or a lounge area cabinet that has a flat surface.

As for the slideouts, they can operate just fine if the trailer isn't level. They are more sensitive to the trailer



being out of square or "twisted" along its length. For example, if the trailer is mostly level but the left front corner is too high, that twists the floor and structure so the floor isn't flat. Imagine holding the rear of the trailer solidly and twisting the front. That twist means the openings for the slideouts and their rack or rail mechanisms are not square and true, as they were designed to be. Under those conditions, the slideouts can bind up if you try to move them and can possibly damage the mechanisms. Just keep your trailer as square and true as you can — you'd need to try pretty hard to get it to twist far enough to cause damage — and your fifth-wheel's slideouts should be fine. — **Jeff Johnston**

2WD OR 4WD FOR TOWING?

Q In the very near future I will be ordering a new one-ton crew-cab dually diesel pickup to tow our fifth-wheel trailer. What are the pros and cons of a 2WD as opposed to a 4WD vehicle used primarily for recreational towing?

Ed Harris, Howell, Michigan

A This question comes up now and then, Ed, and it's worth a revisit. A 4WD truck costs more than 2WD, it weighs a bit more, which means it may achieve slightly lower fuel economy numbers and may be rated to tow a bit less, and it represents more drivetrain hardware to maintain in the long run. Some 4WD trucks are a bit higher than their 2WD counterparts, and that's worth keeping in mind when making a match with your fifth-wheel. Thanks to

today's suspension technology, most 4WD vehicles ride about the same as their 2WD counterparts, but you can determine that by taking a few measurements. A 4WD pickup will also enable you to drive and tow under poor traction conditions that would leave a 2WD pickup stuck. From a performance standpoint, a 4WD tows very well and delivers the same type of handling, braking and steering you'd expect from a 2WD truck. In the end, it's your decision regarding how often you'll likely need the extra traction capability when towing. — **J.J.**

DRY CAMP POWER USE

Q I have a 2014 Keystone Outback 298RE with one battery installed by the dealer. I want to dry camp and I

understand that the one battery might not be enough. How much time can I get on one battery if I use the furnace only when needed and some lights? The refrigerator can run on propane. Should I install or have my dealer install another battery, and how much time or how many days can it run on two batteries?

I understand I can buy a Honda 2000i generator to connect to my trailer to run basic things as mentioned and recharge the battery. What is the story on using generators in state and national campgrounds? I hear you can use them in some for only a few hours. Is that going to be enough? I am afraid to wake up one morning and find I have a dead battery in a remote area of Yellowstone or Yosemite!

David Gordon, Teaneck, New Jersey

A How long a battery will last is a hard question to answer because there are so many variables. These include state of charge of the battery, its age and size, the ambient temperature, the size of your RV's furnace and its power draw when operating, how many lights you use and for how long, and

THE TECH TEAM



KEN FREUND: Ken is a former ASE Certified Master Technician, service manager and shop owner who has authored numerous books on automotive repair.



JEFF JOHNSTON: Jeff served as technical director of *Trailer Life* for 20 years and has been an RV enthusiast, mechanic and writer since he could hold a wrench.

so forth. In my experience one average battery may power a furnace for one day dry camping but not much more if it's cold at night and the furnace runs frequently. Adding a second battery will double the time you get from the furnace and other accessories. For this type of use, adding a solar charging system to your trailer can go a long way toward keeping the battery, or batteries, alive for a dry-camping trip.

Use of a Honda generator to power the converter to charge the batteries will help, but even running all day long, given the modest charge rate from most standard equipment converters, will bring the batteries only partly back toward full charge.

Generator usage rules vary between all types of state and national parks and private campgrounds. As a rule, a campground has quiet times, for example, between 10 p.m. and 7 a.m., when generator use isn't allowed. I haven't heard of a rule that regulates generator use to a certain number

of consecutive hours, but that's possible. Your best bet would be to do an Internet search for the places you plan to visit and then check each place's website for specifics about generator use. Those websites should have the current rules and regulations readily available. — J.J.

REFRIGERATOR FANS

Q I have a 2009 ViewFinder V19FK trailer by Cruiser RV. The refrigerator is in the slideout, which means there is no top vent, and the setup has a fan in back of the refrigerator to help move the heat out of a vent in the side wall near the top of the slideout. The small high-RPM fan originally used for this produces a very high whining noise. I met a fellow in a campground who told me he had replaced his small fan with a larger computer fan and that almost eliminated the noise. I have since done this but find the computer fan is lower RPM and wonder if it moves as much air. I left

the original fan installed, and all I have to do is reconnect the wire to make the smaller fan work again. How do I know if the refrigerator is overheating or not? How do I know if the fan is moving as much air as the smaller one? Does the refrigerator shut down if it overheats, or how does it react?

The smaller fan will run for hours in the heat of the day when we are using the trailer. This fan is 3 inches in diameter; the larger fan is 4 inches. The refrigerator is a Dometic. We have not used the trailer since I installed the new fan, so I do not know if it works yet. The new fan specifications show 39 CFM at 1,200 RPM.

Roy Diers, Hastings, Nebraska

Q I have a 2012 Forest River Cedar Creek Silverback fifth-wheel. I have a couple of issues with the refrigerator that you may be able to help me with or steer me in the correct direction. The first problem is that the refrigerator fan seems to be quite noisy. When we purchased the fifth-wheel, we had the dealer check out the noise, and they said the fan "works as designed." The second, and most critical, problem is the frequency that the fan comes on. As soon as the temp outside reaches 75 degrees Fahrenheit, the fan turns on and runs for a long time and continues to cycle off and on throughout the day until the temperature cools down. When we are at an RV park with hookups, this is not a real big issue, other than the loudness, but when we are dry camping and I am gone more than six hours, the batteries are almost completely gone by the time I return.

I have found that removing the top grate behind the refrigerator on the outside of the fifth-wheel keeps the fan from coming on as often. It seems there may be an airflow issue. Do you have any ideas or suggestions?

Tom Wood, Santa Fe, New Mexico

A As you know, Roy and Tom, the fan that's in your refrigerator compartment helps improve air circulation over the refrigerator cooling coils. The wall-mounted vent is not as effective as the roof-mounted vent be-

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cause the hot air, instead of just flowing straight up and out, needs to make a 90-degree turn to exit via the wall vent. The fan helps pull the heated air out of the opening.

As for knowing if the new fan is moving enough air, you'll need to investigate the airflow specs on the old fan and compare them to those of the new fan. Otherwise, as long as the refrigerator keeps working OK, you know the fan is moving enough air. If the refrigerator overheats or doesn't have enough cooling air moving, due to extra-warm weather, for example, the fridge will simply not work as well as if it were operating up to spec. This can happen to any absorption-type refrigerator under summertime high-temperature conditions and isn't limited to those with the cooling fan installed. It's called heat saturation.

Tom, you might want to consider swapping in a larger-diameter computer-type cooling fan, as mentioned in Roy's letter. Those computer fans

are designed for quiet operation and low power consumption. Regarding the power drain, mounting a solar panel on the roof can solve the dead-battery problem. Those fans don't draw a lot of current, so even a modest-size solar panel wired in as an auxiliary power supply for the fan would help avoid draining your trailer's battery. Better yet, add enough solar panels to charge the battery as well — a 200-watt setup would do very nicely in your area — and that would solve most of the battery use and discharge issues. — J.J.

TRAILER LOST ITS LUSTER

Q My 2009 Open Range has lost its luster on the side walls. Rubbing compound and wax are just not enough to bring it back. Are there any reputable products that will work, shy of the paint shop? I've read about a couple of solutions but would like to know if you know what works.

Bill Knipper, Las Vegas, Nevada

A There are a variety of buffing and polishing compounds available for use on RVs, Bill. A visit to your local RV service center and its accessory shop may turn up what you need, or visit an auto-parts store and peruse the offerings in the finish-and-wax area. Camping World sells a wide range of such products designed for RV use. It would also help to use an electric orbital buffing machine (a rotary buffer can do more harm than good if you're inexperienced), as it can produce far better and more consistent results than trying to cover an entire RV by hand.

That Las Vegas sun can be brutal on an RV's exterior finish. Paint that isn't too far gone can generally be brought back to a decent shine. If your trailer has fiberglass skin that's faded, it can take some doing to get it back to snuff. Whatever you do, follow the product directions, because you can go too far and damage the finish, if you aren't careful. If all else fails, try a visit to a detail shop that can handle an RV, and they may be able to work their magic on your trailer. It costs a bit but can yield some impressive results. — J.J.

LOAD-CARRYING AIRBAGS

Q I am looking to purchase a new fifth-wheel trailer, but the dry kingpin weight is 2,941 pounds. My new Ram 2500 has a payload of 2,720 pounds. I will have air bags installed. However, I am worried about having too much weight on the truck's axle bearings, how long they will last and if the warranty will cover replacement. The kingpin loaded weight could reach much higher.

Dave, Haynesville, Louisiana

A Airbags don't change your truck's payload capacity, Dave, they just help keep your truck level. Any amount of overload you apply to the truck that exceeds its gross axle weight rating (GAWR) or gross vehicle weight rating (GVWR) can cause suspension and powertrain parts to wear out faster, or, in the case of the brakes, to not work as effectively. If the damage can be traced back to an overloaded situation, the warranty can be voided for that repair. We'd rec-

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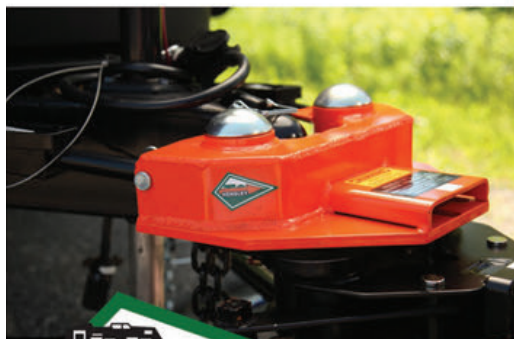
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ommend you select a trailer that's a better match for your truck's tow rating and other specifications. — J.J.

ELECTRIC BLANKET POWER

Q January's "Electric Blanket Surprise" letter from Patrick Bullard referencing an electric blanket failure when powered by a generator could be the result of the blanket's control system. Some generators produce power that is more of a square wave than a sine wave, and the blanket control system may not operate correctly on a non-sine-wave power source. Bullard would probably be better off getting the old-fashioned type that uses a mechanical control rather than an electronic control.

A recent power outage in the Northeast showed me that the generator I have for the house would not power the new microwave oven in my house for the same reason.

John Bottrill, Amherst, New Hampshire

A You're right about the square-wave versus sine-wave matter, John, and a rough square-wave power supply is not going to be compatible with many sensitive electronic devices. If in doubt, an inverter-type generator such as the Honda EU2000i or Yamaha EF2000iS should do a good job with even the fussiest electronics in consumer products. — J.J.

MULTIPLE EXTENSION CORDS

Q We purchased a 2015 Rockwood Signature in October of last year. We towed it home and placed it in a covered area but have not used it yet. The trailer sits about 75 to 80 feet from our 50-amp receptacle that is under our house/carport.

We just had an electrician run a new line from the breaker box to a new 50-amp receptacle under the carport. We have the original 50-amp cord that came with the Rockwood that is 25 feet long, and we purchased another 50-amp extension that is about 30 feet long, so both combined are 55 feet long.

Can we purchase another 50-amp, 30-foot heavy-duty extension cord and be able to use two extension cords with the

original cord, making the total run about 85 feet? We want to be able to do this from time to time instead of having to tow the trailer out of the barn every time. We would do this only when we start loading the trailer for a trip, not as a full-time setup, nor for long periods of time. Will this cause too many problems?

Gloria Evans, Waco, Texas

A There's nothing wrong with supplying occasional power to your trailer this way, Gloria. The only time it could be problematic is if you try to operate too many electric appliances when using the long cord setup. For example, trying to run two air conditioners at once may not work because the extra resistance of all that wire, plus the resistance that occurs at the plugs, can decrease the voltage available at the trailer. Trying to run high-draw appliances on lower-than-usual voltage can damage equipment.

However, if you're just going to run the interior lights, perhaps a furnace,

the refrigerator and so forth, you should be just fine. Likewise, one air conditioner should also be fine, as long as you don't overdo it by adding a toaster oven, hair dryer, vacuum cleaner and other such items in the mix. — J.J.

BATTERY CAPS DURING CHARGING

Q I have a 12-volt deep-cycle battery. I remove the battery and put it in the basement on a shelf for five months during the cold season. I am using a Battery Tender Plus to charge the battery. I want to leave the battery hooked up to the charger for the five months. Do I have to leave the vent caps on the battery off or can I leave them on? I am concerned about the pressure buildup and I am also wondering about leaving the vent caps off for five months.

Albinas Butler, Pointe-Claire, Quebec

A Unlike a so-called "trickle charger," which continually (continued on page 77)



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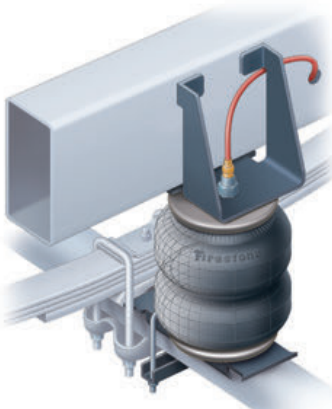
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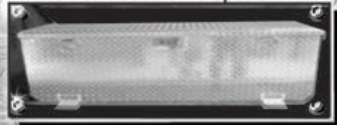
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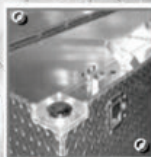
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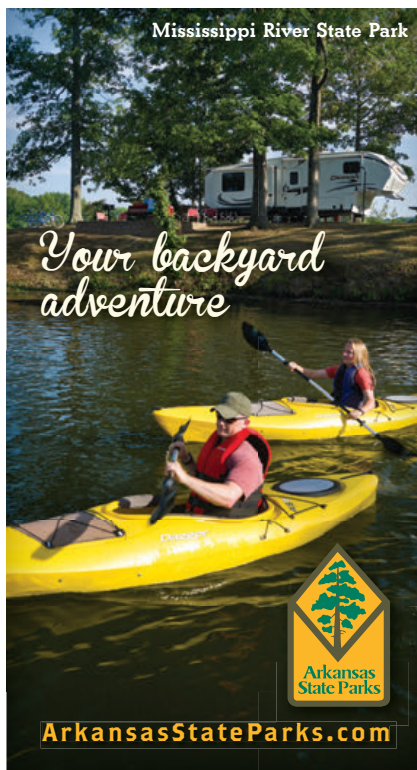
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Classifieds

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(continued from page 73) charges the battery (albeit slowly) and can deplete the electrolyte over time, a smart charger brings the battery to a full state of charge, then maintains it at the proper storage voltage. The Battery Tender Plus puts out only 12 volts DC at 1.25 amps, and automatically switches from a full to float charging mode to prevent damage to the battery. With this low voltage and slow charge rate, the built-in vents in the caps are enough to allow any outgassing. Now, if you were to fast charge the battery (which, by the way, is tough on it), removing the caps would be a good idea, but leaving them off could lead to contamination from dust or present a danger to children or animals in the area. In any case, you should remove the caps and top off the cells with distilled water before charging, then check them after a month or so just to make sure electrolyte depletion isn't excessive. — **Ken Freund**

FOLDING-CAMPER STABILITY

Q My wife and I own a 10-foot pop-up camper. Could you please give us some tips on how we can make the camper more stable?

Paul Webber, Fort Myers, Florida

A By "stable," we don't know if you mean while towing or when you are moving around in the parked unit. If towing, the simplest and cheapest cure for stability at highway speeds is to add a sway control, such as the friction devices sold by a variety of companies. If it's the camper moving around when you are in it that bothers you, you may need to add jacks underneath near each corner to support the floors. Both types of products are available through Camping World (www.campingworld.com) and other RV-accessory outlets. — **K.F.**

REMOVING CAULKING

Q How can I remove the old caulking from my fifth-wheel trailer roof so I can redo it?

Bob Thornett, Whitehorse, Yukon

A On a flat roof with fiberglass or aluminum skin on top, try a narrow putty knife, preferably a plastic one so it doesn't scratch the finish. Work slowly to remove the caulk commonly found on roof vents and seams. Push nearly parallel, in a straight direction and only slightly down to avoid cutting into the fiberglass. Most caulking comes off fairly clean. It may take some elbow grease to get off the small bits that are left. To clean the surface before applying new caulking, use isopropyl rubbing alcohol or a little lacquer thinner (but not acetone on fiberglass) and a clean rag. It evaporates cleanly and does an excellent job removing the dirt and film that prevents adhesion. — K.F.

SHOCKING PROBLEM

Q We have a 2008 Trail-Lite by R-Vision. When connected to 120-volt AC shorepower, I get shocked when I touch the metal exterior of the trailer. I learned of a safety recall in which

the neutral wire in the circuit box was installed incorrectly. I did as the recall recommended, and that made no difference. I tried tripping each breaker, but the condition still exists. I purchased the trailer new and have no idea how long this condition has existed. Any help would be appreciated, because various people we have contacted keep passing the buck.

John Cope, Greensburg, Pennsylvania

A The recall, which is 07V547 in the USA and 07-375 in Canada, applies to a number of 2007 and 2008 R-Vision models, and calls for the converter neutral wire to be moved to the neutral bar in the load center. This should cure the problem. Perhaps you did not make the change correctly, or there may be a second problem causing it. Usually, the manufacturer wants a dealer to perform recalls. Contact the manufacturer at 877-466-6226 to report that the problem covered by the recall has not been

remedied. If the problem is not resolved, contact the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration at 888-327-4236. — K.F.

TOILET-TANK TIP

Q I use approximately one or two cups of baking soda in my RV's toilet, then open the flush and pour vinegar in equal amounts into the tank. It's the best solution for it. I had used this method to clean regular drains, sinks, tubs, toilets and most clogged pipes. Usually, I pour the baking soda and vinegar into it in the morning, then in the evening I open the drain and run hot water through the toilet. Last, I put another cup of baking soda, then vinegar, and leave it for another week. I don't believe this has done any damage, and it is always a better aroma.

Sharon Evans, Gilbert, Arizona

A Vinegar is a mild acid, and baking soda is a mild alkali. They both can

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be used for cleaning, and when mixed they foam and form a mild salty solution. I don't recommend this in place of holding-tank chemicals. — K.F.

RUBBER-ROOF REPAIR

Q We have a 2004 Fleetwood Prowler 25RK trailer that has a roof problem. I need to replace an 8-foot x 26-inch section of the roof. The roof at one time developed a leak somewhere. The water never came through the ceiling — it seems like the wood trusses and insulation absorbed the water. I contacted Fleetwood's Maryland office, and they said they have not handled the Fleetwood trailer line since 2009. My main concern is how to replace the rubber skin. I also have to replace the wood above the slideout.

My regular dealer went out of business due to the economy. I have contacted two dealers, and they told me that, for them to do the repair work, I would be looking at a \$10,000 repair job. I am looking for any repair advice I can get.

Robert Walukiewicz
Pittsgrove, New Jersey

A Depending on your DIY skills, you may be able to do all or part of the job. Many owners do the own repairs. There are several major steps, which could include removing the old damaged parts and repairing the woodwork and trusses before installing the new roof. You may be able to work out a deal with a shop to perform the steps you don't feel confident doing, or you can simply look for a shop that may do the job for less — \$10,000 seems unreasonable. — K.F.

HARD-RIDE CURE

Q I tow a 2009 Jayco Eagle 33-foot travel trailer with my 2003 Ford F-250 diesel Crew Cab pickup. Some of the roads we take are cement and have been repaired many times. These roads will shake your guts out. Are there any ideas you can offer on how to lessen the severity of the shaking? We're using a Reese 2-inch hitch bar with equalizing bars and a friction anti-sway bar. We run 80 psi in our

ST225/75R15 trailer tires and 75 psi in our LT265/75R16 truck tires.

Clayton Clevenger, McCalla, Alabama

A You might get a slight bit of relief if you weigh your trailer and tow vehicle, and set tire pressures on each axle according to actual load, using a load-inflation table from the tire manufacturers. You may also get some improvement by installing high-quality aftermarket shock absorbers. However, the changes will be minor, relative to what you will experience if you change to an air-ride suspension. One of the major suppliers, Kelderman (800-334-6150, www.kelderman.com) offers kits for both front and rear axles on your truck. — K.F. 🚚

HAVE A QUESTION? » Email our experts at RVClinic@trailerlife.com or write to RV Clinic, 2750 Park View Court, Suite 240, Oxnard, California 93036. Please include your hometown. No phone calls, please.

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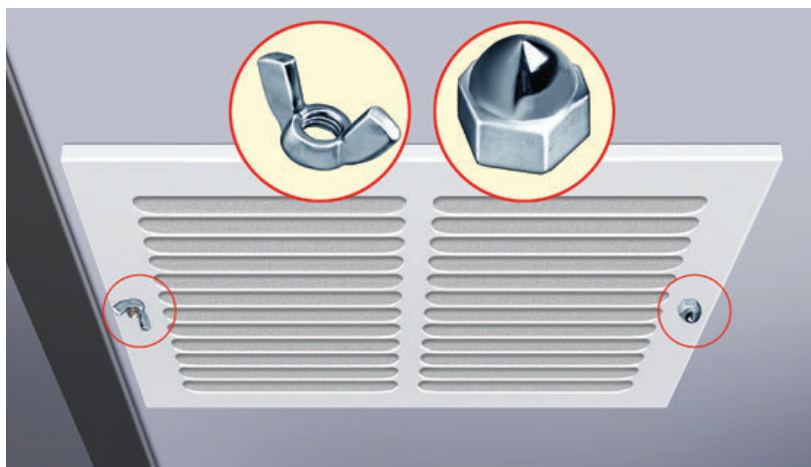
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Progress Manufacturing, Circle 122 on Reader Service Card

You Light Up My Steps

Sometimes when we leave our RV, I forget to turn on the outside lights for when we return in the dark. I mounted two solar deck lights on either side of the steps that adhere with hook-and-loop fasteners so I can take them off when traveling. They could be mounted permanently with something stronger. I bought the lights on sale for \$3 each, and they work perfectly. No more stumbling around in the dark trying to find the steps!

Michael Myers, Kirbyville, Texas



Simplify Ceiling Grille Removal

We love the 8½-foot ceilings in our toy hauler but cannot imagine why anyone would design the air-conditioning return grilles in the ceiling (that contain the filters and are held on with cover screws) so you need to use a screwdriver every time you remove them. Our trailer's grilles had only two screws, while our buddy's has six! We replaced the cover screws with hanger bolts. From there, you can add wing nuts or chrome acorn nuts to ease grille cover removal and air-filter access. And it's the perfect time to replace the inferior filters with higher quality products.

Tim Hamilton, Miami, Florida

To send your submission, write to 10-Minute Tech, 2750 Park View Court, Suite 240, Oxnard, California 93036 or email 10minutetech@trailerlife.com. Please include an illustration or photo, if applicable. *Trailer Life* will pay \$35 for original 10-Minute Tech ideas.

QUICK FIX

Impact Wrench Saves Knuckles

I can't remember when the wheels were last removed from my trailer, but the lug nuts were tightened by a tire shop using an impact wrench. Soon after, I ended up busting my knuckles trying to loosen the lug nuts to change out a flat tire on my trailer, so I bought an electric impact wrench and an inverter at Harbor Freight to eliminate that frustration. The inverter was installed under the hood of my truck and is used to power the impact wrench. With an extension cord, I can reach all the wheels on my rig. Flats can be changed in minutes rather than hours, and no more scraped knuckles. Just be sure to keep the engine running when powering the impact wrench.

Kay Cluff, Gooding, Idaho 🚚

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LOT NO. 67227
69567/60566/62532

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Requires three AAA batteries (included).

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26", 4 DRAWER TOOL CART

US*GENERAL

LOT NO. 95659
61634/61952

Item 95659 shown

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580 lb. Capacity

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SUPER COUPON

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RAPID PUMP® 3 TON HEAVY DUTY STEEL FLOOR JACK

Item 68048 shown

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SAVE \$85

• Weighs 74 lbs.

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MOVER'S DOLLY

1000 lb. Capacity

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\$8.99

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SAVE 40%

LOT NO. 93888/60497
61899/62399

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CHICAGO ELECTRIC
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• 5400 lb. Capacity

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A small-town depot in Nebraska became a welcome center for 6 million troops during World War II



If you have driven Interstate 80 in eastern Nebraska, I am confirming what you probably already know. For 72 miles west of Lincoln, I-80 does not vary by more than a few yards from being a straight line. It's the longest straight stretch of interstate highway anywhere in the system.

Continuing westbound, out of Grand Island, I-80 dips south to accommodate those who want to see the Great Platte River Road Archway that spans the interstate at Kearney. The archway is actually a two-story museum that tells the story of the pioneer trails that run by here — Oregon, Mormon and California. It appears from a distance as an oversize covered bridge. If you've been driving for hours across a featureless prairie, most of it in a straight line, it will certainly get your attention.

You can cross Nebraska in a day on I-80, if you can handle 455 miles without a sleep stop. But seeing any state through a windshield is no way to travel. For many of us, the journey is what it's all about — the joy is found not in finishing it, but in doing it.

Having said that, down the road another 150 miles from Kearney is North Platte. It's a city of 25,000 that offers visitors more interesting things to discover than places three times its size. The big one is Bailey Yard, the world's largest rail yard. Operated by Union Pacific, it sorts, services and repairs locomotives and railcars that roll all over North America. Midway between Chicago and Salt Lake, it covers 2,850 acres and is 8 miles long, 2 miles wide and has 315 miles of track with 985 switches built in. An average of 139 trains or 14,000 railcars passes through Bailey Yard every day. Coal trains alone number 35 loaded and 35 empty each day — and they average 130 cars each.

The great thing for us is the new Golden Spike Tower with an enclosed deck, 95 feet above the ground, offering a full view of the yard. I met a retired conductor up there — a few hundred live in town — who told me that UP burns 18 million gallons of fuel every month. Still, trains are the



(Top) The repair facility at Bailey Yard in North Platte operates 24/7 and can do major repairs on 750 locomotives a month. It services and fuels more than 280 locomotives a day. (Right) The Golden Spike Tower gives tourists a full view of the 8-mile-long yard.



cheapest way to move things around the country — other than people.

Between 1945 and 1964, rail passenger travel declined 84 percent in the United States. The automobile had picked up the difference. Then airplanes with jet engines came along. By the end of the 1970s, the glory days of passenger trains were over.

But during World War II, trains carried everything across the country, including millions of troops. Every troop train stopped in North Platte at what became known as the Servicemen's Canteen in the Union Pacific Railroad station. The stop was usually about 15 minutes, long enough for its crew to service its steam engine. Beginning on Christmas Day 1941, 18 days after the attack on Pearl Harbor, the folks in this town met every troop train, day and night, offering homemade cookies, sandwiches and especially angel food cake to members of the armed forces. More than 6 million service members visited the North Platte canteen during the 45 months of the war.

To fully appreciate what these generous Nebraskans did, keep in mind that this was a time of rationing — sugar, coffee, gas — all these things were needed to run the canteen. Some days up to 3,000 service members passed through here. And no one ever left hungry or without a hug. Some of those guys came back to North Platte and married local girls whom they had met in the canteen. Some still live here.

Welcome to America's Outback. 🚂



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Fig. 1 Saturn



Fig. 3 Asteroid Gaspra



Fig. 5 Mercury

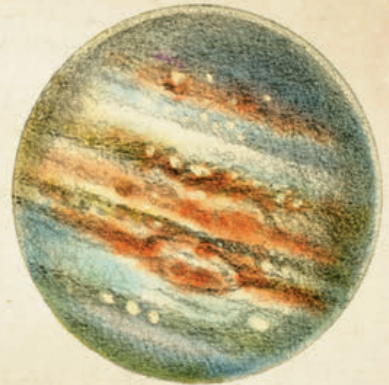


Fig. 7 Jupiter

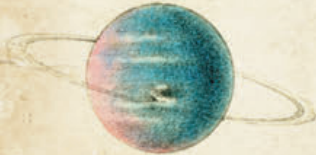


Fig. 2 Neptune

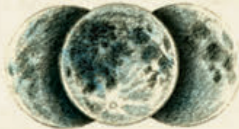


Fig. 4 Phases of the Moon



Fig. 6 Mars

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