Small Wonder
Testing Lance’s Light and Livable 1475

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kz-rv.com
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A few miles north of Gila Bend, Arizona, RV snowbird Ted Werner explores rough desert roads in his ATV. Page 26

On the cover: Taking it easy at Rancho Oso RV Resort in Santa Barbara, California, with the new Lance 1475. Photo by Scott Hirko

One of 24 products in “SEMA Showcase,” Squadron Sport LEDs shine 1,800 lumens. Page 32
Keeping Connected
Mobile technology is reaching deeply into the RV world

I am constantly amazed at how technology continues to affect the RV lifestyle. The world around us is advancing rapidly, of course, and as RVers integrate that technology into their everyday lives, it's quite natural that it should follow them on the road.

I began a stint as a full-time RVer almost 20 years ago, and mobile connectivity was much more difficult then. Email relied on landline connections, and many campsites had wired phone hookups, or the campground office provided a line or two that could be used for connecting to the internet. Then there were the truck-stop restaurant booths equipped with phone connections for moderns. Where there was a will, there was a way.

In 1996, two acquaintances of mine, Megan Edwards and Mark Sedenquist, started RoadTrip America, a travel-planning website with an active community of road trippers. The site's original purpose was to educate RV travelers and others on how to connect and work on the road, which they called "dashboarding."

Now, mobile connectivity happens everywhere, all the time, thanks to our wireless networks and mobile devices. Companies such as Winegard, King, WeBoost and Wi-Fi Ranger are marketing cellular and Wi-Fi boosters that work to improve connectivity, even in fringe areas. Many RVs now come with these systems built in, as the newest generation of RVers relies on and, indeed, insists on connectivity, even when they're unplugged.

Most RVs and tow vehicles now come with multiple USB ports for charging mobile devices, and the new Lance 1475 (page 14) and Ford Expedition (page 20) are no exceptions. The 2018 Expedition has up to six USB ports, along with a wireless charger and proprietary mobile app. An upgrade adds an in-vehicle Wi-Fi hotspot and Apple CarPlay or Android Auto capability.

Lippert Components has raised the bar with its RV automation system, myRV, which is now capable of not only controlling all the electric and electronic systems on an RV but can be internet connected via a satellite or cellular network so owners can check on and even control their RVs remotely. ASA Electronics has upgraded its IN-Command system to control RV heating and cooling systems, as well as many other onboard components, and its newest version is internet connected. Carefree of Colorado offers an iOS- or Android-connected awning controller. And the list goes on.

As I write this, I am connected via my MacBook Pro at 35,000 feet. As amazing as all this is, I can't wait to see what technological wonders are coming down the road to make our journeys even better. See you out there!
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Wild About Wilder
My family loves traveling with our fifth-wheel and reads Trailer Life every month. I was thrilled to see “Little Towns on the Prairie,” Pamela Selbert’s December 2017 article about visiting Laura Ingalls Wilder’s homesites. The towns have put so much effort into providing great experiences for visitors, and I cannot recommend them enough. Just standing on the prairie near De Smet, South Dakota, or Walnut Grove, Minnesota, gives an entirely different view of the country than most of us experience in our daily lives.

Lauri Goforth, Treasurer
Laura Ingalls Wilder Legacy and Research Association, Mansfield, Texas

Side-Wall Sandwich
In December Driver’s Seat, Chris Dougherty mentioned that some RV manufacturers are using Azdel panels instead of lauan plywood in laminated side walls. Since I’m in the market for a new travel trailer, I would be interested in knowing which manufacturers use Azdel.

Ray Russell, Yuma, Arizona

A number of RV manufacturers build lightweight travel trailers and toy haulers with Azdel composite panels. Among them are Aliner, Coachmen, Forest River, Gulf Stream, Lance, Livin’ Lite, nuCamp and Riverside Travel Trailer. It’s best to check the manufacturers’ websites and literature to confirm that the trailers you’re considering feature the type of construction you want. — Editors

Buy a Bib
In response to Ed Austin’s “Sanitation Lessons Learned” in December’s Letters column, let Grandpa help you. To make the task of emptying your holding tanks cleaner, buy yourself a sewer cap with a hose bib on it. When you start to empty, hold the sewer-hose connection under the hose bib, open the bib first and let the fluid run into the sewer hose. As has been said, be sure the valves are closed, then take the cap off and connect the sewer hose. And always use gloves.

Hubert Hurst
Hernando Beach, Florida

Keep Checking the Tires
Each issue of your fine magazine has letters about failed trailer tires. The response to one RV Clinic letter suggested checking the tires at each stop. We took this advice to heart and have done so.

We bought a used travel trailer and in the first five years replaced 11 Chinese tires. To be fair, I have to point out that it came with used tires, since it was a used trailer. By diligently checking the tires at each stop, as suggested, we have caught the defective tires before having a blowout and incurring damage to the trailer.

It is somewhat of a chore to do this much checking, but it has certainly been worth it. Thank you for your suggestion.

Timothy Reagan, Smithville, Texas

Quality Counts
I am a subscriber to Trailer Life, and over the years I have read with keen interest the commentary from Letters, Driver’s Seat and RV Resolutions. December’s “RV Quality Time” letter from E.A. Ulbrich motivated me to contribute one of my own.

As Ulbrich suggested, not having an institution that monitors RV quality and ratings is becoming detrimental to RV owners. I have been ignored by the manufacturer of my fifth-wheel and denied obvious warranty-repair requests from my purchasing dealership. Letters to the manufacturer and dealership have been disregarded or “lost” on three occasions.

I am thankful for the extended warranty coverage and service contract I purchased and later extended. It is my belief that dealerships push their customers to purchase this type of protection, knowing manufacturers’ tendency to ignore, delay or disregard warranty concerns and complaints.

Wilson L. Brame
Severance, Colorado

I thoroughly enjoyed “Satellite-TV Portability” in the December 2017 issue. We own a King Quest antenna, and based on Bob Livingston’s article, I purchased the King TR1000 tripod mount, which will save my knees from having to get down on the ground when setting up the system.

As to where to put the antenna when under way, instead of using the mounting kit to store it on the roof, as Bob did, we stow ours in the shower stall of our Northwood Arctic Fox 26X travel trailer. Campsites here in the Pacific Northwest tend to have tall trees, so being able to move the antenna to a more favorable site to “see the satellite” precludes mounting it on top of the RV, whether permanently or just for storage.

Several years ago, I mounted a bubble level on top of the dome. These can be purchased at most any hardware store. I placed a piece of double-sided sticky tape on the bottom of the level and attached it to the top of the dome to be sure it is level.

Charlie Billings, Port Orchard, Washington

TALK TO US!
Write to: Trailer Life, 2750 Park View Court, Suite 240, Oxnard, California 93036 or email info@traileralife.com. Please include your full name and location.
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Both Lance Ultra-Light Travel Trailers & Truck Campers Earn Trailer Life Reader’s Choice Award for 2017

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Prepare for Liftoff

Journey through time at Florida’s Kennedy Space Center with an up-close look at the spacecraft and astronauts that piloted the United States to new frontiers

by Dave G. Houser

With all the talk of a real trip into space, guests at the Kennedy Space Center Visitor Complex on Florida’s Merritt Island are greeted with a climactic sense of arrival upon entering the Heroes and Legends attraction, featuring the United States Astronaut Hall of Fame.

Positioned just inside the entrance, the $20 million hall unveiled in late 2015 reminds us why we think of astronauts as heroes. Formerly situated in an outdated facility 6 miles north of the space center and its popular visitor center, which attracts more than 1.5 million visitors a year, the Astronaut Hall of Fame now sits at the heart of a cutting-edge multimedia educational experience.

Step inside the Boeing-sponsored exhibit hall’s 360-degree Discovery Bay, and you’re surrounded by an array of images and videos that captures the human element of America’s space program. It’s a compelling production that sparks some thought about how society defines its heroes.

Next is a four-dimensional multisensory movie called Through the Eyes of a Hero that tells stories about four famous astronauts — Neil Armstrong, Alan Shepard, John Glenn and James Lovell — enhanced by cockpit views of lunar journeys. In one vignette, Armstrong tries to correct a tumbling Gemini 8 capsule during a docking exercise, and we hear, “We have a serious problem here...the capsule is spinning out of control!”

Beyond the screening area is a series of pods, designed to look like space capsules, that contain artifacts, most of them donated by astronauts. Among them are the Mercury flight suit of the second American to fly in space, Gus Grissom, and the World War II bomber jacket of NASA’s first chief of the Astronaut Office, Deke Slayton. A larger display contains the original consoles of the Mercury Mission Control Center.

The final act is the actual Astronaut Hall of Fame, where the walls of the rotunda are lined with plaques and images of 95 astronauts, including the latest honorees. Space Shuttle astronauts Michael Foale (who flew six space missions) and Ellen Ochoa (the first Hispanic woman to go into space) were inducted during ceremonies last May.

The Kennedy Space Center Visitor Complex is organized into Mission Zones with grouped attractions reflecting specific eras and achievements. By the time this article is in print, two new “training stages” with simulators should be in place for visitors: Mars Exploration and Spacewalk Training.

Kennedy Space Center Visitor Complex
855-433-4210, www.kennedyspacecenter.com

Nearby RV Parks
The Great Outdoors RV Resort, Titusville
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J.O.Y. RV Park, Cocoa
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Space Coast RV Resort, Rockledge
Whispering Pines, Titusville
321-267-2081 www.mywhisperingpines.com
**Grand Design Transcend**

Grand Design Recreational Vehicles, manufacturer of travel trailers, fifth-wheels and toy haulers, has added the Transcend, the company’s first non-laminated RV, to its lineup for 2018. Grand Design is expanding its offerings to include the non-laminated (aka “stick-and-tin”) travel trailer to appeal to a larger group of potential buyers. Production on the Transcend starts this spring with one floorplan available.

The 32-foot Transcend 27BHS bunkhouse is designed to sleep up to 10 people. Offered inside are upgrades such as seamless thermal-formed countertops, a deep stainless-steel sink in the L-shaped kitchen, a 6-cubic-foot refrigerator, overhead cabinets with glass doors, and Ultra- 

Production on the 32-foot Transcend 27BHS, Grand Design RV’s first “stick-and-tin” travel trailer, starts this spring.

leather dinette seating, sofa and cushions.

Creature comforts include a 15,000-Btu air conditioner, an upgraded insulation package, a 32-inch HDTV across from the trifold sofa bed and lots of windows on the street side. Below the galley’s TV are large cabinets.

Up front, the bedroom, with a residential-size walk-around queen bed and mirrored wardrobes, is separated from the galley by a sliding door. The galley and kitchen are at the center of the trailer, and the bathroom, with a 36-inch-wide shower, is at the back. Outside features include a power A-frame jack, electric awning and aluminum entry steps.

Grand Design broke ground on two new production facilities last year, one dedicated to growing the Transcend line. The Transcend 27BHS will weigh around 6,400 pounds and sell in the $20,000 to $30,000 price range.

Grand Design RV, 574-825-9679, www.granddesignrv.com

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According to a survey from the National Environmental Education Foundation, teenagers spend only an hour outdoors on a typical school day. Although 80 percent of teens say they prefer to spend time indoors, they recognize that time outdoors makes them healthier [92 percent] and happier [88 percent]. Also highlighted were insights into how teens interact with the environment in our technology-driven world and the need for parents, educators and fellow teens to offer more information since only 62 percent of teens feel knowledgeable about the environment and even fewer (42 percent) care about its protection. www.funoutdoors.com

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**AUDIO APP**

Smartphone as Tour Guide

Just Ahead, a mobile app that delivers real-time audio tours, can be played through any smartphone or tablet and is like having a virtual park ranger along for the ride. In between the sights, the app tells stories about the area’s history, wildlife, geology and flora. Once an audio tour is downloaded, there’s no need for an internet connection or cellular service, as GPS prompts each story based on the listener’s location. Just Ahead audio guides cover 20 national parks as well as scenic highways and cities. The app is a free download, and each destination guide is available as an in-app purchase. 562-800-0124, www.justahead.com

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**RV RESORT**

Rebuilding in Northern California

Club Royal Oak RV Resort in Kingsburg, California, was nearly wiped out when the Kings River flooded the 100-site RV park last year. Park owner Alan Degenhardt rebuilt the RV resort, which offers full-hookup, pull-through sites and park-model trailers for lease. A quiet riverfront retreat just east of the tiny Swedish-theme town of Kingsburg, Club Royal Oak is 45 minutes east of Sequoia National Park. The 30-acre park has 95 large campsites, ranging from 3,000 to 12,000 square feet, most of which are shaded by 50- and 60-year-old ash and willow trees, and 36 riverfront sites with private beaches. 559-897-0351, www.clubroyaloak.com

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February 2018 TRAILER LIFE 9
Texas Is for the Snowbirds

The small Texas Hill Country community of New Braunfels has a thriving downtown, mild winter temperatures and nearby RV parks that cater to snowbirds. There’s much to do from fishing on Canyon Lake and the Guadalupe River to spotting the more than 300 migratory bird species and visiting wineries and breweries. Other attractions include Natural Bridge Caverns with a 60-foot limestone bridge, Natural Bridge Wildlife Ranch, Animal World and Snake Farm Zoo, and the Gruene Historic District, featuring an 1878 dance hall. Or take in a movie at the Stars & Stripes Drive-In with two of the largest screens in Texas. On February 14, the chamber hosts the Winter Texan Reception, welcoming seasonal residents with music, food and fun.

When temperatures start to climb, RVers can leisurely float down the Guadalupe or cool off at Schlitterbahn, a 70-acre waterpark. Schlitterbahn opens for spring break from March 10 to 18 and then again for Easter weekend, March 30 through April 1 (check the website for summer hours).

New Braunfels Chamber, www.playinnewbraunfels.com

RV Parks in New Braunfels and Canyon Lake

Hill Country Cottage and RV Resort, www.hillcountryrvresortnb.com

Summit Vacation and RV Resort, www.summitresorttexas.com

Yogi Bear’s Jellystone Park Hill Country, www.jellystonehillcountry.com

Arizona’s Surprise

RVers looking for a warm place to escape winter’s chill will find lots to do in Surprise, Arizona, about 20 miles northwest of Phoenix. The city is home to spring training for Major League Baseball’s Kansas City Royals and Texas Rangers, seven golf courses, a fishing lake, and the Southwest’s largest tennis and racquet complex. Nearby White Mountain Regional Park provides 30,000 acres of outdoor recreation with trails for hiking and biking. Uptown Alley, Surprise’s over-the-top entertainment complex, features a two-story laser-tag maze, 80-plus video games, billiards, a sports theater, a massive 40-lane bowling alley and live entertainment.

www.surpriseaz.gov

RV Parks in Surprise and Phoenix

Desert Shadows RV Resort, www.phoenixrvresorts.com
Royal Palm RV Resort, www.continentalcommunities.com/royal-palm
Sunflower RV Resort, www.cal-am.com/resorts/sunflower

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Around the Bend
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**Trading Shades**

An Illinois reader asked RV Resolutions for help with reimbursement for an overpayment on four window shades he had purchased for his fifth-wheel trailer:

- I purchased a new 2015 Keystone Montana fifth-wheel from Camping World in June of 2015. The trailer has 16 windows with top and side valances, 12 of which came with MCD American Duo Day-Night Roller Shades, and the other four have pleated shades from another company. Because the pleated shades didn’t block the light well, I decided to purchase four shades from MCD to match the others.
- I contacted MCD and requested a material-sample packet, which was sent. After determining a match, I ordered four American Solo Shades for $345. Instead, I received four Gold Series Shades that sell for $270.
- The American Solo shades have speed and auto-stop dials that can be adjusted anytime. The Gold Series shades cost less, and you have to adjust them with a screwdriver before installation. Also, the shade material was mounted backward. Instead of the shades rolling toward the windows, they roll toward the room.
- I contacted MCD with my concerns. The representative told me that this is the way the shades are made now, and because I had stated there were side valances, they rolled the shade material toward the room. This is totally opposite of the 12 MCD shades the factory installed. The rep worked very hard to justify the $75 overcharge.
- Can you help me get reimbursed?

**Michael Tolliver, New Berlin, Illinois**

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**Won’t Let It Slide**

After paying to fix a cable-driven slideout in his out-of-warranty fifth-wheel, a California reader asked for help with recouping the repair fee:

- We have a 2015 Rockwood Ultra Lite that had a broken cable on the bedroom’s wardrobe slide after being used only six times. When I contacted Forest River’s Rockwood division about the problem, I was told there was nothing they could do because the fifth-wheel was out of warranty. I had the repairs made at a cost of $370.
- I then called Norco Industries, which makes BAL Accu-Slide systems, and spoke to Tim Belle. He told me there is a set nut that must be tightened down to prevent the slideout cable from hitting a bracket and causing the cable to break. If the system is properly installed, he said, there shouldn’t be a problem with the cable breaking.
- I believe the slide was improperly installed and I should be reimbursed for the $370 I paid to fix it.

**Charles Gilbreath, Redding, California**

Charles Gilbreath sent the following thank-you note after RV Resolutions contacted Forest River and the company agreed to reimburse him:

- I have received full payment for the repairs, and I’m very happy with the way Forest River and its Rockwood division satisfied my claim. I would like to give special thanks to Rockwood’s Mark Akins for his personal service and attention on my behalf.

**C.G. ☺**

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**THE COMPANY RESPONDS**

To encourage an amicable resolution, we reached out to MCD Innovations on Michael Tolliver’s behalf. MCD’s vice president of sales replied, thanking us for informing the company about the complaint and enclosing a copy of the following correspondence addressed to Tolliver:

Our goal is to provide a quality product and an exemplary level of customer service. Based on the events you described, we did not meet this goal. Your comments regarding the features of our American Day-Night Shades, pricing and customer-service experience will be addressed at our Texas facility and authorized dealer locations.

We are in the process of updating our website and owner’s manual to reflect the current features of our product. We are also working with all of our authorized dealers to ensure they have accurate price lists and product information. We will use your experience as an opportunity to provide training with all employees to better assist customers in the future.

I’m enclosing a check to cover the price difference of the purchased shades and your time in correcting this situation.

**Amanda Rogers, Vice President of Sales**

MCD Innovations, McKinney, Texas

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**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.
For more info, call Edna Katz 833-RVSUPER or email edna.katz@goodsam.com

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Small Wonder

Lance’s shortest travel trailer, the 1475, incorporates a slide and well-conceived layout in less than 15 feet of floor space.

It’s a toss-up over who was more delighted with the 2018 Lance 1475 travel trailer — the woman who recently bought an RV that was “too much, too big” for her and came by to inquire about it, or our group of a dozen who crowded inside the 14-foot, 10-inch floorplan for a standing-room-only breakfast to escape the pestering flies and yellowjackets. Four were seated on the sofa, and three sat on the queen bed, which left five of us loitering in the galley. Though we exceeded the 1475’s cargo-carrying capacity for about 20 minutes, we enjoyed a peaceful bug-free dining experience.

The 1475 test coincided with a surprise Western-theme birthday campout we planned for a friend, with our group spread out at Rancho Oso RV Campground and Ranch near Santa Barbara, California. We camped in the Western Village portion, on the outskirts of the main RV park. Except for the pests, it was a lovely camping experience with the Lance serving as the staging area and chuck wagon for our party of 15.

The test Lance 1475, a prototype model, was paired with an all-wheel-drive Dodge Durango GT with the 3.6-liter Pentastar V-6 engine and the Brass Monkey Appearance Package, which includes a monochromatic sporty exterior, blacked-out badging/crosshair grille and 20-inch burnished-bronze aluminum wheels. Putting this special-edition Durango through its paces, we found it to tow the 3,520-pound (loaded) Lance smoothly over more than 150 miles of highway and a representative amount of two-lane road with twists and dips that larger RVs would have to be driven more slowly on. The test was topped off by navigating hard-packed dirt with ruts and bumps up a hill to the campsite.

Tip to tail, the Lance 1475 measures 19 feet, 8 inches, with the single battery and 5-gallon LP-gas cylinder at rest on the trailer’s A-frame under a TPO cover. The 1475, introduced in 2016, is Lance’s smallest travel trailer, and for 2018, the Lancaster, California-based RV manufacturer added an optional slideout. On the slide-equipped version, the two midship captain’s chairs are...
replaced with a jackknife sofa and two removable tables. The slide pops out curbside less than a foot, but it opens up the galley so much that, as one friend put it, "For as small as this trailer is, it sure is roomy!" A Fantastastic Vent is set over the bed, and there’s close to 6½ feet of headroom (a couple of inches are lost to the air conditioner shroud in the galley).

One morning, four friends were going about their business cleaning up from the night before, cooking and efficiently weaving around each other like they were moving about in a galley twice the size.

Part of the spaciousness can be attributed to the two swiveling tables with a Lagun-brand anodized-aluminum table-leg system, which are attached via mounting plates on the sofa and bed platform; they easily swing out of the way, taking up no floor space. The other advantage to these tables is that there is no floor base mount to trip over. The tables are solid enough to cut up veggies and fruit on, and they’re adjustable up and down, locking into place and swiveling 360 degrees. The tables are shaped well for mealtime while sitting at the sofa, and one of them can be swiveled over the queen mattress for use while lying in bed. They can stay mounted during travel, and with a turn here and a twist there are set up and taken down quickly.

The 5-foot-long jackknife vinyl sofa has two kickout footrests and, once the tables are removed, it can be made into a 3-foot-wide bed within seconds. With the sofa laid flat, there’s room between it and the kitchen to get to the queen bed at the front of the trailer. There’s a large window in the slide, but absent is overhead lighting. We used the adjustable LED reading light over the bed closest to the sofa to shed light into the slide for nighttime reading.

The kitchen’s 3-foot-high counter-top incorporates a stainless-steel bowl sink — conveniently deep enough to keep water from splashing all over during cleanup — and a faucet with a pull-out sprayer. To the right of the sink, the counter steps up 4 inches to accommodate a wardrobe with a clothing rod, offering another 21½ by 24½ inches of usable countertop. The “lower” portion of the counter offers more than 3 feet of continuous countertop with the sink and range covers in place.

The three-burner range’s glass cover folds back to act as a backsplash, and there’s a splash guard on the walls behind and to the left. Buyers can spring for the optional microwave ($239) and Wedgewood Vision oven ($322) — both of which were in the test trailer — for less storage. Even with these in place, we found that there was plenty of cabinet space.

To the right of the range are three 3-inch-deep slideout drawers with plastic bins for stowing silverware and cooking utensils. Over the window is a shelf for small items like spice bottles; there’s a rod to hold things in place, but a couple of our spices didn’t make it during travel. Overhead, a large, curved European-style cabinet made by Technoform and soffit LEDs brighten the kitchen.

Lighting and airflow throughout the 1475 is splendid, with ceiling-mounted LEDs and European-style acrylic windows that open outward for maximum airflow, all with screens. In the "bed-
FM/CD/DVD stereo with Bluetooth is mounted at ceiling height, and to the left of it is the digital Airxcel thermostat for the 18,000-Btu furnace and air conditioner, which means that shorter people may have to stand on the bed or a step stool to see the controls for both. An open cubby below the stereo was a good place for keeping DVDs and bowls while in camp, but there’s nothing to hold things in place during travel.

At the back of the trailer, next to the entry door, is the 5-cubic-foot three-way refrigerator, conveniently located for grabbing a drink or snack on the way out or in. The fridge door swings open toward the door, blocking entry and exit, and the entry door’s frame kept it from opening much past a 90-degree angle. A simple adjustment of the shelves on the inside of the refrigerator’s door allowed the crisper drawer to be easily removed when needed.

To the right of the refrigerator is a deep pantry with adjustable shelves. We also really liked the four-ring hook over the pantry near the entry door for keeping keys handy when coming and going. A great touch is the keyless entry-door handle with a combination pad, and the exterior storage locks are keyed alike. I’d raise the key hook a tad since my dangling keys had to be moved to close the pantry door. And how about this? A real analog wall clock (AA battery included)! It’s a nice touch we don’t see too often — and Lance set it for 5 o’clock on the dot, which means that shorter people may have to climb over the other to get out.

A 27-inch Jensen HDTV that locks into place for travel is set over the wardrobe for viewing from the bed and sofa, and the 1475 is prewired for cable and a satellite antenna. The Jensen AM/
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getting hung up on the door, something to keep in mind. The lateral arms were very much appreciated when we set up our taco bar under the canopy, since nobody had to dodge vertical-mounted hardware. When it got dark, our group admired the LED lighting strip that added ambience. During travel, however, the 1475 suffered a minor casualty — losing the end-cap covers for the Carefree awning’s hardware on our way to the campsite, something Lance has fixed on production models.

For 2018, Lance replaced the diamond-plate rock guard below the front window with an integrated TPO gravel guard, inset with LED lighting, and there’s a hitch light and electric A-frame jack. The switch for the LEDs is housed inside the pass-through storage compartment, which has a cargo drawer that can be pulled out from either side of the trailer. We stored the electrical cord and hoses here, and magnetic latches keep storage doors up and out of the way. Other exterior niceties include a water sprayer, a quick-connect propane line for a barbecue, a 120-volt AC outlet, speakers and an LED light.

The Dodge Durango GT, with a tow rating of 6,200 pounds, made simple to the campsite, something Lance has fixed on production models.

As nice as it was sharing the 1475 — with an interior that’s more spacious than its compact appearance would indicate — I liked having the little Lance to indicate — I liked having the little Lance to my campsite or hear the occupants. I sat outside in a camp chair enjoying the outline of the darkened Santa Ynez Mountains and the peace and quiet — no generators, no music, no lights from other RVs — just the sounds of crickets and the occasional neigh from a horse or yip-howl of a coyote.

I went from being part of a birthday jamboree to it being just me and a Class C that was parked down the hill, far enough away that I couldn’t see it from my campsite or hear the occupants. I sat outside in a camp chair enjoying the outline of the darkened Santa Ynez Mountains and the peace and quiet — no generators, no music, no lights from other RVs — just the sounds of crickets and the occasional neigh from a horse or yip-howl of a coyote.

For more on the new Lance 1475, see the corresponding Trailer Life video on our YouTube channel, TrailerLifeDIY. Search for “Lance 1475 Travel Trailer Review.”

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Alloyed Force

Ford’s all-new aluminum 2018 Expedition features more power, more space, a higher tow rating and better fuel economy. What’s not to like?

What’s old is new again. For decades, Americans have regarded the full-size SUV as the go-to vehicle for transporting people and things in comfort and confidence. A commanding view combined with plenty of elbow room, cargo capacity and the ability to tow the family boat or trailer made the full-size SUV a practical alternative to a passenger car or minivan.

But the market is changing. While the large SUV segment is still dominated by American manufacturers, the proliferation of svelte midsize SUVs — many with three rows — continues to take a bite out of sales. Companies like Ford and GM aren’t the only ones that have recognized the profit potential for family trucksters; today, nearly every manufacturer offers its own product line. Indeed, companies like BMW, Porsche and Mercedes credit SUV sales for keeping them solvent, enabling them to continue to sell the models they became famous for but weren’t necessarily getting rich from. Couple these factors with fluctuating fuel prices and a tenuous economy, and the future of the full-size SUV seems precarious.

Who, or what, is going to save it?

According to Ford, the surprising answer is America’s largest demographic — millennials. The kids who grew up in the second or third row of the family SUV are now shopping for one themselves, but they don’t want the same hulking beast their parents shuttled them around in. They expect more comfort, higher content levels and, as children of the internet, connectivity. They’re keenly aware of social issues and won’t accept a gas-guzzling, environmentally unfriendly icon of excess.

Enter the 2018 Ford Expedition, a sleeker, lighter more fuel-efficient version of its old self. To reinvent its largest SUV, Ford pulled a page out of its F-150 and Super Duty playbook, crafting
The 2018 Ford Expedition is offered in XLT, Limited and Platinum grades (Limited shown). The FX4 Off Road package also returns this year with all-terrain tires and off-road-tuned shocks.

The new body out of aluminum alloy while retaining a high-strength steel backbone. In fact, the Expedition rides on the same platform as the F-Series pickup but is designed to accommodate SUV proportions and styling, according to Ford. As with its truck cousins, the weight saved (Ford claims 300 pounds) was reinvested in other areas to make the Expedition better equipped and more capable, adding new features like a second-row seat with tip-and-slide functionality and an available Panoramic Vista Roof. Towing limits increased as well, to a class-leading 9,300 pounds maximum tow rating (Expedition 2WD) when equipped with the available Heavy-Duty Trailer Tow Package.

Starting with a clean sheet of aluminum also gave designers the freedom to open up the cabin area, which netted exceptional second- and third-row legroom, and increased hip and shoulder room over the outgoing model. This is the first SUV we’ve tested where the third-row seat is more than just an afterthought or a place to stow the littlest members of the family. These seats are actually comfortable and supportive, have a recline feature and offer enough legroom for daylong drives.

At Ford’s press introduction in Malibu, California, we placed 6-footers in all three rows and asked to make themselves comfortable. When all was said and done, the second- and third-row passengers had at least 4 inches of knee room from the seatback in front of them. The Expedition Max is approximately 1 foot longer and has a greater wheelbase (131.6 inches versus 122.5 inches), but passenger space is virtually identical between the two models. A PowerFold third row is standard on all grades.

Moreover, Ford made an effort to make sure that everyone riding in the new Expedition is comfortable and happy. Standard USB ports, one on either side of the vehicle, are available in every row, and an available Wi-Fi hotspot supports as many as 10 devices at once from up to 50 feet away. Also available is a dual-headrest rear-seat entertainment system that allows pas-
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sengers to watch live TV via SlingPlayer on either or both of the two video screens. It’s the first time SlingPlayer — which connects to a user’s Slingbox account — has been offered in an automobile, according to Ford.

Having made its debut in 2016 as the only engine choice available, the 3.5-liter EcoBoost V-6 engine returns to power all versions of the Expedition but this year incorporates port and direct fuel injection for greater performance and fuel economy. XLT and Limited models get a 375-horsepower version of the engine that produces 470 lb-ft of torque, while the top-dog Platinum model, both standard and Max versions, get 400 horsepower and 480 lb-ft of torque. The engine is matched with a new 10-speed automatic transmission, which Ford credits with the higher tow rating and best-in-class fuel-economy ratings of 17 mpg/city, 24 mpg/highway, and 20 mpg/combined (Expedition 4x2).

According to Ford’s market research, towing is important to 50 percent of its customers, while 15 percent tow weekly or monthly. So, in addition to the higher tow rating and standard Class IV hitch receiver, Ford added a feature called Pro Trailer Backup Assist (PTBA), which made its debut on the 2015 Ford F-150.

Realizing that most of its customers can’t get accustomed to steering a trailer the correct direction while looking through a rearview mirror, PTBA makes the whole process much more intuitive. Turn the system on by pushing
a button in the center of the dash-mounted knob, then simply take your hands off the steering wheel and turn the knob the direction you want the trailer to go. The vehicle’s rearview camera reads the position of a target sticker that the owner places on the trailer’s A-frame, giving the system a reference point. As the knob is turned, the steering wheel spookily turns on its own in relation to driver inputs, and voila! You’re backing like a pro. We tried maneuvering a short travel trailer through a series of cones, and we can tell you, it really does work.

As for towing in general, Ford supplied an Expedition Max attached to an Airstream travel trailer weighing a claimed 6,500 pounds. Driving a loop through the Santa Monica Mountains, the new EcoBoost engine and 10-speed automatic towed the trailer effortlessly. In fact, it was easy to see how someone could actually forget the trailer was back there. The engine sound was muted, and the ride smooth — one of the more relaxing towing experiences in recent memory.

For those who see themselves traveling to faraway places, Ford once again offers the FX4 Off Road package on the Expedition, making it the most off-road-capable Expedition ever, according to Ford. The package includes a patented electronic...
limited-slip rear differential, off-road-tuned shocks, all-terrain tires, seven skid plates in strategic locations, unique 18-inch Magnetic Metallic-painted cast-aluminum wheels, chrome running boards and other unique features. An all-new Terrain Management System lets FX4 customers select from seven special drive modes including Normal, Sport, Tow/Haul, Eco, Grass/Gravel/Snow, Sand and Mud/Rut.

We sampled an FX4 on a surprisingly aggressive off-road trail in the Santa Monica foothills and were impressed at how competent the vehicle was at handling uneven terrain as well as steep climbs and descents. We simply switched the selector to 4WD low and the Terrain Management System to Mud/Rut and drove easily over the loose, rocky and rutted terrain.

At a very steep downhill section, we turned on Hill Descent Control. Once the system is activated, you remove your foot from the brake pedal entirely and nudge the vehicle to the precipice with a tap of the accelerator. As the vehicle breaks over, Hill Descent Control takes over immediately, safely guiding the vehicle to the bottom of the hill. And like other, similar hill-descent systems, this one is totally silent — no pulsing of ABS sensors or clicking of solenoids. We drove over trails that would give a mountain goat pause for thought, all while running the air conditioning and listening to the stereo.

A full-size SUV certainly isn’t the right choice for all families, but if yours is large and adventurous, we can’t think of a better choice than the 2018 Ford Expedition.
ARIZONA’S OUTBACK

A GROWING NUMBER OF RV ENTHUSIASTS ARE HUNTING DOWN HISTORY IN ALL-TERRAIN VEHICLES

For Terry Saar and his wife, Kae, there’s no better way to spend the summer than salmon fishing on Alaska’s Kenai Peninsula. But during the winter months, the Saars park their 33-foot Cardinal fifth-wheel at Black Rock RV Village in the tiny town of Brenda, Arizona, about 17 miles east of the snowbird mecca of Quartzsite. Then, perhaps once or twice a week, the Saars take off with friends in their small, two-seat off-road vehicle to explore abandoned gold mines, hidden canyons with ancient petroglyphs and other historical sites, some of which you won’t find on modern topographical maps.

“It’s a fascinating lifestyle,” said Saar, who lived in Port Angeles, Washington, before becoming a full-time RVer. The Saars are among a growing number of snowbirds who flock to southwestern Arizona during the winter months to explore the desert’s back roads and jeep trails in all-terrain vehicles.

The Saars have a Polaris RZR 800 side-by-side, which is capable of navigating dirt routes through deeply cut flash-flood washes and up steep, uneven trails with loose rocks that could easily intimidate those who aren’t used to traveling rough roads. “You learn how to drive these roads little by little,” said Saar. “I learned by following the guys who knew what they were doing.”
A GROWING NUMBER OF RV ENTHUSIASTS ARE HUNTING DOWN HISTORY IN ALL-TERRAIN VEHICLES

article and photos by Jeff Crider

Visiting campgrounds and RV parks in remote areas of Arizona, you see lots of RVers with off-road vehicles. But spend a little time with them, and you learn that many didn’t start living the snowbird lifestyle with the idea of off-roading. Rather, they got into it after developing friendships with other RVers who have a passion for exploring places that are off the beaten track. Most people never see many of the historical sites that surround them because they are too busy with their day-to-day lives. But snowbirds can make time to see these places. And if they have off-road vehicles, they can take it a step further and see historical sites that are not recorded on the latest topographical maps or maps produced by the U.S. Bureau of Land Management.

That’s the conclusion of Warren Rhyner, a snowbird from Altoona, Pennsylvania, who has spent the past eight winters exploring southwestern Arizona’s back roads in a Can-Am Maverick X3. Rhyner has found that maps made in the early 1900s are best for identifying early roads used by miners, pioneers and others who lived and worked in the Arizona desert a century or more ago. More recent maps do not show some of these routes, which adventuresome snowbirds discover as they follow BLM roads and ATV trails across the desert. “In the desert, the trails are visible, even if they haven’t been used in 10 or more years,” said Rhyner, who spends the winters at Black Rock RV Village with his wife, Mary. “Some roads haven’t been used for many years, but they remain perfectly preserved in the desert,” added Rhyner, who plots his routes using Google Earth and Garmin mapping software.

RVS AND ATVS

Originally from Hartford, Connecticut, Ted Werner and his wife, Jan, are full-timers who park their 38-foot fifth-wheel about 120 miles away at the KOA in Gila Bend, which they use as a winter base camp while exploring the Butterfield Overland Mail Route, also known as the Butterfield Trail, and other historical sites in their Polaris Ranger.

“In the Gila Bend area,” Werner said, “we have the original Indian travel routes, the Juan Bautista de Anza Historic Trail, the Southern Emigrant Trail, the route used by the Mormon Battalion and the historic Butterfield Trail. There are places where we can see the wagon ruts in the rock, so you can very clearly see where they went through. In our travels, we’ve also seen artifacts from the Native Americans as well as the miners.”

On one recent trip, Werner and his friends visited a section of the Butterfield Trail near the Gila River. Stagecoach drivers used the route to carry passengers and mail across the country, from St. Louis to San Francisco, before the transcontinental railroad lines were constructed. Even today, more than 150 years after the heyday of the Butterfield Trail, you can see it clearly through the desert, including the depressions in the rocks that were worn down by the passing of countless horse-drawn wagons with their steel-rimmed wheels. “It is fascinating to see the evidence of the people who came before us,” said Werner, a retired high school teacher.

One noteworthy historical site near Gila Bend that can be reached only by using dirt roads is the site of the Oatman Massacre. A sign erected by the Yuma County Historical Society marks the location and the date, February 18, 1851, when most of the Oatman family was massacred by Native American warriors in an attack that made national headlines while dramatizing the dangers that emigrants faced as they traveled out West.

To reach ancient petroglyphs north of Gila Bend (below), Ted Werner traverses rough desert routes in his Polaris Ranger (opposite page).
According to historical accounts, Royce and Mary Oatman were traveling in a covered wagon with their seven children and had just climbed a steep road up a bluff overlooking the Gila River when they were attacked. There is some discussion about whether the Oatman family was ambushed by Apaches or a band of Yavapai Indians known as the Tolkepayas, but the attackers killed Royce and Mary and four of their children, and took their daughters, 14-year-old Olive and seven-year-old Mary Ann, into captivity. Their son, Lorenzo, survived the attack and spent years looking for his sisters.

The two young girls were held as slaves and were eventually traded to a Mohave tribe, who gave them blue tattoos on their faces and arms. Historical accounts say Mary Ann likely died during an extreme drought, while Olive was eventually delivered back to white settlers at Fort Yuma in 1856.

Snowbirds staying at Gila Bend KOA recently learned even more when historian Gerald Ahnert visited the campground and took several of them on an impromptu tour. Ahnert, who wrote two books about the Butterfield Trail, led the Werners and several of their friends down the road that leads to the site of the Oatman Massacre.

It was on that tour that Ahnert pointed out the location of an abandoned emigrant camp, which lies hidden in plain sight along the dirt road leading to the Oatman Massacre Site. "Most people don’t see it," Werner said, "because they don’t know what to look for."

The emigrant camp includes the rusting remnants of tin cans and broken glass from 100-plus-year-old containers used by emigrant families as they traveled westward to California. "Some of the cans were sealed with lead," Werner said, pointing to the outlines of the cans during a recent visit to the site. "That was before they knew lead was poisonous."

The camp also includes an unmarked grave, which is visible only because it features a row of carefully set volcanic rocks of roughly the same size. The identity of the person buried remains a mystery, much like many of the unmarked graves that snowbirds discover in their travels across the Arizona desert. But as interesting as these historical sites are, Werner advises visitors not to touch anything and to leave the historical evidence as it is for others to see.

Saar and his friends at Black Rock RV Village have a similar philosophy and use great care as they explore their desert surroundings because they want to ensure that it remains preserved for others to enjoy. And while they love to explore dirt roads that do not appear on modern maps, they are also careful not to drive off-trail because they don’t want to mar the desert landscape.

Traveling these back roads with Werner, Saar and other snowbirds, one realizes that the many areas of the southwestern Arizona desert are like the open pages of a history book that...
are just waiting to be discovered. Snowbirds exploring Arizona’s back roads can even discover written historical records in the form of ancient petroglyphs, which can be found in numerous locations. Werner said The Rocks Begin to Speak, a guide to understanding Indian rock writing by Lavan Martineau, is a helpful resource for petroglyph enthusiasts.

Native Americans also left behind other records of their existence, including dwellings and battlefield structures. One defensive area, called Fortaleza, can be seen from a dirt road a few miles north of Gila Bend. The protective walls that once shielded Native American Indians from attack can be seen on top of a mountain. But most people traveling Interstate 8 or State Route 85 from Gila Bend to Buckeye would never know these historical structures exist.

MINES AND MINERALS
As one might expect, the mines and tailing piles that are strewn across southwestern Arizona are of particular interest to rock hounds, including Bill Gelhaus, an RV snowbird from Wisconsin who spends the winter at Black Rock RV Village with his wife, Judy.

The Gelhauses sold their 2,300-square-foot home in 2005 and have been full-time RVing ever since in their 40-foot motorhome. The couple explores Arizona’s backcountry in an orange 1968 Volkswagen Baja Bug with a powerfully modified engine. They affectionately call it Ladybug.

Bill Gelhaus estimates they have logged more than 10,000 miles exploring Arizona’s jeep trails during the past 11 years. That amounts to nearly 1,000 miles each winter. But he said they are still a long way from seeing everything there is to see. “You can be like a history hunter,” Gelhaus said. “You’re traveling back into the late 1800s and early 1900s.”

The Gelhauses also love to revisit their favorite places each winter, especially abandoned gold mines in the Jewel Anne Mine Group in the Granite Wash Mountains. “There are mines you can see with mine shafts and tunnels,” Gelhaus said, adding that an online mineral and rock database on www.mindat.org provides information and locations of old mines in Arizona and other states across the country.

The Gelhauses sometimes pick through abandoned tailing piles, which contain quartz and other types of rock that they polish into jewelry and centerpieces. In their travels across the desert, the Gelhauses have also found “Apache tears,” small dark brown or black polished obsidian stones that are slightly transparent. Some people believe the stones have healing properties.

In addition to seeing historical sites, the Gelhauses like to travel with friends into remote scenic areas, including Red Rock Canyon, a slot canyon with 40-foot-high walls that is about 75 miles northeast of Black Rock RV Village.

But while there are many enticements in the barren desert and mountain areas of southwestern Arizona, these snowbirds are careful to travel in groups for safety. They make maps of their routes and carry walkie-talkies to remain in communication with each other when mobile phones are out of range.

Driving across the desert, they say, it’s easy to lose sight of each other behind thick stands of palo verde and ironwood trees. There are also plenty of hazards, including sharp rocks and creosote.

WHERE TO STAY IN ARIZONA’S OUTBACK
Located off Interstate 10 on U.S. Route 60 in Brenda, Black Rock RV Village offers 408 full-hookup sites, a winter activity program and amenities that include a café, an outdoor pool, an 18-hole pitch-and-putt course, horseshoe pits, a library, laundry facilities and free Wi-Fi. The pet-friendly Good Sam Park received the 2017 Large Park of the Year Award from the Arizona Association of RV Parks and Campgrounds. 928-927-4206, www.blackrockrv.com

Just off Interstate 8, Gila Bend KOA in Gila Bend has 130 roomy full-hookup sites, a new outdoor swimming pool, laundry facilities, limited Wi-Fi and a 4,000-square-foot dog park with three corrals. The RV park received KOA’s Founders Award in 2017 and was ranked 55 out of the 500 KOAs, based on guest-satisfaction surveys. 928-683-2850, www.koa.com/campgrounds/gila-bend

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3 Dreamers RV Park, Salome
928-859-4145, www.dreamersrvpark.com

Wagon West RV Park, Salome
928-927-7077, www.wagonwesrvpark.com

The Arizona Association of RV Parks and Campgrounds hosts a travel-planning website that lists more than 90 Arizona campgrounds, RV parks and resorts in big cities as well as remote desert locations that are popular with off-road-vehicle enthusiasts.

www.gocampinginarizona.com

In addition to publishing an annual directory of RV parks, the Good Sam Club provides a searchable online database of North American campgrounds that includes Good Sam Parks offering members a 10 percent discount on nightly stays. www.goodsamclub.com/travel/campgroundsandrvparks

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bushes that can puncture the thickest tires. “We also see gila monsters and rattlesnakes,” Rhynner added.

But there is tremendous beauty in Arizona’s desert, too, including desert sheep, spring wildflowers and the majestic saguaro cactus.

DISCOVERING THE DESERT

Werner said during the middle of winter there will be 18 or more couples with ATVs at the Gila Bend KOA. Black Rock RV Village has even more, probably 20 to 25, according to Gelhaus. But ATV enthusiasts at both parks typically break into smaller caravans when they do their tours, partly to keep the dust down but also to minimize delays as they travel.

Most of them drive out into the desert frequently, usually at least two to three times a week. When they go, they typically make a day out of it, taking along plenty of water, snacks and a picnic lunch. Saar brought along smoked salmon from his latest trip to Alaska that he shared with friends during one recent trip into the Granite Wash Mountains.

Snowbirds say ATV rides are a nice complement to the other social activities they enjoy with friends at RV parks and campgrounds. And when newcomers arrive at these parks, some of them find they can’t resist the temptation to buy their own ATV and join in the fun. That’s how the Saars got hooked.

Ted and Jan Werner never dreamed they would be ATVers, either. Both are hikers, and they thought they could get wherever they needed to go on foot. But after spending time in the Arizona desert, they soon realized they needed an ATV to be able to visit some of the places they most wanted to see.

The Werners go back to New Hampshire each summer to visit their children and grandchildren, as they have every year since they started full-time RVing in 2010. But in winter, you’ll find them out riding with friends in their ATVs, looking to turn more pages of history in the Arizona desert.

“Every time I go out,” Ted Werner said, “I see something new or something from a different perspective.”
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Very November for decades, tens of thousands of people representing the automotive aftermarket from around the world have converged in Las Vegas to attend the four-day Specialty Equipment Market Association Show, better known as the SEMA Show. Last fall's event attracted an estimated 140,000 people, from manufacturers and retailers to journalists, who came to see amazing customized vehicles and the latest accessories. As we do every year, we browsed the sprawling New Product Showcase, with more than 3,000 products on display from some 800 manufacturers. Here's a sampling of the gear and gadgets that caught our attention for outfitting tow vehicles and making RV towing safer and more efficient.

**TRENDSETTING TRUCK AND SUV ACCESSORIES, TOWING GEAR AND TUNING TECHNOLOGY FROM THE WORLD’S LARGEST AUTOMOTIVE-EQUIPMENT EVENT**

LED LIGHTING

**Baja Designs**

Squadron Sport LED lights attach to any flat surface to shine 1,800 lumens of flood-type illumination on hitches, storage compartments, interiors or anywhere additional lighting is needed. O-rings seal the compact housings to the mounting surface, and the wiring harness holds the switch. The bright lights come in square or round housings in white or black and carry a 30-day money-back guarantee.

MSRP: $129.95
866-335-7050, www.bajadesigns.com

**Westin Automotive**

Named Best New Exterior Accessory at the SEMA Show, the HDX LED Grille combines form and function. Made of 16-gauge steel mesh, the stylish textured-black grille houses a double-row LED bar in the center and single-row LED bars on either side. The replacement grille comes with a wiring harness and bolts onto the front of newer Ford, GM, Ram, Nissan and Toyota pickups with no drilling.

MSRP: From $1,733.32
626-960-6762, www.westinautomotive.com
**THEFT PREVENTION**

**CT Johnson Enterprises**  
Theft is always a concern for trailer owners. The all-in-one Hitch and Trailer Anti-Theft Lock Kit stands guard with a DeadBolt Blockhead coupler lock, a coupler latch lock and a receiver lock, plus a single key to open all three. The hitch lock blocks the receiver so it cannot be slipped over a hitch ball. The TSK1-AS lock set works on 1¼- and 2-inch couplers, and the TSK3-AS works on 2- and 2½-inch couplers. Both kits fit all Class III and IV hitches.  
MSRP: $34.95  

**Robert James Innovations**  
The patented RJ Lock adds another level of trailer protection by preventing access to the ball nut itself. Now available for 1- and 1¼-inch ball-mount shanks, the keyed locking mechanism replaces the existing nut on the ball, preventing thieves from taking off the nut and moving the ball to the shank on another vehicle — with the trailer still attached.  
MSRP: $79.99  
949-929-2677, www.rjlocks.com

**Tuffy Security Products**  
Ford F-150 XLT owners can safely stow valuables with Tuffy’s Security Console Insert for 2009 to 2014 models. Named the SEMA Show’s Best New Product Under $500 by the Light Truck Accessory Alliance, the welded and powder-coated 16-gauge steel insert has a ⅛-inch-thick Pry-Guard locking system for serious security. The insert installs easily into the center console without drilling, according to the company, and allows access to existing USB and power outlets. Similar inserts are available for GM and Ram full-size pickups.  
MSRP: $149.95  
800-348-8339, www.tuffyproducts.com

**OIL FILTRATION**

**Pareto Point Industries**  
Engine oil is the lifeblood of a diesel pickup. To keep it clean, the Filteröl serial advanced filtration system from Pareto Point is designed to remove particles as small as 2 microns, continuously clearing wear-causing debris that standard filters can’t trap. This simple yet elegant filtration kit is an easy bolt-on application, with no engine modifications, and can result in improved mileage, longer service intervals and extended engine life, according to the company.  
MSRP: $99  
323-726-2199, www.paretopoint.com

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**TRUCK-BED PROTECTION**

**Pace Edwards**  
With the UltraGroove Electric retractable truck-bed cover, truck owners can securely store cargo beneath the tonneau and haul bulkier items on top. A built-in expansion system allows use of Thule or Yakima racks to carry bikes, kayaks, surfboards, paddleboards, skis or snowboards above the padded-vinyl-covered aluminum panels. No drilling is required. This new electric version allows for remote opening and closing with the touch of a button.  
MSRP: $2,829.60  
800-338-3697, www.pace-edwards.com

**Leer**  
State-of-the-art latching and edge-sealing systems in the new Latitude trifold tonneau protect the truck bed and the cargo stored inside it. The soft cover’s self-tensioning system stretches the material tightly, cushion-type seals keep water out, and adjustable latches allow the tonneau to be opened with one hand from either side. No-drill installation makes it easy to use and remove.  
MSRP: From $399  
800-338-3697, www.leer.com

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February 2018 TRAILERLIFE 33
DIESEL PERFORMANCE

Banks Power
Ram and GM HD owners can boost truck performance with an assortment of new products from Banks Power. The Six-Gun Tuning Bundle for 6.6-liter Duramax diesel-powered vehicles combines an iDash digital monitor and a Derringer tuner claimed to add 98 horsepower and 200 lb-ft of torque to 2017 and newer models. The Ram Cold-Air Intake (shown on the left) and 3.5-inch Monster-Ram Intake systems more than double airflow into Ram 6.7-liter engines, according to Banks.
MSRP: From $383.33
800-601-8072, www.bankspower.com

Bully Dog
Made of high-quality stainless steel, Bully Dog’s emissions-compliant Performance Diesel Particulate Filter is designed to increase airflow by as much as 21 percent, reduce exhaust gas temperature (EGT) by up to 12 percent, and improve horsepower and torque. Available for the 2007 and 2008 Dodge Ram 2500/3500, 2008 to 2010 6.4-liter Ford Power Stroke and 2009 to 2012 Ram 2500, the Performance DPF replaces stock units that have been prone to maintenance challenges.
MSRP: $1,799
940-783-9914, www.bullydog.com

Sinister Diesel
Cool air helps diesels make power, and the Sinister Diesel Cold-Air Intake for 2013 to 2016 Chevy/GMC 6.6-liter Duramax LML engines is designed to supply just that through its mandrel-bent aluminum tube and high-flow filter. The intake extends from the filter to the turbo to promote maximum airflow, and silicone (not rubber) couplers provide durable, trouble-free connections, according to the company. Sinister also has cold-air intakes for Power Stroke and Cummins diesels, all with a distinctive blue finish.
MSRP: $469
844-550-5707, www.sinisterdiesel.com

Edge Products
Engineered for a wide range of Ford, GM and Dodge/Ram diesels, the Stage 2 Diesel Performance Kit bundles an Evolution CTS2 Programmer with a Jammer Cold-Air Intake and all-new Jammer Exhaust. Edge claims the package reduces EGT while increasing horsepower, torque and fuel efficiency. Most applications are 50-state legal.
MSRP: From $1,189.95
888-360-3343, www.edgeproducts.com

TRAILER BRAKING

Curt Manufacturing
The Spectrum Brake Control takes charge of trailer-brake activity for smoother and more responsive stops on any grade, according to Curt. The main component mounts out of sight, while the in-dash user interface (shown above) operates with a simple pushbutton knob with 10 LEDs. Both modules install with a quick-plug harness.
MSRP: From $182.75
HANDLING AND STABILITY

Dynamic Suspensions
The Stability Plus Stabilizer is an overload spring system from Australia-based Dynamic Suspensions that utilizes greaseable swing shackles to allow the helper spring to move and twist for maximum stability, load handling and ride comfort, according to the manufacturer. Adjustable for both light and heavy loads, the stabilizer is said to install easily and comes with a three-year, 60,000-mile warranty.

MSRP: $449
336-416-2083, www.dynamicsuspensions.us

Hellwig Products
Hellwig’s lineup of truck and SUV accessories now includes a heavy-duty rear sway bar for 2017 Ram 3500/4500/5500 Chassis Cab trucks. Designed for towing applications, the U.S.-made 1¼-inch sway bar (part number 7767) works with the stock front sway bar to stop body roll in normal driving and tow/haul mode, according to Hellwig. Three mounting holes allow for adjustable positions to fit the truck and suit the load. Installation takes a few hours and requires basic hand tools.

MSRP: $340
800-367-5480, www.hellwigproducts.com

Roadmaster Active Suspension
The RAS system converts the tow vehicle’s passive rear-leaf springs into a mechanical active suspension that instantly absorbs and dissipates load-force energy for a better ride, according to the company. The unique suspension upgrade is designed to reduce wheel hop and enhance vehicle stability when towing or hauling heavier loads. The system comes fully assembled and is available in standard and heavy-duty models.

MSRP: $429
800-398-5036, www.activesuspension.com

AFTERMARKET FUEL TANKS

Titan Fuel Tanks
The 40-gallon Travel Trekker fits in truck beds with limited space, such as Chevy Colorado and GMC Canyon midsize trucks, and Ram pickups with the RamBox cargo holder. The touch of a button switches sources to pump fuel from the auxiliary tank directly into the primary tank. Made of military-grade polymer, the tank has an in-cab controller that also serves as a fuel-level gauge.

MSRP: $1,229
800-728-4982, www.titanfueltanks.com

Transfer Flow
Transfer Flow’s 60-gallon replacement fuel tank for 2017 and newer Ford Super Duty shortbed Crew Cab models nearly doubles the trucks’ driving range. Built with aluminized steel, the tank is baffled to reduce sloshing and comes with heavy-duty straps and mounting hardware. The company’s full line of replacement and auxiliary tanks includes models for other popular tow vehicles.

MSRP: $1,579.74
530-893-5209, www.transferflow.com

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TOWING GEAR

Blue Ox

For easy hookups, Blue Ox’s Super Ride 20,000-pound-capacity fifth-wheel hitch features a 360-degree latch and a self-locking head. Rubber springs cushion the hitch for a smooth ride, eliminating up-and-down and back-and-forth movement, and reducing stress on the truck and trailer. A full 11 inches of articulating travel keeps the trailer from striking shortbed cabs. The lightweight design allows the hitch to be installed and removed without a second person’s help.

MSRP: $1,495
800-228-9289, www.blueox.com/super-ride

Fastway Trailer Products

Built for heavy-towing pickups, the latest addition to the Flash line of ball mounts features a drop shank that can handle trailer weights up to 20,000 pounds. Designed to fit trucks with 2½-inch receivers, the mount provides adjustable ball heights from 6 to 10 inches of drop. The powder-coated finish on the forged-steel shank should keep it looking good for years.

MSRP: From $199
877-523-9103, www.fastwaytrailer.com
PullRite
SuperLite fifth-wheel hitches feature a unique funnel receiver and kingpin adapter that make hooking up nearly effortless. The latest SuperLite (part number 2600) connects to any factory or aftermarket bed-mounted 2½-inch gooseneck ball. The design allows two kingpin positions for towing a fifth-wheel or a gooseneck trailer. The hitch is rated to tow 20,000 pounds yet weighs just 64 pounds.
MSRP: $789
800-443-2307, www.pullrite.com/superlite

BATTERY MAINTENANCE
Reikken
Dead batteries are not an option when using the Reikken 12V Smart Charger. The 7.5-amp microprocessor-controlled RSC7002 desulphates and reconditions batteries as it charges. Compatible with 12-volt SLI, SLA, VRLA, AGM and gel-cell batteries up to 250 ampere hours, the charger (part number RSC7002) comes with quick-disconnect battery clamps and ring terminals, and provides polarity protection and a polar mode for extreme cold charging.
MSRP: $119.95
260-348-7003, www.reikken.com

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WEATHERING THE STORM

AFTER ENDURING DEVASTATING DAMAGE FROM HURRICANE HARVEY LAST YEAR, A FAMILY-OWNED RV PARK ON THE COLORADO RIVER IN LA GRANGE, TEXAS, REBOUNDS

Getting our first look at Colorado Landing RV Park was jaw-dropping, to say the least. We gaped in awe, as in awful: “Oh, my! Geez! Look at that!”

Colorado Landing in La Grange, Texas, wasn’t initially in our travel plans, but when I received notice that our reservations near Lake Somerville were canceled due to flood damage from Hurricane Harvey, I searched for other RV parks.

Colorado Landing, a Good Sam Park with 9.5- to 10-point ratings and five-star reviews, looked nice on its website. When I called to make reservations, Sydney Newhouse answered and said the park had indeed incurred “some” damage, but that RV sites were available with water, electric and sewer connections. Since flooding in the area had been an issue, I asked, “Is it muddy, and will I get stuck?” She assured me that it wasn’t and I wouldn’t, and that it was “clear of nails.” That last comment surprised me, and I jokingly replied, “So I won’t get a flat tire either!”

Arriving at Colorado Landing 10 days later, I thought “some” damage was an understatement. The broad concrete road leading to the gravel sites was clear and swept clean; however, both sides were cluttered with debris and damaged homes. RVs were askew, most lying on their sides stacked against trees, with others toppled, twisted and butted up against each other. Mobile homes were detached from their moorings with underpinnings, porches and walkways ripped away. One home lay broken and crumpled a few yards from a plot of bare, brown earth dotted with cinderblock pilings, no doubt its one-time foundation. Several rooftops lay on the ground with walls crushed beneath them.

Picnic tables, swings, chairs, a baby’s shoe and all sorts of other unnatural “fruit” were hanging from trees. The swimming pool was filled with muddy gray-green water. Cabanas were mere piles of wood pushed against the stubborn leaning fence. Clothing, household items, furniture, lumber, sheet metal and toys were everywhere. Some lay in piles started as an effort to clean up, but most of it was still simply scattered, left lying where the floodwaters abandoned them.

We found the temporary office, a motorhome near the end of the avenue. An elderly gentleman greeted us and invited us to come in out of the Texas October heat. Once we were inside, he offered us a seat and began the check-in process. We commented about the damage to the park, and he replied, “It looks good now.” If this was good, I can’t imagine what it was earlier. He was kind and soft-spoken, with a hint of weariness in his voice and expression, while commenting that they were doing all they could to get things cleaned up and running again. He held up an inch-thick blue folder. “This is what you have to fill out to get a loan.”

Our registration completed, he
follow the traditional storm trajectory of weakening as it moved inland. It stuck and meandered around the coast for days, dumping record rainfalls that measured from 10 inches at Bergstrom Air Force Base in Austin in the west to 60 inches in Nederland, Texas, on the eastern edge of the storm.

In the middle of this area along the Colorado River lies La Grange, Texas. With 25 inches of rain in La Grange and similar amounts upriver, Colorado River Landing was in the crosshairs of the rising waters and, sadly, took a direct hit, even though it is located on high bluffs.

The next morning I saw the elderly man near our site and introduced myself. He told me he was Bill Whorton, co-owner of the park.

“Looking around, I can’t even imagine what this is like for you,” I said.

“It’s devastating! I just tried to turn some water on and discovered the pipe’s busted,” he said. “Every time I try to do something, I find something else that needs fixing. We lost the piece of equipment that handles the cable in the park. It will cost $25,000 to replace.”

“That’s discouraging!”

“Yes.”

According to www.water.weather.gov, at its crest on August 28, the river was at 54.18 feet. To put that number in perspective, 37 feet is considered major flood stage. The last time the water was near this level was in 1913, when it was at 56.4 feet. Harvey had spawned the 100-year flood.

“Some of these mobile homes you see lying around were in that mobile-home park way over there,” Bill said as he pointed to a cluster of mobile homes about a quarter of a mile upriver. “They floated through here, causing a lot of the damage.”

“Really!” I replied. I made arrangements to talk with him more.

On Monday morning, while walking to meet with Bill, I met a fellow and greeted him: “Hello. How are you today?”

His response was, “Well, it can only get better from here.”

“What’s that about?” I asked.

“It’s about a hurricane!”

“Oh, are you the co-owner?” I asked.

He extended his hand and introduced himself, “Yes, Charlo Whorton.”

“Whorton? That’s the same as....”

I said.

“Yes. He’s my dad.”

“So the park is a family operation?”

“Yes, it is.”

Charlo and I talked outside the original office and community building while workers gutted the interior. Charlo pointed out the high-water mark on the building, a double-wide mobile home, at the top of the window where the familiar red, round Good Sam Park decal was placed. The water hadn’t lifted the building from its foundation, so they plan to refinish the inside.

Charlo’s afraid if he moves the building out, he won’t be allowed to move another one in, since there was talk that the city of La Grange isn’t going to allow mobile homes back in the area. According to the Fayette County Record, the local newspaper, the city is placing some restrictions on new mobile-home placements.

When Bill joined us, I learned more. The father-and-son team bought the park in October 2004 after Charlo retired from the U.S. Navy, where he served as a photographer. “It was my retirement job!” he said. The park had been primarily a mobile-home park, but they’ve worked over the years to establish it as an RV park by allowing the number of mobile homes to decrease by natural attrition.

Charlo said, “I know that RVers don’t really like to be next to permanent mobile homes. I have property over there for long-term and permanent stays,” he gestured. At the time of the flooding, full-time residents occupied only eight of the 84 RV sites.

Charlo and his family had lived in a residential treehouse built high above the ground on one of the terraced bluffs of the riverfront for their first 10 years at Colorado Landing. He recalled high water rising under the house a couple of times, but “never like this.”

A few years ago, after they learned that building on the RV park property wasn’t feasible, he and his wife bought

PHOTOS BY BRENDA McWILLIAMS AND COURTESY OF COLORADO LANDING RV PARK
WEATHERING THE STORM

a large home in nearby Schulenburg, and his parents live with them. His daughter, Sydney, and her two-year-old son, Colin, lived in the park, and Sydney helped with the daily operations. They also are now living with Charlo, as their home was destroyed. “Good thing it’s a large house,” he chuckled.

During the hurricane, as the water was rising, Charlo was monitoring the creek level. He knew that at 42 feet the river backed up into the creek, and it was in the creek on Sunday morning, August 27. The police arrived and gave a two-hour evacuation order at noon on Sunday. Sydney and other residents grabbed what they could and left, not knowing what they might return to.

The river crested on Monday and began to recede, even though the local police continued to restrict access for a month. Charlo and Bill weren’t allowed onto their property. “A public health hazard,” they were told. This was aggravating as they could clearly see that the water was down. Charlo was threatened with arrest if he entered the property.

The aftermath and cleanup efforts have been filled with financial concerns and frustrations for the Whortons. The park was completely booked the weekend of October 6 to 8 for the antique festival in nearby Warrenton and Round Top, a regular event and major draw for the park. All those bookings had to be refunded. The utilities were

Then and Now. (Top, left to right) Before Harvey, the Colorado Landing office and grounds provided a warm welcome to guests. The 100-year flood rose to the top of the office windows and leveled the entry. (Middle) The fenced pet area, Bark Park, offered a shaded place for dogs to roam freely. The flood destroyed the landscaping, downed the fence, uprooted the sign and overturned a picnic table. (Bottom) The outdoor swimming pool was an inviting retreat from the Texas heat. After the flood, damaged cabanas and tables could be seen at the far side of the murky pool where the floodwaters abandoned them against the fence. Though the pool is closed for now, the Whortons hope to have it restored in time for the summer season.

GETTING TO LA GRANGE

Named for the French chateau of the Marquis de Lafayette, the small community of La Grange, Texas, sits on the Colorado River in Fayette County, also named to honor the Revolutionary War hero. La Grange is 64 miles southeast of Austin on State Highway 71 and 101 miles northwest of Houston on Interstate 10 and Highway 71. Highway 71 runs through the northern part of La Grange, and U.S. Route 77 passes through the center of town.

The river below Colorado Landing before the storm.
restored, but the electricity was turned on before the water. Before the electricity could be tested and used, the utility boxes had to be washed. "We had to haul in water to wash the utility boxes!" said Charlo.

Charlo began the application process for assistance, but the overlapping bureaucracy thwarted him. He went to the Small Business Administration three times and was then told to go to FEMA. FEMA sent him to the county judge. Finally, he was approved for a six-month small-business loan, and that’s his current working capital. The only structure covered by FEMA insurance was the treehouse.

All the park facilities are located on a bluff 30 to 40 feet above the river, which would reasonably make flooding such a remote possibility that flood insurance seemed unnecessary. Other than the small-business loan, the outlook for disaster assistance is bleak, so to help with cash flow, they continue to work tirelessly to get more sites cleaned up and available for guests.

They face other obstacles as well, such as looters. Those mobile homes that floated through the park and settled on their property are theirs to deal with. The insurance companies should eventually pay for the removal, but the Whortons have to actually manage it. At the time of this writing, they were planning to rent a Bobcat truck with a grapple arm to pick up the large debris, but availability was scarce since most were being used in the hard-hit Houston area.

I asked them what they were thinking and feeling when they came back and saw the destruction. "Overwhelmed," Bill said quietly.

With a sly grin, Charlo said, "I should have sold it when I had the chance!"

More seriously, he added, "Just bad for my family. My daughter and grandson lost everything."

"With the obstacles to rebuilding, what keeps you motivated?" I asked.

Charlo responded, "Family! It’s a family business. We have a lot of repeat, regular visitors who’re like family. We want our visitors to feel like family. Campers and RVers are just
good people, remarkable. I love doing this business.” Charlo added that they will rebuild and expect to “exceed the excellence of before [the flood].” The price tag on the rebuild is $1.2 million.

I asked if I could take a picture of them, and Bill said, “Let me go change my shirt. My wife doesn’t like me wearing this.” “This” was jeans, T-shirt and suspenders. As Bill walked away to change, I asked Charlo how old his father was.

“He’s 81 and keeps moving,” he replied.

“Wow! He’s something else!”

“Yes, he is,” Charlo said quietly. The affection in his voice was loud and clear.

When we departed, I wished them all the best. Colorado Landing RV Park is coming back. If you’re in the area or planning a trip to La Grange, Texas, to visit the many antique festivals and painted churches, do stay with them. I certainly will.

WEATHERING THE STORM

Owners of Colorado Landing RV Park Charlo and Bill Whorton welcome volunteer help and appreciate the many volunteers who have lent a hand with the cleanup, including local groups and repeat guests. The family has offered discounts to RVers who volunteer, and even free sites, although Charlo states, “Most have insisted on paying.” That’s proof of his earlier statement, “RVers are just good people.”

Colorado Landing RV Park
979-968-9465, www.coloradolanding.com

Major Work Completed
• Damaged RVs and mobile homes have been removed.
• $40,000 worth of debris and trash removal has been completed.
• Water, electric and sewer utilities have been restored.
• New satellite-TV dish and fiber-optic cables are in place, and distribution installation is ongoing.
• 74 RV sites are clean and available for use.

Major Work Remaining
• An estimated 60 large dumpsters worth of crushed debris and trash are yet to be removed.
• The swimming pool needs to be cleaned and repaired.
• 100 picnic tables need to be replaced.

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Big windows on any RV are welcome assets, but when the sun shines brightly, the heat inside rises sharply. Shades or curtains can block intense heat from direct sunshine, but say goodbye to the outside view. Since 2009, motorhome owners have relied on sunshades from Magne Shade to block the sun from penetrating the interior through huge windshields. Now the company offers the same type of protection for other windows, which can be a real boon for trailer and fifth-wheel owners.

RV picture windows provide glorious views of the outside from the dinette, for example, and are perfect candidates for a Magne Shade product, which is the scenario we used to test the company’s versatile sun blockers.

Magne Shade’s window covers are not plain-Jane, generic sun blockers like those found in home-improvement stores. These shades are sized to order, and buyers have a choice of fabric colors or scenes. The ordering process requires careful measuring of the glass area and determination of the radii, and interaction from the company (Hunckler Fabrication in Mocksville, North Carolina), which does a great job guiding customers.

The first step is probably the hardest: choosing between a solid fabric color or a scene that will be digitally printed on the sunshade material. Thousands of available scenes can be viewed on www.bigstock.com and www.dreamstime.com. Customers can also submit a personal image, as long as the quality is at least 300 pixels per inch in size and it is free of copyright protection. To comply with copyright laws, the company requires written permission from the photographer.

When deciding on a scene, it’s also important to understand how the image will crop for the window format. For example, images with focal points suitable for a vertical format will usually not look right when cropped for a horizontal presentation. Among the three choices for those who prefer a solid-color look, black and brown offer the greatest heat protection and UV control, the best view to the outside and better privacy. While the sunshade limits the view from peering eyes by day, complete privacy at night is not assured when the interior lights are on.

The fabric is durable and capable of blocking 90 percent of UV rays and heat. It will not dry out, stretch or crack, according to the company, which attributes the durability to a PVC coating, Sunbrella UV-rated binding and marine-grade thread. Once the scene, fabric color...
and binding are determined, the glass measurements and radii are submitted to the company, along with a photograph of the window, if requested. For the test project, a photo and tracing of the radii were submitted to confirm the window specifications. In a couple of weeks, the sunshade was delivered with all the parts and precise instructions needed for the install. Complete instructions for ordering can be found on the company’s website.

1) A 50-50 mixture of isopropyl alcohol and water is used to thoroughly clean the window. 2) The glass is then dried completely with a clean microfiber cloth. 3, 4) Silane primer, provided with the rare-earth magnets, is sprayed on the clean glass and wiped dry in one direction using a lint-free cloth. 5, 6) The magnets that are provided with the kit are very strong and are difficult to “pry” off a metal attractant, so they must be handled carefully when placing on the backside of each bound pocket, which contains another magnet.

The heart of the installation procedure revolves around a patented super-strong rare-earth-magnet mounting system. There are no holes to drill because magnets, which are attracted to other magnets sewn into strategically placed pockets in the sunshade, are attached to the window with double-face 3M VHB Tape discs. The use of magnets in the bound pockets provides full strength for pulling the fabric to the window tightly in unified polarity.

There’s really nothing difficult about the installation, and no tools are required. Before starting, it’s best to confirm that the sunshade fits the...
It’s a fact of life: Trailer tires are going to be exposed to the sun, and constant penetration by harmful UV rays can render the sidewalls unsafe for travel in a hurry. That’s why prudent owners cover them when staying in one place for a while or storing their RV in outside facilities. For years, the commercial product staple for protecting tires has been light-colored vinyl covers that are secured by straps. While these covers shield from the sun’s rays, getting them on can sometimes be a hassle.

Magne Shade, known for its window sunshades, has definitely designed a “better mousetrap” with its EZ Fold Tire Shades that use a patent-pending spring frame. The folded tire shades store neatly into a small tote bag and, when needed, are simply unstrapped and allowed to spring open to the diameter of the tire. Rather than unfolding typical tire covers and struggling to position a strap behind each wheel — sometimes requiring crawling on the ground — the EZ Fold shades are simply held in place with an elastic strap.

It takes only seconds to mount each shade, and when in position, they actually look like tires instead of baggy covers, so the visual aesthetics of the trailer or fifth-wheel are not compromised in an RV park. Passersby who look casually have no clue the tires are even covered. The only possible caveat: They look so real, you might forget to take them off before getting back on the road.

These cleverly designed tire shades are made of high-quality marine-grade fabric that offers 100 percent UV resistance. The center portion is cut to the wheel diameter and hemmed, and the elastic straps seem to hold firmly. We were able to test them in wind gusts of 25 MPH, and they didn’t budge. Since the shades do not cover the tire tread, air is allowed to flow freely. Simplicity is the theme, but it does take some practice to twist and fold the spring frame for storing the tire shades in the tote bag.

EZ Fold Tire Shades for trailers with 16-inch and smaller wheels sell for $45 each and are made in the USA.

1) Four EZ Fold Tire Shades fit nicely inside a convenient storage tote. 2) The tire shades are sold individually and are available in most sizes common to travel trailers and fifth-wheels. Elastic mounting straps prevent the shades from popping open. 3, 4) It doesn’t get any easier to protect the sidewall. The tire shade is held against the sidewall, and the elastic strap is positioned over the tire. Once in position, the elastic strap can be adjusted for the best fit.

5 through 9) To open the tire shade, the elastic strap is pulled away, and the spring frame pops open, guiding the fabric to its final size. The opening process is seamless, but closing takes some practice.

10, 11) A casual observer will hardly detect that the shades are in place, since they mimic the look of unprotected tires. Shades are made of exterior-grade marine fabric and offer 100 percent UV resistance.
With a helper holding the sunshade in place on the window, the protective film is removed from the magnet, which is mounted to the glass. It’s best to start with the upper corner or center. Steady pressure must be applied to the magnet for at least 30 seconds.

The magnets require up to 72 hours to fully bond to the glass, but the sunshade can be hung after 24 hours. It takes about 24 hours for the ink on the fabric to cure completely. When done, the digitally printed scene is a real attention-getter.

Handling the fabric, which can be removed from the window easily, requires simple care, and it must not be folded for storage. The company recommends that the fabric be rolled around a swim noodle to prevent creasing and the bound pockets from stacking and scratching the printed image.

The sunshade is then turned over and placed on a clean surface so that the magnets can be “stuck” to the backside of each bound pocket. The strong magnets will literally jump out of your hand when near an attractant, so it’s best to keep them away from metal until ready for placing on the sunshade.

For obvious reasons, the magnets cannot be placed on the window first. They are permanently attached to the outside surface of the window, which differs from the procedure used for installing on the inside of a motorhome windshield.

At this point you’ll need another person to help hold the sunshade when attaching the magnets to the window. This is done by peeling off the protective film on the outside of one magnet at a time (starting at the upper corner or center of the fabric) and placing the magnet on the window in relation to where the sunshade will hang. There’s a little wiggle room here, since the magnets in the bound pockets move a bit, but accuracy is still important to ensure an ultimate fit on the window.

After all the magnets are mounted, the sunshade is removed for at least 30 seconds.
24 hours to allow the adhesive to bond enough before rehanging; it takes up to 72 hours for full bonding. Once bonded, the magnets are rock solid. The ink on the fabric will completely cure after 24 hours, preferably exposed to sun.

Removing the sunshade from the window and repositioning it are effortless, and the shade requires only minor care to keep it looking new. A soft brush and mild detergent can be used to clean the fabric, which then can be allowed to air dry.

To prevent scratching the digitally printed sunshade when unrolling, the pockets must be lifted straight off the material. Also, the sunshade should not be folded when stored; the company recommends rolling the sunshade around a swim noodle, available at any pool-supply store. This will keep the pockets from stacking and the fabric from creasing.

Magne Shade sunshades are made in the USA and backed by a limited five-year warranty with normal use and operation, which stipulates proper maintenance and care as specified in the instructions to retain coverage.

Pricing for the shade depends on size and image choice, and will be quoted by the company. The wine-glass-and-sunset scene on the 46-by-46-inch shade installed on the test fifth-wheel retails for $425 ($225 for the fabric and $200 for the digital print) plus shipping.

The wine-glass scene we chose for the test (Dreamstime No. 19781468) was an instant hit in the RV park. Beyond the attention it attracts, the sunshade reduces heat dramatically and keeps the glaring hot sun off the adjacent dining table without pulling down the inside window shade.

Magne Shade
336-753-0905, www.magneshade.com

Medical device warning: Individuals with implanted medical devices should consult their physician before handling any product that uses strong magnets.
## 2018 RV Show Lineup

**Map# Event Name Dates**

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<th>Map#</th>
<th>Event Name</th>
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<td>02</td>
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*Good Sam Club members save 50% on up to two (2) adult admission tickets. **Dates subject to change.

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Visit goodsamindyrvsupershows.com for more details on RV camping packages for the Good Sam Indy RV Super Show.

800.848.6247 | GSEvents.com
In one way or another, RVers seem to be in a constant battle against the elements. One element on every RVer’s radar, regardless of location, time of year or climate, is the sun. That’s why most RVs are factory-equipped with a patio awning, and for the most part, they work pretty well. But there are times when there’s just not enough dimensional coverage to keep the sun’s relentless rays from penetrating the patio area. In many cases, finding more shade can be futile.

Carefree of Colorado has introduced a relatively easy-to-install, inexpensive and clever way to extend the coverage of a typical awning without using unsightly makeshift materials like towels and generic sunshade cloth. The company’s Awning Extend’r adds 8 feet to the width of any patio awning, and in most cases the extension just about doubles the coverage area. The material is lightweight and comes in 12- to 20-foot lengths, in 2-foot increments, to match that of the existing awning, electric or manual.

It utilizes the slot in the roller tube for installing a zipper insert, which is a section of fabric that attaches to the extension canopy. The zipper insert rolls up with the awning, which encourages easy setup. Also included in each Awning Extend’r kit is a pair of adjustable-height support poles, complete with heavy-duty steel stakes, adjustable nylon straps to secure the material and a carry bag.

To assemble the extension fabric, you’ll need only a couple things: a good hammer for pounding in the stakes, and a helper, which is imperative, even for this seemingly rudimentary operation. In fact, having help is such a key element to success with the Awning Extend’r that if you attempt it solo you’ll feel like you’re on a sailboat; any wind will prevent the material from staying put in the roller-tube slot during the setup. I chased it three times before getting help.

We also had some difficulty dealing with posts atop the support poles that were a little too short. Again, you’ll need help, and the instructions don’t shy away from that recommendation.

The process begins by placing the awning in its fully opened position and lining up the slot in the roller tube, per instructions, depending on the awning style. The polyrod from the zipper insert portion of the canopy is then slid into the roller-tube slot until centered, making sure to orient the seams toward the trailer. Once the canopy is zipped to the insert, have your trusted helper hold the centered placement and pull out the slack in one corner in preparation for
5) Once the support pole is adjusted for desired pitch, the grommet in the fabric is placed over the post before placing the D-rings for the straps in position. 6) The straps should be 90 degrees from the poles and staked down about 5½ feet from them. 7) The Awning Extend’r adds 8 feet width to the awning coverage, which in most cases provides about twice the shade.
**Indoor-Outdoor Table**

Our RV has a two-legged indoor dining table, and rather than bringing along a second table for outdoor use, I converted it so we can take it outside. I bought a couple of round table-leg bases (available at Amazon, Camping World and RV surplus stores) and a 24-inch-round piece of 1/2-inch-thick plywood. I attached one table-leg base underneath the table between the two existing bases and the other one to the center of the plywood.

When we move outside, I bring the tabletop, one of the table legs and the plywood base, and set them up as a pedestal table. This way we need to store only the plywood base, rather than an extra table. If you don’t want to add a third base to the table, you can make two plywood stands.

*Daryl Schmidt, Yuba City, California*

---

**Fifth-Wheel-Hitch Cable Catcher**

After getting the breakaway-switch cable caught in our fifth-wheel hitch and pulling the pin (and hearing of the same thing happening to other RVers), I came up with an idea to help eliminate the potential problem.

I purchased a length of clear tubing at the hardware store that is about a foot shorter than the cable and started feeding the cable through it. After the cable was pulled partway into the tubing, I put a key ring at each end of the cable loop to ensure the tubing won’t fall off the cable. Now it will be very difficult for the cable to get caught in the hitch and put the brakes on the trailer.

*Lee Fieldman, Braidwood, Illinois*

---

**Put a Bow on It**

We have a cupboard door in our fifth-wheel that likes to come open during travel. To keep that from happening, I loop material around the knobs and tie it in a bow to keep the door closed. Not only does it solve the problem, it looks pretty. It works so well that I decided to use colorful ties on all the cabinets to let me know I have everything in its place. When there’s a tie on each of the doors, it means I’m ready to go.

*Juanita Tesluk, Attica, Michigan*
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**Pump Up the Volume**
Larger RVs sometimes have issues with good water pressure in fixtures farthest away from the freshwater tank and pump. DuraSelf’s 12-volt DC Flow Max water pump, distributed by Lippert Components, is designed to pump up that volume with water pressure averaging 45 PSI at a flow of 3.3 gallons per minute. This NSF/CSA-certified heavy-duty pump is corrosion-resistant, self-priming, operates quietly, withstands multiple two-hour freeze/thaw cycles and can run dry without incurring damage, according to the manufacturer. The Flow Max carries a two-year limited warranty.

**MSRP:** $79.95
574-537-8900
www.lci1.com/flow-max
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**A Clean RV Is a Happy RV**
A tidy RV interior begins at the door — just ask the keeper of the castle. Laying down the heavy-duty WeatherTech OutdoorMat at the foot of the entrance steps works as a first line of defense in keeping mud, dirt, sand and other crud from being tracked inside. Available in black, brown, tan and gray, the recyclable-resin rubber mat combines a scraper edge and semirigid cones to remove debris from shoes. Edge cutouts allow liquids to drain quickly. Measuring 24 by 39 inches and weighing 7½ pounds, the smallest of the three mats is heavy enough to stay put in the worst weather but light enough to stow easily in an RV.

**MSRP:** From $29.95
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**Splinter Pickers**
“Get the tweezers — they’ll do the trick.” That’s great advice when a splinter, sticker or stinger needs to be extracted. One of the best tools for the job is Grandpa’s Tweezers. These two-prong metal gizmos have been crafted one by one in the Pacific Northwest since the 1960s, using skills passed down from generation to generation, and are ideal for making fine repairs, tying fishing flies and even plucking those random hairs that appear where they shouldn’t. Each tweezer comes in its own hand-turned wooden case. No two pairs are alike, except that they’ll probably be the best tweezers you’ll ever own.

**MSRP:** $18.99
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www.grandpastweezers.com
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**Solar Charged**
Keeping batteries charged while dry camping can be a challenge unless an AC generator is powered up. A smart alternative is a Victron Complete Charger System from AM Solar, which lets the sun do all the work. Each kit includes a solar panel, mounts, cables, combiner box, sealant and a Victron BlueSolar charge controller to keep any type of battery, including lithium-ion, charged. Solar panels come in a variety of sizes to fit a wide range of applications from slide-in pickup campers to the largest travel trailers and fifth-wheels. Bluetooth connectivity allows monitoring of charging current and battery voltage from a smartphone or tablet without the need for a wall-mounted display.

**MSRP:** Starting at $639. 541-726-1091, www.amsolar.com
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RESIDENTIAL THERMOSTAT USE
In regard to Chris Barkoukis’ “Thermostat Replacement” issue in the December 2017 RV Clinic, I have been using a Honeywell RTH111B digital non-programmable thermostat in my trailer for a couple of years. It can be purchased online for less than $18 and is powered by two AAA batteries. I recommend lithium batteries, as alkaline batteries have significant voltage drop if the temperature dips into the 30s Fahrenheit.

It is a simple two-wire installation. Although it can be used for both heat and air conditioning, I use it for heat only (my A/C unit has separate ceiling-mounted controls). It’s also simple to use with an on-off heat switch and up and down buttons for setting the temperature. The readout shows the current ambient temperature; when the up or down buttons are pressed, the display changes to the desired temperature.

It is not lighted, however. If I wish to change the setting during the night without turning on a light, I merely hit the up or down button a couple of clicks.

Kent Thompson, Aptos, California

As you probably learned when shopping for a residential-style thermostat for your RV, it’s important to make sure all the connections will be compatible, to avoid damage and ensure proper operation. Thank you for passing along this information. It’s good to know you found a setup that works.

PLUGGED IN DURING STORAGE?
Q We have finished pouring a concrete pad next to our house for our trailer. Is it OK to store the trailer all winter attached to shorepower from our house?
Larry Lower, Roseville, California

A This is one of those questions we seem to answer frequently, Larry, and the short answer is, yes, it’s OK,

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as long as you check float voltage each month to confirm it’s not overcharging the batteries; a single-stage charger should maintain around 13.5 volts. You must also check water levels in flooded lead-acid batteries. Better yet, use a multistage charger, which won’t overcharge and damage the battery.

Check the owner’s manual for the brand and model of converter; if it’s an old-style single-stage model, you can install a newer model converter with a multistage charger or use one of the many battery-maintainer chargers available for use on RVs, and leave the RV unplugged.

**SLIDEOUT WIRING CURE**

My “Slide Won’t Slide” letter was published in the November 2017 RV Clinic. Clearly, you put much effort, research and time into your response. Your reply was very complete and thoughtful.

I investigated all aspects thoroughly, to the extent of removing the ceiling in my basement and lying on my back with a bright light to watch and listen while a friend moved the slide in and out. I could find no problem, so I went back to square one with the wiring question I asked you about.

I am happy to report that the slide on my Redwood 36RL now works for the first time. And all by itself! The issue was electrical. I found 12-gauge wire in the old fuse holder and a twisted connector with a wire nut. I replaced the primary-feed cable with 10-gauge wire, replaced the terminals with properly sized and soldered terminals, and replaced the fuse holder with a much heavier unit and a new 30-amp fuse. It works fine now.

Thanks for your help, and I hope my solution will help others.

Jim Stoll, Searchlight, Nevada

Thank you for the kind words, Jim. It’s always fun to get feedback on how well some of our technical suggestions work out.

**TRUCK PUSH-PULL**

My wife and I are proud owners of a 24-foot 2012 KZ Spree 240. We purchased it new in 2012 and have a dealer-installed Equal-i-zer hitch. We pull the trailer with a 2006 Ford Expedition, the XL version, with a 5.4-liter V-8 engine.

The Ford seems to have all the power needed to tow the trailer. However, I do have a concern when I am pulling and am passed by a large semi-trailer. There’s severe wind push from the truck passing. It feels as if, when the truck first approaches, that the front end of the tow vehicle is pushed toward the passing truck, and then as the truck passes, we are pushed away. This is disconcerting, especially on some narrower roads and bridges, and it is exacerbated when there is a crosswind.

Is this primarily due to the wheelbase of the Expedition versus an F-150? What can I do, if anything, to fix it?

Glenn Lygrisse, Wichita, Kansas
We know that push-pull feeling well, Glenn. It's safe to say that most people towing travel trailers, and to a lesser degree, those towing fifth-wheel trailers, experience the same sensation. It's caused by the "bow wave" of wind that's pushed by a large commercial truck, and that wind effect also interacts with the same but lower-intensity bow wave produced by your tow-rig-and-trailer combo. It acts to push the trailer away, and pulls the trailer back in as the truck moves past the trailer or vice versa. Strong cross-winds can aggravate the effect because you're already fighting that wind, and the truck blast just makes things worse.

In general, there's nothing you can do about that push-pull effect, other than making sure your towing setup is as stable and well-balanced as it can be. A longer-wheelbase tow rig tends to provide more stable towing in general, but as long as your setup is satisfactory the rest of the time, there's no reason for you to change anything.

When I'll be passing or passed by a large truck or bus, I tend to ease over to the far side of my lane, to the extent it's safe to do so. I make sure of my firm grip on the wheel, and, because I know what's coming, I brace myself and am ready to make whatever modest steering corrections I need to, to remain in safe control. It's important not to over-correct when steering, as it can cause trailer sway and possible loss of control. It can also help to reduce your speed a bit, which allows the other traffic to pass and be gone in less time.

**GREASABLE AXLES**

I had an older 26-foot Fleetwood travel trailer. Every year I would grease the wheel bearings. I now have a new 32-foot Forest River travel trailer. When I removed the wheels to have them balanced, I noticed a zerk fitting on the end of the axles like boat trailers have. After examination, I found the outlet at or near the inboard bearing.

My question is, am I lubricating the axle or lubricating the bearings? It looks like the axle is being lubricated.

**Bob Maager, Perryville, Missouri**

That zerk fitting and that axle hole are designed to help grease the wheel bearings, Bob. The axle is a piece of steel tubing with no moving parts, and thus requires no lubrication. The hole near the inner bearing allows the grease to enter the hub from the center and move outward toward each bearing.

Note that the presence of the zerk fitting does not mean you need to routinely add grease to the hub as part of your occasional maintenance activities.

Inspect and pack the bearings annually, as you did with your previous trailer, and you'll be good to go.

**TUNDRA BRAKE PROBLEMS?**

Q In "Half-Ton Towing by the Numbers" in the November 2017 RV Clinic, Bill Allender wrote about Toyota Tundra brakes not holding up. I experienced the same brake problems on a 2008 and a 2015 Tundra. The brakes
I don't think this is a technical problem with the Tundra brakes, although it’s coincidental that you guys have had similar experiences. The pulsating steering wheel indicates a warped rotor, which is caused by overheating. As brake pressure changes, the front wheels vary the feedback you feel at the steering wheel.

When a tow vehicle displays excessive brake wear when towing, it’s almost always an indicator that the trailer brakes aren’t doing their share of the braking. This can be caused by poorly adjusted trailer brakes, by brakes that are not working right (for example, bad magnets), a brake-wiring problem or a brake control that’s not adjusted to provide adequate trailer-braking force. Ideally, the trailer and truck should feel like a single unit when stopping, not as if the trailer is pushing or tugging on the truck because the trailer braking is inadequate or too aggressive.

Try this: On a deserted back road or empty parking lot, accelerate to about 25 MPH and use the brake controller’s manual feature to fully apply the trailer brakes without using the truck’s brakes. The trailer should firmly and quickly draw down the truck’s speed without locking up its brakes and skidding. If not, the brake control needs adjustment, or the trailer brakes need to be inspected and repaired.

Once trailer-brake performance is addressed, you may find your truck brakes work a lot better the next time you’re towing.

ANOTHER MICE CURE
In the December 2017 RV Clinic, there were two “Mice Intrusion” letters. I wanted to share our solution to this pesky problem.

We bought our 2011 Forest River Salem 30FKBS trailer new from a dealer, and since day one I have used a product called Mouse Magic by Bonide. This is an all-natural repellent that comes in affordable packs. It has a pleasant smell and is available at most hardware stores. Mouse Magic is designed for stored equipment. I keep one pack in front and
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RV CLINIC

[continued from page 60]

one in back of the trailer, and change them monthly.

I’m not affiliated with this company, just a fan.

Rebecca Sutton, Kansas City, Missouri

Thank you for the suggestion, Rebecca. When it comes to products of this type, it always helps to have a firsthand recommendation from an end user. We’re glad it helps!

MYSTERY TIRE DEFLATION

This problem started in 2015 on my 2014 KZ Durango. I’ve been to three dealerships and four tire shops. I’ve replaced the wheel and bought all new tires. The tire on one wheel lasts for a few days or a few weeks, then goes flat with not a whiff of air left. I never had a problem with the other three tires or spare. I would really appreciate any ideas to help me resolve this issue.

John Thiel, Grand Rapids, Michigan

You’ve replaced both the wheel and the tire that gave you the deflation problem, so those are the first steps in finding a solution, which didn’t work in your case. Shops always install new valve stems when installing new wheels, so we can leave off an old, leaking valve stem as the problem, although that’s a detail some people don’t check. Then you have technicians at seven professional shops put their hands on the product and work on the problem unsuccessfully, and that’s even more puzzling, and it makes it all the more challenging to subsequently try to solve the problem here in the RV Clinic column.

You didn’t mention any unusual tread-wear problems with this situation. My gut feeling, given the other factors that have been ruled out, is some type of axle-alignment problem that places undue lateral stress on the tire when traveling. That stress could affect the bead seat — unlikely, but given all other factors, there’s not much else to go on — and that could result in a slow, erratic leak.

I’d recommend that you take the trailer to a shop that can handle a trailer solid-axle alignment and have them check it over. It could, of course, also be a neighbor who’s messing with you by letting out a bit of air each day.

FRIDGE-FAN USE

We have a 2014 Bounder with a Dometic four-door refrigerator. We are considering adding fans to reduce the strain on the refrigerator in hot, humid weather. Is there an exhaust fan that mounts in the exhaust duct at the top of the RV? Do the fans mounted on the fins in the rear of the refrigerator work better? Do those require removing the refrigerator?

Dawn Gosselin, via email

You didn’t say which model you have, but I believe it is the Dometic 2+2 RM1350, and, depending on the installation, may have thermostatically controlled fans already installed from the factory. If you are having difficulty with hot-weather cooling, you can add fans to the unit to increase the airflow through the cooling unit, but I would check the rear cabinet configuration first.

The service manual for this refrigerator is available online as a download (do an internet search for “RM1350 service manual”), and in it are the dimensions for the refrigerator cabinet, and most importantly, the baffles. The air must flow evenly through the cooling unit from bottom to top to work properly. If you want to add the fans, find a dealer at www.dometic.com or contact Dometic’s customer service to get the specifics. By adding the Dometic fan kit, the fans will operate only when the refrigerator is on.
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Butterfly Effect
Fluttering through a world of color in Coconut Creek, Florida

The rainforest drips with humidity, yet the air percolates with color. I carefully place one foot ahead of the other on the curving walkway, aiming my camera here and there. Thousands of butterflies flit from plant to plant around me, giving the sensation that every leaf, vine and flower is moving.

My 80-something father finds a bench from which to take in the ever-shifting, multihued scene. Within moments, a blue morpho the size of his ear lands on the brim of his hat. "Don't move!" I call to him. Click.

In the short half-hour since our arrival at Butterfly World in Coconut Creek, Florida, I take 100 photos of delicate blue glassy tigers, Madeiras, piano keys and rosinas. More than 3,000 of the broad-winged insects (50-plus species) can be found at Butterfly World on any given day. Butterflies are bred here, not only for research and educational purposes but also for the sheer enjoyment of visitors.

Flowers, too. Each type of butterfly has its preferred plant, often tropical, depending on the moment in its life cycle. Butterflies lay their eggs and make cocoons in the plants, as well as eating and pollinating them. As a result, Butterfly World has some of the most gorgeous, butterfly-friendly botanical gardens in the world. Passifloras (or passion vines) and orchids bloom along the walkways, as fantastically colored as the butterflies. Click.

Butterfly World also has six aviaries containing hundreds of exotic birds and an insectarium. In the bug museum, I cringe at the scorpions, tarantulas and black-widow spiders but can’t take my eyes off them. Click.

In one of the aviaries, an Australian budgie (parakeet), snoozing on a branch, opens one eye to check me out. A Chinese painted quail scurries back to her clutch of eggs under an arching shrub. Then a red-legged honey creeper lands on a nearby hummingbird feeder to sip the sweet water with its long, pointed beak. Click, click, click.

I’m no lepidopterist, but Butterfly World truly fascinates me. Its kaleidoscope of creatures brightens even the grayest days. Just be sure there’s enough memory in your camera before you arrive!

Butterfly World (www.butterflyworld.com) is north of Miami and Fort Lauderdale, with no shortage of RV parks in the surrounding area.
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