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TRAVEL

38 Shipwreck Shoreline

A meander along the sweeping northwest coast of Lake Superior, the largest freshwater lake in the world, reveals hiking trails, a historic lighthouse and a folk school that preserves the heritage of Minnesota

54 Eight Weeks in Australia

A two-month journey in the land Down Under presents numerous national parks, coral gardens of the Great Barrier Reef and a sanctuary of diverse habitat for unique wildlife

96 Vermont's Capital Assets

America's smallest state capital, Montpelier offers big-time fun with first-rate restaurants, museums, galleries, music and a historic statehouse, all set against a New England backdrop

110 Just Add Water

Splish-splash across the States to experience 10 wet-and-wild adventures, from taking an underground boat tour to cascading down high-speed waterslides — *in the dark!* — to just soaking in hot springs or relaxing poolside

TRAILER LIFE'S 75TH ANNIVERSARY

63 The Evolution of RVing

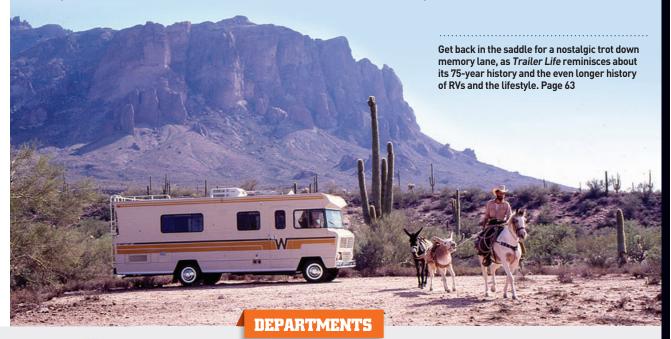
As Trailer Life celebrates its diamond anniversary, we take a look at how the recreational vehicle industry has changed with the times

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79 Golden Oldies

Vintage camping trailers stoke our collective love affair with the mid-20th century and connect enthusiasts from all walks of life





Check out nine innovative products from a rust inhibitor and a versatile flashlight to a 70-gallon fuel tank. Page 128

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Nashville, Tennessee

On the cover: Trailer Life, North America's bestselling magazine for RV enthusiasts, commemorates its 75th anniversary this month.





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The AB-35RS fifth-wheel has a number of unexpected features earmarked for full-timers and extended travelers

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Explore the backcountry with the V1, an all-weather hard-sided pop-up with marine-grade appliances powered by diesel fuel and everything needed for roughing it in style

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117 H₂O on the Go

RV water filters make removing impurities and improving taste as quick and easy as turning on the tap $\,$

Above: With three slideouts and a huge exterior storage compartment, the Augusta Ambition caters to extended travelers. Page 30

Your Passion leads you to your Destination



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A Special Celebration

Reaching the 75th-anniversary milestone is a feather in the cap of *Trailer Life* and the lifestyle it portrays and loves



elebrating milestones is how people reminisce about the past and look forward to the future. We typically commemorate birthdays and wedding anniversaries, which are annual events, but when a magazine reaches 75 years of continuous publication and distribution, it's a big deal. In 1941 — certainly turbulent times for the world — a new magazine was introduced that catered to a mobile lifestyle that no one at the time could ever imagine would grow into one of most popular outdoor activities in modern times.

It's fun to look back at the early trailers. The definition of self-containment was different then, with many of these trailers finding their way into camps for full-time living. But the desire to explore the country drove the development of new trailers with scaled-down appliances and accessories that could be used more efficiently on the road. At the same time, vehicles were becoming more capable of pulling the weight.

My love for the RV industry and lifestyle was kindled by a chance meeting with Art Rouse in 1971. Rouse is credited with quickly transforming a fledgling magazine into the undisputed leader in RV publishing. He had an uncanny vision of where the lifestyle was going, and his love for RV travel injected a special personality that was as lively as it was informative.

By the time I became involved in the editorial process, this magazine had recruited an amazing lineup of contributors, like Faith Terry, the Old Wagonmaster Johnny Johnson, V. Lee Oertle, tech guru Roy Morrison, Bill Estes and others who helped make *Trailer Life* a must-read. Some of the contributors were a little crusty at times, but always colorful. Their articles were infused with realism and honesty that helped set the course for the magazine.

Over the years the focus of *Trailer Life* has been consistent, with emphasis on RVs, accessories, maintenance and travel. It's fun to see how the industry offerings have changed, with rapid advances in technology leading that charge, but the lifestyle is not much different today. RV travel is still the best way to experience the country and meet new people. If you thumb through old issues of *Trailer Life*, you'll see pictures that portray a familiar type of life in campgrounds, sitting around fire pits and visiting with fellow RVers — dressed differently, of course.

Many of *Trailer Life*'s back issues are in the library of the RV/MH Hall of Fame and Museum complex in Elkhart, Indiana. And there's probably no better way to relive the history of the RV industry and lifestyle than strolling through the exhibits on display.

I hope you enjoy our tribute to this magazine's 75th anniversary and the amazing RV lifestyle, starting on page 63. 🗭





As Trailer Life commemorates its 75th anniversary this month, we turn back the clock to celebrate the magazine's storied past and the history and evolution of RVs.

TRALER FOLLOW THE ROAD TO ADDRESSURE LIFE



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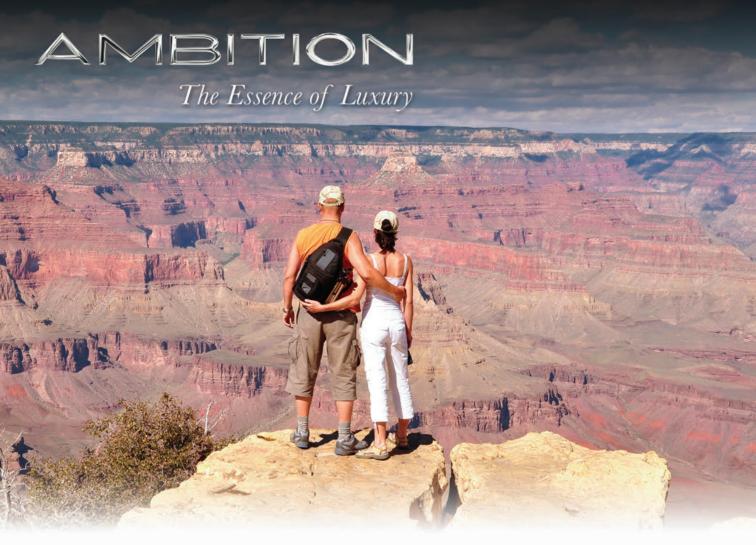
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YOUR OPINIONS, STORIES AND FEEDBACK

60s Flashbacks

I have really enjoyed your 75 Years of *Trailer Life* column. The one about the 1960s, "Feelin' Groovy," in the May issue hit close to home, as I graduated from high school in 1966. I would like to own one of the little vintage trailers, but we love taking our 2012 Keystone Montana fifth-wheel on the road.

Linda Whiting, Burns, Oregon



Back in the 1960s, three kids and my parents camped in this tiny travel trailer. The little sink had a pump handle to bring water from the storage tank. The icebox (yes, a real icebox) had to keep the milk cold. The two-burner propane stove (some things never change!) was lit to make coffee. An old canvas tent was put up to be our bathroom, complete with a fold-up toilet and a bucket for a tub. At the end of the week, the trailer and the car had an interesting smell, with the odor of fish permeating both vehicles! Barbara Maglich, Phoenix, Arizona



In the summer of 1966, our family — Mom, Dad, myself, my brother and two sisters — visited Yellowstone National Park in a now-vintage Winnebago trailer. Being 16 years old, I enjoyed camping, partying with the park's seasonal workers, and catching and charcoal-grilling fresh cutthroat trout from Yellowstone Lake. We found out the bears also liked the fish, as they

Battered Bushings and Shot Shocks



After reading "Underworld" back in the September 2015 issue, which advised checking trailer suspension shackles and fittings for wear, we decided to check our fifth-wheel's hardware. We have always maintained the wheel bearings and brakes on an annual basis. This time, as we were getting ready for an extended trip, we took Chris Hemer's advice and inspected the other hardware. To our surprise, the shocks were shot, and the factory suspension bushings were terribly worn. Had we gone any longer with them in this condition, we probably would have had a major problem.

We installed new Monroe shocks and purchased a heavy-duty suspension kit from Dexter Axle Company. The kit included bronze bushings, new bolts and E-Z Lube grease fittings for proper lubrication. The kit also included new

equalizers with E-Z Lube grease fittings and shackle plates.
Thanks, *Trailer Life*, for saving us a lot of

Francis Johannes, Las Vegas, Nevada



visited our campsite one night after midnight and made quite a ruckus. **Bob Yechout, Omaha, Nebraska**

money and grief!



This beloved tent trailer has been in our family for 56 years, since June 3, 1960, when it was purchased new at Montgomery Ward in Tyler, Texas. It has hosted three generations of campers, has been across the country countless times and has been registered in Texas, Florida, California, Georgia, Alabama and South Carolina. It was at Disneyland in the early 1960s, and at Disney World in 1971. It has been to the Fraser River in British Columbia, the North Rim of the Grand Canyon, Yellowstone, the Everglades and many more national and state parks. And it is still in good shape! Anita Lichtman, Livingston, Texas

Twenty Truck Campers

Thank you, Kristopher Bunker, for "Camping Without Boundaries," your May article on 20 of the top truck-camper manufacturers. And thank you, Bob Livingston, for publishing it. **Don Kissel, Vernal, Utah**

Solar's Shady Ways

This is a reply to Ken Reed's "Going Solar" question in the May issue about using a solar system when parked at shady campsites. Ken does not have to live without solar. We boondock in the shade of pine trees in the mountains all summer using nothing but solar.

We have a 145-watt roof-mounted panel that picks up some power even in the filtered shade. My husband took a 50-foot 12-gauge extension cord and severed it near one end. He attached the exposed wiring of the short piece to our regulator and the exposed wiring of the long piece to a 75-watt freestanding solar panel.

We plug the two free ends of the extension cord into each other daily and set the 75-watt panel out in the sun. Every few hours I adjust the panel to continually face the sun. The panel

keeps our two golf-cart batteries sufficiently charged.

Our electrical usage consists of running the lights, the water pump, a tablet and a laptop computer, charging two smartphones, watching TV for a half hour to an hour a day, and using our DVD player and the TV to watch a movie once or twice a week. Anyone with greater electrical needs could use a higher-watt freestanding panel or two. Jodi Werhanowicz, Phoenix, Arizona

Current Affairs

I read with interest Chris Hemer's "Power Protection" article in the May issue. In 2009 I purchased a Surge Guard 34750 portable surge protector from Technology Research Corporation (TRC). We use our fifth-wheel about two times a year for a week at a time, so it has not had much use.

The surge protector worked fine until May of 2015 when it started making a vibrating sound, and the lights

started blinking after I plugged it in. At first I thought it was a problem with the electrical box, but I plugged my fifth-wheel electric connection directly into the box, and all worked fine without the surge protector. When I returned home, I plugged the surge protector into my home connection. It made the same noise, and the lights blinked like they did at the campground.

I called TRC to see where I could send it for repair. The service rep asked me what type of sound it was making and when I purchased it. He then told me it sounded like the unit had been exposed to water and could not be repaired. It was also out of warranty, since it was six years old. I told him it was raining the last time I used it.

He then explained that the units are weather-resistant, not waterproof, and I needed to purchase another surge protector at a cost of just under \$400! He suggested that, when it rains, I either unplug it and bring it inside or place a trash bag over it. I live in Oklahoma, where we get lots of thunderstorms with wicked lightning, and that's one of the reasons I bought the surge protector in the first place.

After doing some research, I did purchase a new unit, this time from Progressive Industries, which has a lifetime warranty on its surge protectors. However, they, too, are only weather-resistant and not waterproof. This is something to consider when buying a surge protector.

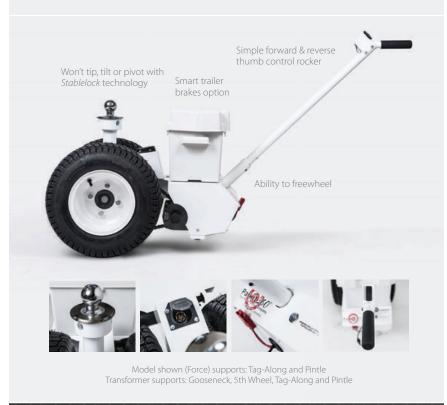
David Sanders, Ochelata, Oklahoma

Regarding "Power Protection" in the May issue, I was dismayed by the recent failure of my portable surge protector, a Surge Guard 34730. The last time I used it, the one prong of the female receptacle was partially melted and green; the unit never tripped during use. I contacted the manufacturer, and the rep's response was that the surge protector does not protect against electrical overcurrent and was most likely damaged because of this occurrence. I was under the impression the device would protect my RV from excess current!

Charlie Kleinhuizen, Portage, Michigan



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My wife, Carol, and I are new to the camping scene. Last September, we purchased our first camper, a 28-foot Keystone Passport Ultra Light 2250RB, from Camping World of Oxford, Alabama. In March, on our first trip with the new trailer, we went to Myrtle Beach, South Carolina, for a week, and last weekend we spent five days at Cheaha State Park in Delta, Alabama. Our camper has an outdoor kitchen, so I'm in seventh heaven!

As for Camping World, the service has been spectacular, and the people have been so helpful prior to, during and after the sale. As for *Trailer Life*, the ideas and experiences shared by others in the Letters, RV Clinic and 10-Minute Tech sections are invaluable. The rest of the magazine is also great, and I have already ordered three advertised products. Thanks for putting this magazine together and spreading the word to novice camper owners like us. Jim Lorenzo, Anniston, Alabama

The American Way

I have a 2013 Keystone Montana Big Sky. While wintering in Brownsville, Texas, I noticed a strong vibration in the second air conditioner. That is the one in our bedroom. It was so bad, I decided not to use it for fear of making the condition worse.

After returning home in late
February, I called our dealer,
American RV Center, just north of
Evansville, Indiana, and described the
problem to the service manager, Denny.
He could have asked me to bring the
RV to the shop for repair, or he could
have told me that it needed a new air
conditioner and a new compressor
and charged me X-amount for labor.
Instead, I was advised to remove the
air-conditioner cover and check to see
if mud daubers had been inside the unit.

I was skeptical and thought I would give it a quick check and then call him back for an appointment. After removing the air-conditioner cover, I found wasps had made mud deposits on the fan blades, throwing them out of balance. About 30 minutes later, the problem was fixed. With service like

this, American RV Center has earned my respect and loyalty.

Lloyd H. Boucherie, Henderson, Kentucky

Great Reception

We took delivery of a Winslow Excel fifth-wheel from Peterson Industries shortly before the company went out of business. We had ordered the Winegard Motorized Sensar Antenna, which worked great at first. Then we started having trouble with it not moving

properly, and one of us would have to go up on the roof to move it, as directed in the owner's manual. Winegard has a two-year parts warranty, so we called the company's tech services and spoke to a service rep named Leslie. After troubleshooting together, we concluded that the roof unit was the problem. Leslie said she would see what she could do, then called back promptly and told us she had located a refurbished unit, and it was on the way.

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LETTERS

Thank you, Leslie and Winegard.
The antenna works just as good as new.
Kenneth and Carroll Phibbs
Powhatan, Virginia

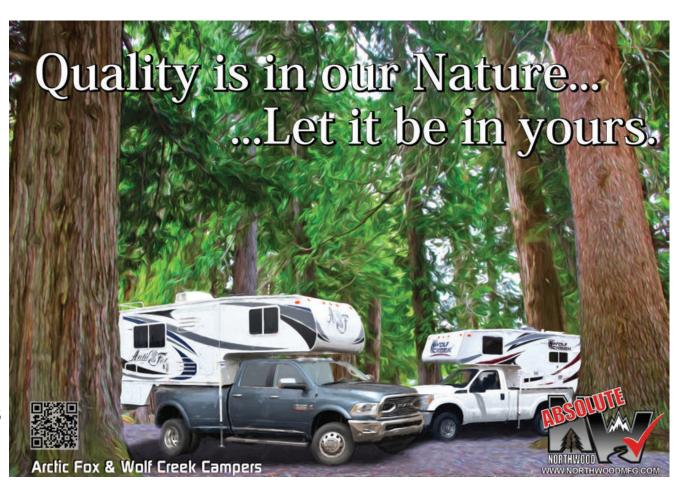
Small Wonder

Out on the freeway in my Toyota Tacoma pulling my 16-foot Scamp, it gets 27 MPG on cruise control at a steady 60 MPH. I often hear others complaining that they get only 8 to 10 MPG in their big pushers. Somehow, I can sleep just as well in the Scamp with my two dogs, a refrigerator, shower, toilet, Coleman camp stove, dinette and double bed as those folks in the big RVs do — and have a lot more of my limited retirement income left over for travel.

Donald Thomason

Moses Lake, Washington #

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America's Stonehenge

New Hampshire's 4,000-year-old maze of man-made chambers and ceremonial meeting places is an accurate astronomical calendar

article by Pamela Selbert

Walking through America's Stonehenge, an odd array of man-made caves, chambers and walls of roughhewn chunks of granite sprawled up a forested hillside in Salem, New Hampshire, you get the feeling you're communing with antiquity. The 30-acre site — a giant astronomical calendar of standing monoliths aligned to accurately plot solar and lunar events, such as solstices and equinoxes — appears ancient. Archeologists have determined that the gray granite found in the area was quarried using a primitive technique called "stone-on-stone."

But who built it is a mystery. The site, long known to area settlers, was called Mystery Hill until 1982, when the name was changed to better reflect its function. Its only relation to England's Stonehenge is that both were made by ancient people familiar with astronomical calendars.

Current owner Dennis Stone, whose father, Robert Stone, bought the attraction and surrounding acreage in 1956 and opened it to the public two years later, says numerous theories attempt to explain its origins. Previous owner and antiquarian



The East-Facing Chamber (far left) and the Summer Solstice Sunrise Alignment Stone (left) are two of nearly three dozen features at America's Stonehenge.

William Goodwin speculated that it was a monastery built before Columbus' time by the Culdees, early Irish monks fleeing Vikings. Others suggest it may have been built by some ancient migratory group, such as Phoenicians, because marks on the stones resemble early writing systems of the Old World. Or possibly (though Stone discounts this notion), it's the misinterpreted creation of 18th- or 19th-century farmers.

That's unlikely, Stone says, because radiocarbon analysis done over the past half-century indicates that the site was built around 4,000 years ago. Reputable surveyors, he adds, "vouch for the alignment of stones consistent with astronomy of a few thousand years ago."

Stone believes the site, with nearly three-dozen features, including an oracle chamber, a 4-ton sacrificial table and underground drainage network, was probably used for religious ceremonies, though it's unclear how long the builders were here. Fragments of bowls and stone tools found during archeological excavations indicate ancestors of current Native Americans made use of the site later. The true origin may never be known, but research continues.

America's Stonehenge in Salem, New Hampshire, is open daily from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. for a nominal fee. Selfguided tours take about an hour, and snowshoe tours are available in the winter. There is plenty of RV parking.

America's Stonehenge 603-893-8300 www.stonehengeusa.com

Sanborn Shore Acres RV Park Hampstead, New Hampshire 603-329-5247

www.sanbornshoreacres.com

The entrance to the Oracle Chamber, the most sophisticated prehistoric chamber structure found in the Northeastern United States.



Lance Launches Ultralight 1475 Trailer

Lance Campers has introduced another ultralight travel trailer, the 1475, with an overall length of less than 20 feet and a 14-foot 10-inch floor length. The non-slideout 1475 does not have a fixed dinette because, according to Bob Rogers, Lance's marketing director, "Customers tell us they like to eat outside or while sitting in their lounge chairs and would rather have two comfortable chairs and a nice-size dry bath, so that's what we designed."

Inside, the 1475's swivel rockers sit across from the galley, which features lightweight solid-surface countertops, a three-burner range, a 5-cubic-foot refrigerator and a single-bowl sink with a pull-out faucet. The bedroom has a queen-size innerspring mattress and LED reading lights.

A Bluetooth app-enabled audio system, passthrough storage, radius frameless dual-pane tinted windows and aluminum wheels are all standard, as are an outside LP-gas barbecue connection and a wash



station. Options include keyless entry, a solar panel, an LED TV, a microwave, air conditioning, a Fan-Tastic roof vent and an electric lateralarm awning with a motion sensor.



The 1475 has a 3,700-pound GVWR, and Lance claims the trailer can be towed behind almost any midsize vehicle. Base MSRP is \$23,888.

Lance Camper, 661-949-3322, www.lancecamper.com





Past and Present RVs in Indiana

For a glimpse of old and new RVs in one place, pop into the 61st annual Midwest RV Super Show at the RV/MH Hall of Fame and Museum in Elkhart, Indiana, August 4 to 7. Hundreds of new RVs will be on display, with discounted show pricing and clearance specials. Outside, you can walk through modern travel trailers, fifth-wheels, toy haulers and motorhomes, then step back in time indoors to see the history of RVing and the pioneers of the industry.

Tickets cost \$10 for ages 16 and up, which includes museum admission, and are free for ages 15 and under. www.rvshows.org/midwest-rv-super-show

NEWSWIRE



Yellowstone Postage Stamp

The U.S. Postal Service has released the last of 16 Forever stamps celebrating the National Park Service's 100th anniversary. The photograph of two bison silhouetted on a winter morning on a rise in Yellowstone National Park's Lamar Valley was captured by Art Wolfe. The Seattle-based photographer said the morning was minus-30 degrees Fahrenheit. "The bitter cold had left the animals encased in a mantle of thick frost," he recalled. The photo was taken in 2000, when Wolfe was still shooting with film, so he didn't know if he'd captured the scene until the film was processed. Clearly, he succeeded.



Caravan Salon Düsseldorf

The world's largest trade show for motorhomes and travel trailers (called "caravans" in Europe), Germany's 2015 show was the most well attended in history with 202,000 visitors, including a high share of international guests.

Joachim Schäfer, managing director of Messe Düsseldorf GmbH, said RV sales were high: "That's particularly exciting because Caravan Salon Düsseldorf is considered the trend barometer for the upcoming season."

The 55th-annual Caravan Salon Düsseldorf takes place August 26 through September 4, 2016. www.caravan-salon.de

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On the Right Track

Railroads have been an integral part of North America's history. For those who want to hear a steam-whistle blow, smell the grease on the axles or hear the roar of an "iron horse" up close, the following museums will grant you a ride in a steam or diesel locomotive from a different era. Be sure to check operating hours and dates, as some are seasonal.

Sacramento, California

California State Railroad Museum

Numerous exhibits explore how railroads shaped the west. Highlights include a Pullman-style sleeping car, a railway post office and train excursions. 916-445-5995, www.csrmf.org

Golden, Colorado

Colorado Railroad Museum

The museum has 15 acres to explore with steam engines and cabooses, and a roundhouse with a working turntable. www.coloradorailroadmuseum.org

Union, Illinois

Illinois Railway Museum

The country's biggest railroad museum preserves the *Electroliner*, a streamlined four-coach passenger train, and the only remaining EMD E5 2,000-horsepower diesel locomotive.

800-244-7245, www.irm.org

Baltimore, Maryland

B&O Railroad Museum

The Birthplace of American Railroading has the oldest, most comprehensive American railroad collection in the world. 410-752-2490, www.borail.org

Lenox. Massachusetts

Berkshire Scenic Railway Museum

The restored station was built in 1903,

and the rail yard features an early 20thcentury passenger car and a vintage diesel electric locomotive.

www.berkshirescenicrailroad.org

Ely, Nevada

Nevada Northern Railway Museum

Century-old steam engines pull historic locomotives in this remote location. Passengers can experience robbery re-enactments and themed train rides. 866-407-8326, www.nnry.com

Bryson City, North Carolina

Smoky Mountain Trains Museum

The museum has a collection of 7,000 Lionel engines and activities for kids. 800-872-4681, www.gsmr.com

Elbe, Washington

Mount Rainier Railroad and Logging Museum

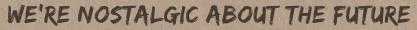
Exhibits show the importance of railroads in the timber industry and include a display of logging locomotives. 888-783-2611, www.mrsr.com



CONGRATULATIONS

TRAILER LIFE 75 YEARS

OF MAKING MEMORIES!



Many things have changed over the years, but some American traditions are worth keeping.

American manufacturing prowess, and the engineering know-how that goes with it is what shaped our country. It's a part of our history that is important to keep.

Why should good service be a thing of the past? If you take the time to call, one of us will answer the phone. It's really not that hard to do.

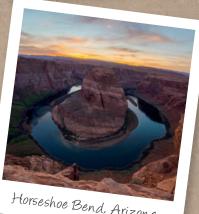
Remember when a handshake meant something? It still can. If you have a problem with a product we built, we will work to get you back on the road with as little cost and hassle as possible. It's the old-fashioned handshake, backed up on paper.



Valley of the Gods, Utah



Josh, 1984









Virginia's Liberty Celebration

Virginia's Yorktown Victory Center salutes the 240th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence, July 3 and 4, 2016, with interpretive programs, military drills, artillery demonstrations and fife-and-drum performances. Located in Yorktown, the town where America's independence was won on the battlefield in 1781, the center is a living-history museum of the American Revolution.

At noon on both days, "The Price of Liberty" program invites visitors to learn about the sacrifices of Americans who declared independence from Great Britain and concludes with a reading of the Declaration of Independence. A Revolutionera tax protest is staged each afternoon, followed by a militia muster and training in espionage. Visitors will enjoy fiddle, banjo and washboard music from the Cigar Box String Band as they play old-time, blues, folk and Celtic tunes.

Yorktown Victory Center, 888-593-4682, www.historyisfun.org

Readers, Cast Your Votes

Tell us what you think in *Trailer Life*'s fifth-annual RV poll



RVers tend to be a friendly bunch, eager to share their knowledge with fellow enthusiasts. To tap into that vast body of knowledge and share it on a grand scale, each year Trailer Life conducts an online poll of readers' favorite RV brands and destinations. Sharing your RV-lifestyle experiences can smooth the way for others, so be sure to cast your votes online. Take a few minutes to visit the Readers' Choice Awards webpage and tell us which vehicles, products and places make life on the road easier and more enjoyable. The deadline is September 23, 2016. We'll announce the gold, silver and bronze winners in each category in the January 2017 issue. Trailer Life Readers' Choice Awards www.trailerlife.com/readers-choice

MORryde's PIN BOX SYSTEM... SO SMOOTH YOU MAY FORGET YOU'RE TOWING



MORryde's Pin Box System redefines the experience of towing a fifth wheel. Install one and forget about that harsh, jerky chucking action.

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Mor/ryde, Circle 137 on Reader Service Card

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Above. Beyond. Always.







Illinois' Salute to John Deere Explore the history of an industrial giant

article and photos by Dave G. Houser

John Deere Pavilion in Moline, Illinois, is the world's largest agricultural museum, but even visitors who've never stepped foot on a farm find it fascinating and informative.

The reason may be that it is designed from the ground up to grab attention. The structure itself — a soaring 14,000-square-foot palace constructed almost entirely

of qlass - isstunning, and once inside, it immediately engages visitors as it traces the history of one of America's industrial giants.



The story began in 1837

when a young blacksmith, John Deere, invented a polished steel plow that replaced wooden plows. Soon a fledgling company was formed to produce thousands of plows a year, and in 1918 it began to manufacture tractors.

The rest, as they say, is history. Today, John Deere Company produces not only farm machinery but construction and forestry equipment as well, along with a line of consumer lawn and garden gear.

Admission to the pavilion is free, and you can peruse exhibits on your own or join an hour-long tour. You'll want to begin with a look at the collection of restored antique equipment, including Deere's first tractor, the 1918 Waterloo Boy. Progressing through the exhibit, you'll see how equipment has changed through the years. You can even climb aboard many contemporary models and watch them in action on touch-screen video displays.

John Deere Pavilion, 309-765-1000, www.deere.com/pavilion 🗭

















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Icon Technologies, Circle 126 on Reader Service Card



Raising the Rubber Roof

A Texas couple reached out to RV Resolutions when both the manufacturer of their fifth-wheel and their insurance company denied coverage for what they considered a manufacturer's defect:

▶ We purchased a 2015 Heartland Big Country fifth-wheel from Byerly RV Center in Eureka, Missouri, in August of 2014. On January 25, 2016, we were driving when the rubber roof slipped out from under the front cap and caused a radius tear in the roof. Luckily, we were within 10 miles of United Home and RV in the town of Iowa. Louisiana.

The crew there took off the screw molding and found that every single screw had been overtightened and broken off when the roof had been installed at the factory. The only thing holding it on was the caulking, and the caulking had given way. United tucked the rubber roof back under the cap and put on a temporary patch.

We emailed Heartland and heard back from Dustin Burgess, who stated that, although our RV was out of warranty, we might be eligible for a goodwill repair if we provided more information and photos, which we did. Burgess then referred us to Paw Paw's Campers in Picayune, and we were told the repair would take from three to four weeks. We had no choice but to rent a house to stay in while the RV was at the shop.

John Lourenssen, Paw Paw's service director, contacted Burgess and was told to remove the patch, cut the roof back 4 feet and patch in another piece of roofing material. Lourenssen informed us that this type of repair would not hold over time and said we should insist on a new roof. We emailed Burgess, and he replied that Heartland had agreed to repair but not replace the roof and would assist with parts but would not cover the labor costs.



We contacted our agent at Nationwide Insurance, since we were getting nowhere with Heartland. Nationwide sent an adjuster to Paw Paw's but ultimately denied our claim, stating, "Wear and tear or a fault, weakness or inadequacy in the design, workmanship, construction and materials are specifically excluded by the policy."

We also contacted our dealership, Byerly RV, but were told they were at a dead end with Heartland and could not help us. We had no choice but to pay for the roof ourselves.

We are contacting you in hopes you can help resolve this matter.

Dan and Linda Kimberlin, Livingston, Texas

THE COMPANY RESPONDS

After sharing the Kimberlins' experience with Heartland RV's customer-service department, we received the following correspondence:

Heartland RV will agree to split the cost of the roof-material replacement and will also cover the patch repair that was done. Per the bill and the information provided, Heartland will cover \$4,222.95. In regard to payment for the lodging while the unit was being repaired, Heartland's warranty clearly states than any consequential and incidental expenses like lodging are not covered.

Anthony Roberts, Customer Service Heartland RV, Elkhart, Indiana

On the Flip Side

In addition to requests for assistance with consumer disputes like the one published above, *Trailer Life* receives many more letters from readers who don't require our help in obtaining favorable outcomes. Here's a recent example:

▶ In August 2013, we bought a Forest River Flagstaff Super Lite fifth-wheel. When the end cap started buckling, I made one phone call to Forest River and talked to Rodger Beiler. He told me to contact Reed Camper Sales in Huntsville, Alabama, the nearest RV facility that could do the repair work.

I made one trip to Reed Camper and talked to Chuck White in the parts department. To make a long story short, my fifth-wheel is repaired and looks great! Forest River covered all the expenses, even though the camper was more than a year out of warranty. I was impressed by the great service from Forest River and the high quality of the work done by Reed Camper.

Jim Nicholson, Athens, Alabama 🗭

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



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100 Full-Service Sites with Grass Lawns & Picnic Tables

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- 06 20'x60' Luxury Sites with Barbecue Grills
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For Additional Charge

- · Clubhouse with 2 kitchens
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For reservations: **1-844-4PALARV** (**1-844-472-5278**) Pala RV Resort: 11042 Hwy 76, Pala, CA 92059

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From San Diego County & Riverside County: Take I-15 to HWY 76, go east 5 miles. From Orange County & Los Angeles County: Take I-5 South to HWY 76, go east 23 miles.

MEMBER NEWS | BENEFITS | EVENTS | PARKS | SAVINGS



SUMMER SAVINGS AT CAMPING WORLD

I Love the '90s: Camping World shoppers can revisit the last millennium's final decade during the I Love the '90s event, June 23 through 26. The first 50 customers each day will receive a gift, and everyone can fill up on free lunches, Friday, June 24, and Saturday, June 25, from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. Look for special savings on Doorbusters, along with other sale items and unadvertised discounts.

50th Birthday Party: Camping World's and Good Sam's yearlong birthday celebration culminates in a party so big it spans two weekends, July 15 through 16, and 22 through 23, at all Camping World SuperCenters. In addition to extra savings on Doorbusters, each day the first 50 customers will receive a gift, and cake will be served from 1 to 3 p.m. to mark the twin birthdays.

Bonus Bags: Camping World customers who spend \$50 or more during any one visit this summer will receive a reusable shopping bag, while supplies last. Bag designs will feature a 1990s theme from June 20 through July 10 and showcase Camping World's and Good Sam's joint 50th birthdays from July 11 through 31.

Extra Savings: Good Sam members get exclusive online access to hundreds of dollars' worth of Camping World coupons at **www.goodsamclub.com/coupons**. That's in addition to RV-accessory savings and installation specials throughout the year and 25 percent off LP-gas on Tuesdays and Wednesdays.



Budget Booster

Good Sam members who use the Good Sam Camping World Visa® credit card can now earn rewards faster with three points per \$1 spent on gas and diesel purchases. With the exclusive Rec Rewards program, cardholders earn points with every purchase:

- 5 points for every \$1 spent at Camping World and on Good Sam products and services
- 3 points for every \$1 spent on fuel and at privately owned campgrounds in the United States and Canada
- 1 point for every \$1 spent everywhere else Visa is accepted.
- ▶ Members can apply online at www.goodsamcampingworldvisa.com, by phone at 844-271-2591 (TDD/TTY: 888-819-1918) or in person at any Camping World SuperCenter.

This offer is subject to credit approval. The Rec Rewards program is provided by Comenity Capital Bank, and its terms may discontinue or change at any time. For full Rewards terms and conditions, please visit www.comenity.net/goodsamcampingworld. The Good Sam Camping World Visa and Visa Signature cards are issued by Comenity Capital Bank, pursuant to license from Visa U.S.A. Inc.

To find all 120 Camping World SuperCenters, driving directions, hours and available services, go to www.campingworld.com/stores

Good Sam RVer of the Year: Who Will Wear the 2016 Halo?

In online voting last fall, Life members Bill and France Moriarty captured the Good Sam Club's RVer of the Year title for 2015. The perennial volunteers not only won \$500 in Camping World merchandise certificates, their chosen charity, Habitat for Humanity Care-A-Vanners, received a \$3,000 donation from the Good Sam Club. As the 2015 winners, the Moriartys joined an elite group of do-gooders

dating back to 2008 when Richard Daniels won the inaugural award for founding a network of homeless-animal shelters.

▶ To nominate a public-spirited Good Sam Club member or couple for the 2016 RVer of the Year award before the July 15 deadline, go to www.goodsamclub.com/rveroftheyear. You can even nominate yourself and promote your favorite cause.

















RVers of the Year, past and present: Richard Daniels (2008), Sue and Monty Scales (2009), Marilyn and Don Buller (2010), Joyce and John Williams (2011), Fred Moore (2012), Joan and Frank Anderson (2013), Ken and Diane Wagner (2014), and France and Bill Moriarty (2015).

GOING PLACES WITH GOOD SAM

REGIONAL EVENTS

Don't miss the chance to connect with fellow Good Sam Club members at the following RV-friendly gatherings.

Jenny Brook Bluegrass Festival June 23 through 26

Tunbridge World's Fairgrounds Tunbridge, Vermont

Country Fest/Mark Chestnut June 24 and 25

Red Barn Convention Center Winchester, Ohio

Rocks, Ribs and Ridges Festival June 25 and 26

Sussex County Fairgrounds Augusta, New Jersey



Oregon Jamboree July 29 through 31

Sweet Home, Oregon

Country Fest/Moe Bandy August 5 and 6

Red Barn Convention Center Winchester, Ohio

Fall Festival at the Beach September 8 through 15

Johnny's Lakeside RV Resort Foley, Alabama

Great Prosser Balloon Rally September 23 through 25

Wine Country RV Resort Prosser, Washington

Norsk Høstfest September 28 through October 1

North Dakota State Fairgrounds Minot, North Dakota

Great Prosser Balloon Rally: Soaring over central Washington.

Country Fest/ Bellamy Brothers October 7 and 8

Red Barn Convention Center Winchester, Ohio

Sun Valley Jazz and Music Festival October 19 through 23

Sun Valley and Ketchum, Idaho

Beer and Wine at the Vines November 4 through 6

Vines RV Resort Paso Robles, California

▶ Find the full schedule of Good Sam events, including State/Provincial Rallies, at www.goodsamclub.com/events.

RV TOURS

Seasoned travel planners at Fantasy RV Tours sweat the details so Good Sam Club members can experience must-see destinations.



Calgary Stampede: World-class cowboys and midway thrills.

Calgary Stampede Rodeo Rally July 13 through 18

Autumn in New England Tour September 20 through October 17

Albuquerque Balloon Fiesta Rally October 7 through 10

New Orleans Culinary Christmas Rally December 6 through 12

► For more information about members-only guided RV tours or to make a reservation, visit www.fantasyrvtours.com/ goodsam or call Fantasy RV Tours at 800-453-9511.

Two Ways to Save at Pilot Flying J

- Swiping the Good Sam Club Swipe & Save membership card at the Pilot and Flying J fuel pumps gets members instant savings on gasoline and diesel.
- 2 Applying for the Pilot Flying J RV Plus charge card can save members even more on gasoline and diesel fuel, LP-gas and dump-station fees.





Swipe & Save Membership Card

Savings for All Membership Levels

Gas (U.S.)

Diesel (U.S.)

Gas/Diesel (Canada)

LP-Gas

Dump-Station Fees

3¢ per gallon

1¢ per liter

5¢ per gallon

\$2.50

Good Sam Member Savings	Deluxe Member Savings	Life Member Savings	Elite Member Savings
4¢ per gallon	5¢ per gallon	6¢ per gallon	7¢ per gallon
6¢ per gallon	7¢ per gallon	8¢ per gallon	9¢ per gallon
1¢ per liter	1¢ per liter	2¢ per liter	2¢ per liter
10¢ per gallon	10¢ per gallon	10¢ per gallon	10¢ per gallon
\$5	\$5	\$5	\$5

• Good Sam members can apply for the RV Plus charge card at www.goodsamclub.com/pfj or by calling RV Plus customer service at 855-478-7587. The website also links to a guide to the more than 650 Pilot and Flying J travel centers and travel plazas throughout North America with information on restaurants, RV lanes, RV parking, LP-gas and dump stations.

© BEAM US UP, SCOTTY The Good Sam Club and Camping World weren't the only stellar debuts of 1966. Captain Kirk and the rest of the *Enterprise* crew boldly went where no man had gone before when *Star Trek* launched on NBC that fall. Judging from the franchise's longevity, Spock's Vulcan salute "Live long and prosper" had the desired effect.



A Great Ambition

Augusta introduces the AB-35RS fifth-wheel trailer with a number of unexpected features earmarked for full-timers and extended travelers

here's no question that when people embark on a path to extended or full-time RV living, the most difficult part of the journey is choosing the right rig. For this type of RV travel, the fifth-wheel is a popular choice. Finding a fifth-wheel that will meet all expectations takes some study and time in the field. It's easy to get wrapped up in the visual "gingerbread" and try to keep costs low, but the reality of spending a great amount of time in a fifth-wheel can be fulfilled only by a product that will hold up well under hard use. It's tempting to take the best deal, but read the fine print.

Many manufacturers warn against full-time living. Augusta RV, a company with only a few years under its belt, promotes the opposite. The company builds fifth-wheels that are designed to spend more time on the road than in storage, and its Ambition AB-35RS is just one example of a unit intended for full-time use but with a price tag well below what

one would expect for such a well-equipped rig. And, since its fifth-wheels are sold directly from the manufacturer, buyers get a lot of bang for their bucks.

The Ambition AB-35RS is new for model year 2017, and the triple-slide format makes it fit for full-timing use right out of the box. Knowing that it's a fifth-wheel that will spend great amounts of time on the road, Augusta concentrates on building a robust chassis and suspension. The company starts with stout 12-inch I-beam main rails and completes the chassis using Dexter axles rated at 8,000 pounds and fitted with multi-piston automotive-style disc brakes. Attached to the axles is the MORryde SRE4000 suspension system, allowing for a full 4 inches of suspension travel and greatly improving overall ride smoothness while helping to reduce unnecessary frame stress or highway-impact damage to the body and its contents.

Top-notch Goodyear 215/75R17.5 H-rated tires are

Handsome graphics that are not flashy enhance the Ambition AB-35RS's gel-coated hung-fiberglass exterior.





the large island structure with a hard-surface countertop and stainless-steel double sink help make the galley more homelike. Galley users have easy access to all appliances. An adjacent 50-inch TV with a fireplace below is directly across from theater seating.

mounted on good-looking eight-spoke aluminum wheels. A six-point Equalizer hydraulic leveling system, which has been backlit by the glow of blue LED accent lights at all legs, rounds out the attachments to the chassis. It's clear that the company has cut no corners in building a chassis that should ultimately provide long life and a pleasant towing experience.

Inside, the floorplan is not unique, but additional touches added to conventional segments bring out a lot of personality. The rear section is devoted to the living room with theater seating and an opposing entertainment center, connected to the kitchen. A large island counter is the focal point of the roomy galley, and opposing slides open up the area tremendously. Up the stairs takes you to the side bath and front bedroom that's big enough to handle the king mattress and gigantic front closet.

Once aboard the very inviting, comfortable and super homey-feeling interior, it's easy to appreciate the design elements and nice touches that rival a high-end house. Here you'll find an abundant use of lightly shaded natural solid cherry-wood doors and drawers that lead to large storage areas. All the cabinetry is built solidly using dovetail drawers for more strength, and standard self-closing guides.

The heavy use of the golden-toned woodwork directs your attention immediately to the theater seating resting in the streetside living-room slideout. The dual reclining theater seats appear to be perfect for the environment from

first glance, offering roominess, access to entertainment, cupholders and a plush feel; however, almost all of that goes to the wayside once attempting to maintain a reclined position. The seats are comfy, but unless you're a body builder with the ability to hold the seats open, they simply won't stay in the desired position. We would opt for the company's upgraded furniture when ordering the fifth-wheel.

There's no doubt the theater seating provides an amazing view and an ideal distance to the huge 50-inch LED HDTV, which also doubles as a door, giving access to a number of shelves and the Bluetooth-enabled entertainment system behind it. The rear wall of the fifthwheel is occupied mostly by the 85-inch hide-a-bed sofa, which we found to easily promote midday napping.

Resting just above the rock-solid foundation is the flooring, which blends nicely with the overall decor package. Here you'll see materials commonly

found in custom homes, which sets this fifth-wheel apart from many others on the market. While the hard-surface flooring may have a slightly strange feel to bare feet, there's no question about the quality, serious durability and originality of installing individual hand-laid tiles in a pleasant-looking pattern. Ultimately, this allows for a one-of-a-kind custom-home feel.

Taking up a large portion of the lower section of the fifth-wheel is the extra-functional and user-friendly kitchen. A lot of real estate is devoted to the island with a one-piece solid-surface counter, stainless-steel sinks and a high-rise faucet. Integrated into the impressive island is just the right mix of modern technology, strategically located. The tech-top, for lack of a better description, has an undercounter charging station, essentially making this a "smart island."

Directly across from the island lies another solid-surface prep area to

A big-screen LED HDTV is mounted on a hinge that allows it to swing open to provide access to additional storage shelving and a Bluetooth-enabled entertainment system.

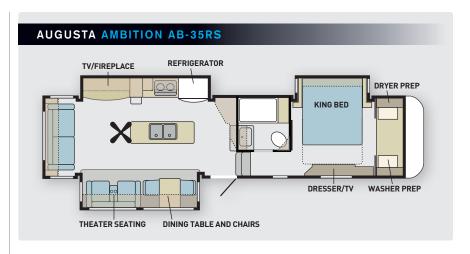




the left of a stainless-steel-trimmed residential range. This is an interesting addition and one that is not yet that common. With the use of residential refrigerators, like the stainless-steel-clad LG in the Ambition, it makes sense that some manufacturers will look for compact residential stoves and ovens, suitably code-approved for use in an RV, and might even set a new trend.

Stationed above the stove is a large stainless convection microwave. Below the small strip of counter next to the stove is a pullout counter extension and a matching solid-surface cutting board with a square hole in the end for sliding scraps directly into the included and aligned trash can. This is a valuable feature for any cook, but the mechanism could use a few more screws and a little glue to function as designed.

Close to the refrigerator is an easy-to-reach, lighted, almost-walk-in pantry. The galley storage in the Ambition was hands-down one of our all-time favorites. Not only is there ample space



everywhere for everything, but the layout is second to none. Within no more than two steps, the entire kitchen can be reached and manipulated. We loved this kitchen! Oh, did we mention just how much cabinet space there is, too?

No need to worry about seeing clearly in the kitchen or anywhere else inside, as the Ambition is guaranteed by the manufacturer to be outfitted with the

most lighting of any fifth-wheel currently on the market, and we don't think it's a false claim. The Ambition is absolutely loaded from top to bottom, front to back, inside and out with lights of all kinds, sizes and colors. Inside, the massive number of recessed LED lights ranges from dim-white to bright lights, mood lighting to blue lighting and nearly all that fits between — there's even a selec-







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NEW! DualAir[™] technology:

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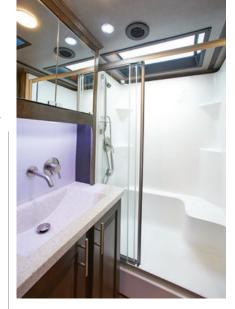
tion of dimmer switches throughout.

Since the Ambition is apparently aiming to be a fully loaded fifth-wheel with innovations exclusive to the market segment, utilizing the right balance of classic RV features with an appropriate touch of tech, there's no way the bathroom would be overlooked, and it wasn't. Augusta opted to mix a little old with new, taking a different approach to how a lavatory sink and faucet should look. Kudos to the company for its bathroom design and component selection with the use of a cultured marble-like one-piece counter and sink, borrowed directly from the residential market. and a waterfall faucet protruding out of a frosted-glass backsplash. The surprisingly roomy sink setup nestles into the wall right below a mirrored doubledoor medicine cabinet.

Aside from the updated look, the bathroom houses a high-quality Dometic 320 porcelain toilet and a relatively common fiberglass shower A waterfall faucet is a great addition to the bathroom. Sliding doors open wide to easily hop in and out of the extra-large shower.

enclosure, supported by glass sliding doors, a molded shower seat and a shower wand that left much to be desired. On the plus side, the shower is exceptionally roomy.

It's only a short trip down the hallway to the master bedroom, but keep your eyes open. In those few feet, if not paying attention to the hallway window covering while walking around or having your back turned, it'll bite you hard. Perhaps leaving out the window covering would be more appropriate, or even a smaller window placed farther up the wall and out of the way. Aside from that small observation, the unparalleled slumber quality provided by the residential I-Rest Cool-Gel king mattress is literally a step away. Take it from someone with sleep-related issues, this mattress is wonderful and



promoted restful nights.

While the mattress takes up the majority of the front section, which is expanded by the streetside slideout, there is plenty of space allocated for the wardrobe and related cabinetry. The wardrobe is huge, and shelves and cubbyholes placed throughout swallow up a lot of clothing and personal items. Lighting with a blue-purple hue



Bedlocker® stands alone as the secure, remote-control retractable cover that's ideal when you're hauling any type of trailer. It opens or closes in less than 30 seconds and can stop at any point.

- Great for fifth-wheel hitches; keeps the latch securely locked away when not in use
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- Powerful electric motor wires to your truck battery
- Heavy-duty, powder-coated aluminum exterior retracts into canister
- Manual override release in case of lost remotes or dead battery
- · No-drill installation
- Three-year warranty



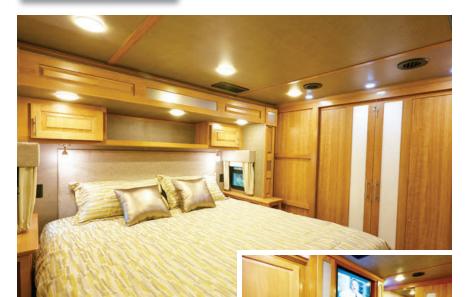
Your hitch shouldn't stop working in wet weather.



Sway Prevention. Rain or Shine.

Swaypro prevents sway • Pre-adjusted hitch head • Backup without disconnecting Rotating latches • No noise • Hook up fast with no pins or cips to lose





The I-Rest Cool-Gel mattress takes up most of the bedroom and helps occupants sleep the night away. The front closet will handle big wardrobes. The dresser with a built-in TV is positioned in front of the bed.

adds a touch of class. Inside the front closet area are provisions for a washer and dryer, which can be used as a large dresser if the laundry facilities are not needed. Another dresser is in front of the bed, and here a 32-inch LED HDTV is mounted, with provisions for a satellite receiver.

While staying in the AB-35RS during rapidly changing inclement weather, it was obvious just how well the insulation was done, leading to true four-season protection. The Ambition utilizes combined fiberglass and thermal-wrap insulation throughout the underbelly, tucking them into all the floor and side-wall crevices.

To keep up with creature comforts, one more area claimed to be unique to Augusta RV and its Ambition is the super-adjustable and powerful, quick-reacting interior climate system, complete with multiple zones, furnaces and air conditioners. Combining Atwood's intelligent multi-location digital thermostat with the two 20,000-Btu furnaces and two 15,000-Btu air conditioners ensures there's never a shortage or a long wait for a cool, soothing breeze or heated air.

The heating system also utilizes a portion of one of the two furnaces to

supply warm air down to the holding tanks, aiding the already well-equipped four-season prepping. Finalizing the four-season foundation are heat pads for all tanks, topped off by a single piece of polypropylene plastic that seals the entire underbelly.

Another area where the Ambition stands out is its wall-construction methods. Augusta hangs the side walls on a 2.25-inch-thick welded-aluminum superstructure that uses 16-inch oncenter stud framing. The aforementioned fiberglass insulation is paired with Thermopane windows to improve the trailer's four-season capability.

Closely mimicking the general building process, the three slideouts are crafted using the same construction techniques as the side walls, maintaining high strength and rigidity. To assure proper alignment between the side walls and corresponding slideouts, special bracing is added and kept in place until the marriage of the slideout to the side wall. Smooth gelcoat fiberglass skin graces the exterior that's treated to a rather conservative graphics package that exudes more class than flash. Storage-wise, the main forward exterioraccess storage compartment is huge

SPECIFICATIONS

AUGUSTA AMBITION A	AB-35RS	
Exterior Length	36' 9"	
Exterior Width	8' 6"	
Exterior Height	13' 4"	
Interior Width	7' 11"	
Interior Height	7' 7"	
with 16" on center walls, fiberglass in	Aluminum frame studs, 2.25" hung nsulation, gelcoat erior, rubber root	
Freshwater Cap.	79 gal.	
Black-/Gray-Water Ca	ip. 40 / 80 gal.	
LP-Gas Cap.	14 gal.	
Water-Heater Cap.	16 gal.	
Refrigerator	20.7 cu. ft.	
Furnace	(2) 20,000 Btu	
Air Conditioner	(2) 15,000 Btu	
Converter	75 amp	
Inverter	1,800 watt	
Battery	(2) Group 27	
Tires 2	215/75R17.5 LR H	
Suspension	MORryde SRE 4000	
Weight (freshwater, w LP-gas full; no cargo)	ater heater, 15,270 lbs.	
Hitch Weight	3,310 lbs.	
Axle Weight	11,960 lbs.	
GVWR	19,100 lbs.	
GAWR	8,000 lbs.	
Cargo Carrying Cap.	3,830 lbs.	
Base MSRP	\$75,500*	
As-Tested MSRP	\$81,100*	
Warranty 1 year/standard, 3 years structural, 5 years/delamination		
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with nicely concealed access to the central vacuum and other service items. Up front, part of the compartment is used for the batteries and power inverter.

In a relatively short time, Augusta has figured out how to build fifthwheels that appeal to people whose desire is to spend a lot of time on the road and in RV parks. The Ambition gets it right and should provide many years of service for those who want comfort and quality plus all the bells and whistles at a reasonable price.

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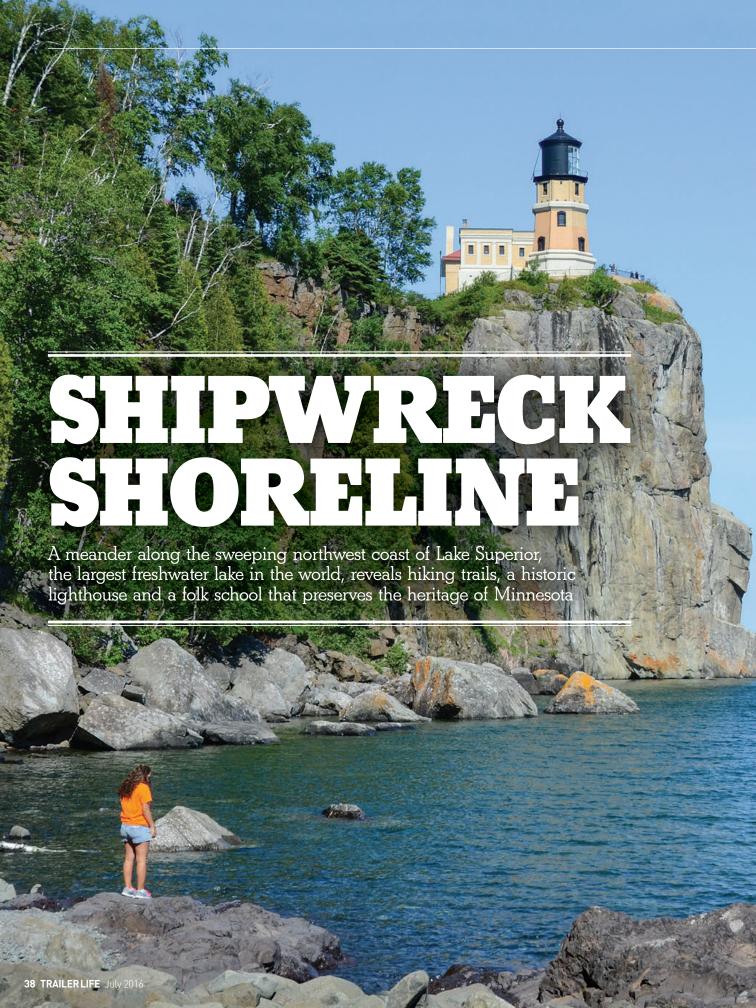


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Cutaway view of the Legendary 4R100 Model

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...The captain wired in he had water comin' in and the good ship and crew was in peril.

And later that night when 'is lights went outta sight came the wreck of the Edmund Fitzgerald.

— Gordon Lightfoot, "Wreck of the Edmund Fitzgerald" (1976)

n November 10, 1975, the S.S. Edmund Fitzgerald, a 719-foot cargo ship loaded with iron ore, was making headway across Lake Superior when a severe storm hit. The immense lake roiled with 30-foot waves and gale-force winds, claiming the ship and her crew of 29 and making headlines. Newsweek carried the story, inspiring singersongwriter Gordon Lightfoot to compose his famous ballad immortalizing the shipwreck.

I was 14 years old at the time. I don't remember the wreck, but the song about the Edmund Fitzgerald's final hours and "the big lake they call Gitche Gumee" touched my soul. Forty-one years later, the tune remains a favorite. Last summer, after traveling the northwest shoreline of Lake Superior from Duluth to Grand Marais, Minnesota, Gitche Gumee is now a favorite camping destination as well.

My husband, Jack, and I went there on a hunch. While planning a road trip from the Adirondacks in upstate New York to our home in Montana, Lake Superior caught our eye. It's hard to miss it on a map. The largest of the Great Lakes and the largest freshwater lake in the world by surface area (31,700 square miles), the enormous glacially carved basin on the U.S.-Canada border is 350 miles at its longest point and 160 miles at its widest. However, with 1,826 miles of shoreline (not counting islands), Lake Superior could supply a decade of pit stops on our east-west route. We never did narrow it down to just one.

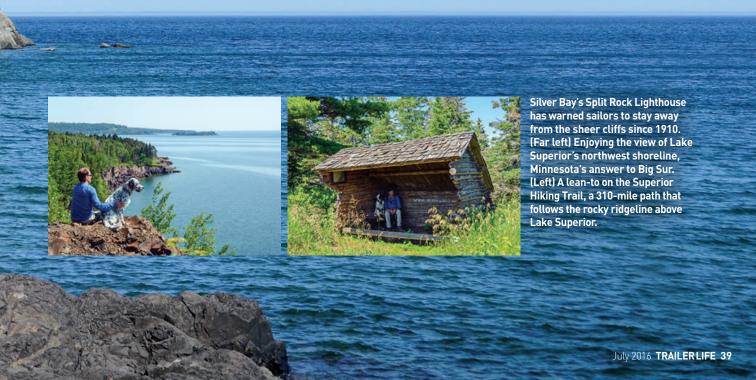
Our road atlas revealed little at first glance, just Highway 61, which traveled close to the shoreline through a seaside-sounding town called Two Harbors, a ski town called Lutsen, French-sounding Grand Marais and a smattering of small villages sparsely spread along the 145-mile route from Duluth to Grand Portage at the Canadian border.

Upon closer inspection, Highway 61, the North Shore Scenic Drive, is considered an All-American Road Scenic Byway. The unpopulated shoreline seemed to have a state campground every dozen miles or so. Then I noticed a historic site called Split Rock Lighthouse and a nearby place called Castle Danger. A hiking trail seemed to wind its way north slightly inland from the road.

Lakeside camping, a historic lighthouse, hiking and a precariously named place — Lake Superior's northwest shore was a destination! Once there, we discovered a mix of intriguing sites, tasty local fare and recreational opportunities, plus a traditional folk school with classes for visitors like us.

First Impression. Heading north from Duluth on Highway 61, we passed through the Silver Creek Tunnel, which cut through a rock cliff above the shoreline. Just past the tunnel exit, we pulled over at a scenic overlook for a view of the lake. During the 17th century, the Ojibwe, a Native American people also known as the Chippewa, migrated westward from the mouth of the St. Lawrence River to the Great Lakes. They called Lake Superior "Gitche," which translates to "great water" or "great sea." Watching the blue waves roll on and on to the horizon, Gitche Gumee looked more ocean than lake.

It acts like one, too. When the weather is fair and calm, the lake is a gentle giant, massaging its rocky shore with mellow waves and enticing sailors, motor-boaters, anglers and paddlers to enjoy its waters. But it can turn moody without warning. A strong westerly wind will coax it into a violent frenzy, which is what happened that fateful evening







(Above, from left) Admiring one of the many waterfalls along the trails near Split Rock Lighthouse. A hiker examines the lighthouse's namesake rock formation. (Bottom) From a high point along the Superior Hiking trail, the author savors a view of the lake.

in November 1975 when the famed Edmund Fitzgerald sank. Luckily, the midsummer forecast during our visit was sunny and warm. The dramatic view north along the heavily timbered, cliffy shoreline and across the endless water instilled a welcome anticipation in us. To a couple who enjoys the outdoors, free of crowds and full of nature, we had found the Big Sur of Minnesota.

Biking. At the Silver Creek pullout, we also discovered the Gitchi-Gami bike path. About 25 miles of the proposed 88-mile paved recreation trail is complete. Several cyclists pedaled by us, along with a couple of joggers and

dog walkers. The path parallels the shoreline and eventually follows it all the way to Grand Marais. Cleverly, the completed sections are adjacent to the campgrounds and towns along the lake, with most of the voids on stretches that are the farthest from the places where the average person is likely to ride.

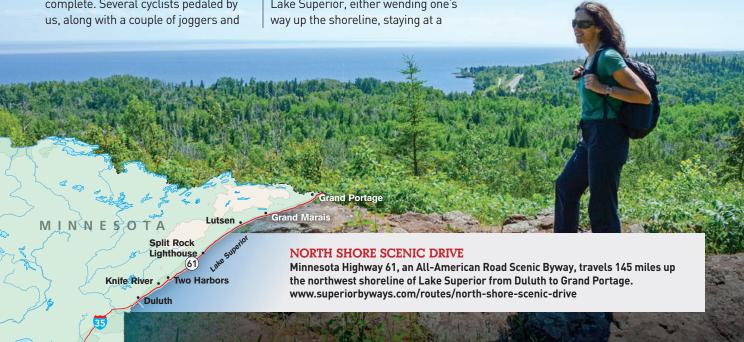
Camping. We continued north toward our campsite at Gooseberry Falls State Park, the first of the eight state parks along Highway 61 about 40 miles north of Duluth. There are two ways to visit the northwest shore of Lake Superior, either wending one's way up the shoreline, staying at a

LAKE SUPERIOR STATS AND FACTS

Lake Superior is the coldest, deepest and highest in elevation of the five Great Lakes and contains 10 percent of the world's fresh water. There is enough water in Lake Superior to submerge North and South America in 12 inches of water. Lake Superior is the western start of the 2,342-mile-long St. Lawrence Seaway, and Duluth, the westernmost point of Lake Superior, is the farthest inland of any port in the world.

It is said that this great lake "never gives up her dead" because of its low water temperature. With an average temperature of 40 degrees Fahrenheit, the water is so cold, it inhibits the growth of bacteria that causes bodies to bloat and then rise to the surface. Divers typically find victims fully preserved years afterward. During most winters, 40 to 95 percent of the lake's surface freezes over; however, the lake freezes completely only once every 15 to 20 years.

- Surface area: 31,700 square miles
- Average depth: 489 feet
- Deepest point: 1,333 feet
- Average water temperature: 40 degrees F
- Shore length: 1,826 miles, plus 900 miles of island shoreline
- Length (at longest point): 350 miles
- Width (at widest point): 160 miles
- Number of fish species: 78
- Average underwater visibility: 24 feet
- Tallest known wave: 51 feet
- Number of shipwrecks: 350



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different campground each evening, or picking one and traveling from it to various points of interest each day. There's no wrong choice. Each park is well maintained and near the water, with its own interesting historical and natural sites and educational programs.

We opted for Gooseberry Falls State Park for our entire visit, to take a break from our bigger cross-country trip. The 1,682-acre park is located near the mouth of the Gooseberry River and boasts five hike-to waterfalls, the largest and closest of which is handicap-accessible, and access to the Gitchi-Gami bike trail and the Superior Hiking Trail, a visitor center and several historic buildings.

Two Harbors. En route to Gooseberry Falls, we stopped in Two Harbors, a pretty waterside village overlooking Agate Bay. We took tours of the local lighthouse (the oldest operating lighthouse in Minnesota) and the *Edna G*, the last working coal-fed, steam-powered tugboat on the Great

Lakes. After watching a couple of "lakers" (ocean-bound cargo ships) depart the bay, we poked around the cute shops in town, then stopped in at the Castle Danger microbrewery.

The brewery proved perilously tasty, whereas the actual settlement of Castle Danger, several miles north of Two Harbors, was little more than a benign blip on the highway, so-named either because the cliffs there resemble a castle or because a boat named Castle ran aground there years ago.

Superior Hiking Trail. While in Two Harbors, we picked up several section-maps for the Superior Hiking Trail at the trail association's headquarters located on the main street (Highway 61). The Superior Hiking Trail (SHT), a 296-mile footpath, follows the ridgeline above the lake with detours inland to ponds, rivers and waterfalls. There are seemingly endless possibilities for hiking along the trail and its various spurs. A shuttle allows hikers to explore a north-south section without the need for two cars.



To narrow the choices, we disregarded the shuttle and limited ourselves to loop hikes, which start and end at the same place, but even that strategy presented too many options.

"What do you want to see on your hike?" asked one of the friendly

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(Above, from left) Handmade skis on display in Grand Marais' North House Folk School, a haven for the region's traditional crafts. Anchored in a small cove, sailboats bob in the morning mist. The head of a huge fiberglass walleye pokes out from one corner of the iconic Beaver House bait shop in Grand Marais, and its tail pops out the other side.

volunteers at the trail association's office, "How far do you want to walk?"

"Something about 5 miles long with waterfalls and a view of Lake Superior would be great," I replied.

"Rivers with fish in them," added Jack, an avid angler. Lake Superior and its 200 tributaries support 88 different species of native and non-native fish,

including trout, salmon, walleye, pike, bass and various pan fish.

We settled on the Split Rock River Loop. It offered all of our criteria, and the trailhead was near the Split Rock Lighthouse in Split Rock State Park where we wanted to go after our hike. The next morning, we drove to the trailhead at a wayside rest area just

LAKE OF MANY NAMES

Most people believe Lake Superior is so named because it is superior in size to the other Great Lakes. That's true, at least from the British point of view, though the lake has also been called Gitche Gumee (spelled various ways) or "the shining blue seawater," 'great water" or "great sea" by the Ojibwe (Chippewa) who inhabited the area about 500 years ago. French explorers during the 1600s and the fur trappers who followed them called it "le lac Supérieur," which translates to "Upper Lake" — in this case, the lake above Lake Huron. Shortly after that, Jesuit missionaries in the area referred to it as "lac Tracy" after Marquis Alexandre de Prouville de Tracy, a French aristocrat who initiated the war that left the Iroquois and Mohawk nations under French rule and forced them to accept Catholicism. After the British gained control of the region following the French and Indian War, they Anglicized le lac Supérieur to Lake Superior.



After crossing a bridge over the river, we turned back toward the lake. The path followed a ridge with breathtaking views across the water. We rested briefly at a small lean-to then dropped down to Highway 61, closing the loop by walking a short way along the bike trail. With little vertical climb and excellent footing, the hike was not difficult, and it proved a perfect SHT sampler.

Split Rock Lighthouse. The 54-foot-tall Split Rock Lighthouse was another high point of Lake Superior's northwest coast, both literally and figuratively. Built atop a 130-foot cliff, the national historic landmark first cast its beacon, which reaches up to 22 miles, in 1910. The lighthouse was built in

response to a tragic storm five years earlier during which 29 ships sank or ran aground. On the way into the visitor center, we paused by an enormous anchor, salvaged from the schoonerbarge *Madeira*, one of the casualties of that storm.

Towed like a barge but also with sails, schooner-barges evolved from wooden sailing ships on the Great Lakes in the late 1800s. Steamships towed the schooner-barges, laden with grain, ore and other commodities. As the *Madeira* heaved and smashed against the rocks, a brave member of the crew jumped ashore with a safety line amidst the battering waves, helping eight other men to safety. By coincidence, the tugboat *Edna G* rescued the stranded survivors after the storm abated.

Split Rock Lighthouse was decommissioned in 1969. Since then, the Minnesota Historical Society has maintained it as the centerpiece of Split Rock Lighthouse State Park. The lighthouse campus includes the tower, a fog-signal building with immense horns on its lakeward facade, houses and barns where the lightkeepers resided and a boathouse.

After climbing the lighthouse, we followed a path to a long concrete staircase, which sloped steeply down to the water. It descended next to the ruins of an old tramway, a rail system that was used to hoist supplies from the boathouse to the top of the cliff. Standing on the boulder-strewn beach, the lighthouse loomed above us as a stalwart landmark and a reminder of the many sailors who lost their lives to the lake in the past 150 years.

Grand Marais. The next day we continued up the coast, hoping to rent kayaks in Grand Marais for a paddle on the lake, but the day brought pea-soup fog. Lake Superior is so large that it impacts the regional weather. Like a sea, it has onshore and offshore breezes. When the wind carries warm, humid air from the land over the chilly water, it condenses, forming fog and



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thwarting any water-bound activities.

Instead, we visited the North
House Folk School by the harbor
in Grand Marais. The school offers
classes in traditional arts and crafts
that reflect the heritage of northern
Minnesota. Anyone can sign up for
classes in such time-honored skills
such as bread baking, woodcarving,
boatbuilding, basket weaving, blacksmithing, toolmaking and the various
fiber arts. A hobbyist hideaway for
those who like to work with their hands,
the school offered a unique look at the
region's heritage while preserving it
for future generations.

Afterward, as we headed south from Grand Marais to our campsite at Gooseberry Falls, we contemplated the school, appreciating its contribution to preserving the past. For the present, we needed to travel on. In the future, we knew we would be back. Lake Superior's northwest shoreline is too great to limit to one visit. It's a coastal gem loaded with delightful surprises.

TRAVEL TIPS AND WHERE TO STAY

Summer is prime time for vacationing on the part of the Lake Superior coastline called the North Shore, though visitors abound year-round, hunting in the fall, and ice-skating, snowshoeing, snowmobiling, and downhill and cross-country skiing in winter. The lake is calmest during June and July. October and November are the stormiest months.

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Grand Marais Campground and Marina 800-998-0959

www.grandmaraisrecreationarea.com

GRAND PORTAGE

Grand Portage Marina and RV Park

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www.grandportage.com/marina.php

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Knife River Campground

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www.kniferivercampground.com



TWO HARBORS

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www.bookyoursite.com/campground/ harborsburling

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www.penmaralltercampsite.com

MINNESOTA STATE PARKS

Eight state parks along Highway 61 have public campgrounds: Cascade River, George Crosby Manitou, Gooseberry Falls, Grand Portage, Judge C.R. Magney, Split Rock Lighthouse, Temperance River and Tettegouche. Reservations are highly recommended. The campgrounds fill up, especially on summer weekends. 888-646-6367, www.mnstateparks.info





article by Gary Wescott

Designed for Adventure

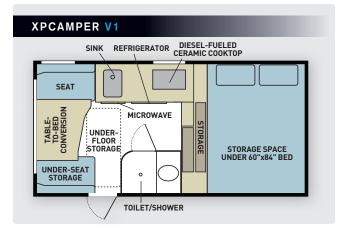
Explore the backcountry with the XPCamper V1 truck camper, an all-weather hard-sided pop-up with marine-grade appliances powered by diesel fuel and everything needed for back-roads roughing it in style

hen we saw the XPCamper prototype a few years ago — with its unique aerodynamic roofline — we thought it was just another popup truck camper. That was our first mistake. XPCamper founder Marc Wassmann, a professional chef by trade, had been applying his German sense of perfection in some of San Francisco's better restaurants for 20 years, so when he searched for the ideal camper in which to explore some of California's back roads, nothing on the market had the features he demanded.

The solution was to mix up an allnew recipe and design his own. Who would guess that a German chef could build campers? But Wassmann's background allowed him to think outside the box. With the help of his wife, Toni, a graphic designer, things started to take shape. Wassmann's motto through the process was, "Include everything you need and nothing you don't need." After seven years of research and testing, the XPCamper was ready for the outdoor enthusiast's table.

Blending his own requirements with proven German and marine-grade components, he used closed-cell foam sandwiched between hand-laid unidirectional fiberglass reinforced with carbon fiber to give the XP the strength to survive rough roads while minimizing weight. Together with German Seitz dual-pane windows, the foam walls provide great insulation. The seamless monocoque construction allows no opportunities for leaks and eliminates the "stick





(Right, from top) A large dinette in the rear is comfortable for two and big enough for company. The bed rises on gas struts to reveal a huge storage compartment, fitted with matching carrying bags. Standard in European RVs, the cassette toilet has a removable holding tank that can be emptied into a residential or public toilet or a dump station.

and staple" or welded aluminum frames that are prone to cracking due to off-pavement twisting.

His preferred foundation for the XP V1 is a one-ton diesel pickup, on which he replaces the factory bed with a custom XP Truck Tray system that offers maximum utility. The Truck Tray features removable fold-down side panels, headache racks (truck-cab racks to protect the rear truck window), spare-tire carriers and on-bed storage boxes that can be custom-tailored to an individual's needs.

The Truck Tray system allows the truck camper to be easily removed, returning the base truck to a multipurpose work vehicle. The unique XPC Flex-Mount system maximizes the departure angle and eliminates the frame flex that would tear an ordinary truck camper apart on rough roads. Large under-bed storage and side storage compartments are bonuses that are often missing in small campers.

To reduce wind drag and allow the truck and camper to fit into a shipping container (a growing consideration for people discovering how easy it is to explore beyond North







America), the XPCamper is a pop-up design. The rear portion is hard-sided, and the front cabover bed area is made of a high-tech, waterproof marine material with large windows that are zippered and waterproof. With the top in the down (or compressed) position, the camper is completely secured and locked inside hard walls. Pushing a button on a remote

control activates hydraulic lifts that raise the sides to full height in seconds. Stairs slide out, so it's easy to get up into the camper.

That's where the real surprise awaits. Over the cab is a queen-size bed using European-designed spring coils by Froli and a high-grade foam





(Far left) The efficient Dometic Coolmatic compressor refrigerator does not need to be level like the more common absorption-type ones in most RVs. (Left) Out of sight under a hinged counter when not needed, the wet bath is actually quite large and includes a shower and Thetford cassette toilet.

mattress. The bed lifts up on gas struts to reveal a huge, easily organized storage compartment, fitted with matching carrying bags and enough room for a long-distance, multi-season wardrobe.

As a chef, Wassmann naturally assigned plenty of counter space to the kitchen. A diesel-fueled cooktop eliminates the need to carry LP-gas or look for a refill station in foreign countries. The Webasto diesel-powered heating system provides hot water and heat to the living area, enclosed water tanks (fresh and gray), storage compartments and the floor. A 3-gallon diesel-fuel cell within the camper is used in lieu of common LP-gas cylinder(s).

Speaking of hot water, as you enter the XP's door, the large counter space on the right flips up to reveal a good-size shower and the cassette toilet, commonly used in European RVs. With a practical German outlook, Wassmann did not find it necessary to have a separate sink to brush your teeth or

QUICK INFO

Box Length		8'
Exterior Width		7' 0"
Interior Height		6' 6"
Exterior Height		4' 6" collapsed 7' 5" extended
Freshwater Cap.		75 gal.
Gray-Water Cap.		27 gal.
Black-Water Cap).	5 gal.
Refrigerator	12-volt	DC/120-volt AC/ 240-volt AC
Water-Heater Cap.		3 gal.

Furnace	6,500 Btu
	rter Magnum 30-amp, 2,000-watt pure sine wave
Batteries	300- or 600-amp-hour AGM battery bank
UVW	2,250 lbs.
GVWR	Depends on truck
MSRP base	\$88,825 with Truck Tray system installed

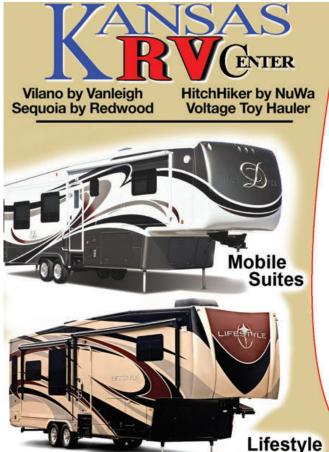
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wash your hands just 3 feet from the main kitchen sink. The faucet features a hands-free, hip-operated system to save water and eliminate touching the faucet handle with dirty or soapy hands. At mealtime, the large rear dinette, located next to a picture window, is comfortable for two but big enough for company, eliminating the cramped feeling of many small campers.

All internal and external lights are LED, and the meticulously engineered

electrical system uses a 300- or 600amp-hour AGM battery bank and a 30-amp/1,000- or 2,000-watt pure sine inverter/converter that quickly recharges the batteries while plugged into shorepower. Otherwise, the 400watt solar panels can keep the batteries charged, even while running the Dometic Coolmatic compressor refrigerator/freezer. Unlike more common absorption RV refrigerators that run off 120-volt AC or LP-gas, this refrigerator



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(Above, from left) The basement of the XPCamper V1 has loads of storage space for travel equipment. The XP Truck Tray, which provides the foundation for the XPCamper, has plenty of locking storage compartments, a bonus on a small camper.

does not need to be level. The use of marine-quality components enhances worldwide serviceability.

Wassmann worked out the bugs in his own personal prototype, and the XPCamper has now been in full production for four years, with many currently running around the back roads of North and South America and Australia. A new, smaller model, the XP V2, is for small to midsize trucks like

the Toyota Tacoma or Tundra. The V3, currently under development, will be a full-size slide-in version for pickup owners who do not want the XP Truck Tray. The V4 XPCube does not feature a cabover design and can be custom-designed to fit most trucks.

All XPCampers exhibit the stateof-the-art perfection of a Germanchef-turned-engineer. We can't wait to see what's for dessert.

XPCamper Options

The XPCamper is no ordinary truck camper and therefore doesn't offer ordinary options. Depending on your needs, XPCamper can outfit your truck with a variety of add-ons designed to make travel in remote locations easier and safer:

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- ☐ ARB dual compressor with air outlets on either side
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- ☐ Long-range auxiliary lights and fog lights
- ☐ Rear Golight Stryker remote-control spotlights
- ☐ 16,500-pound Warn electric winch with Viking synthetic rope
- ☐ Class IV trailer hitch receiver
- ☐ Underside skid plates
- ☐ Awning with LED lights
- $\ \square$ Icon shock absorbers
- ☐ Titan long-range fuel tank
- ☐ Other items necessary for remote overland travel



Toxic Twist

Omega RV takes on the toy-hauler market with macho styling, a well-appointed interior and fifth-wheel DNA

et's not get sidetracked with the focus of this article. It's definitely about a travel trailer but unquestionably one with a few big twists when it comes to design and function. The trailer is the Toxic from Omega RV, and it's a toy hauler, but at first glance it's hard to tell if it's a fifth-wheel or a travel trailer from its side profile.

The Toxic is new, and it's likely you've never heard of it. But if you dig deep enough to see who's behind it, you'll quickly discover it's a longtime trailer producer formerly known as KIT Manufacturing, a company that has roots back in the early days of the industry that has been rebranded Omega RV after a long hiatus from building RVs. While Omega kept the old Road Ranger name for its conventional travel trailers, it labeled its toy haulers Toxic to communicate a feeling that these trailers are edgy enough to satisfy the demands of serious off-road-vehicle enthusiasts who live on adrenaline.

We took a close look at the Toxic 19NS16, a fully loaded toy hauler that maxes out at 25 feet, 2 inches. Although the name suggests something dangerous and unwanted, the trailer is more organic than toxic, but it does exude enough excitement to be addictive — in a fun sense. While a number of features make this trailer different, the foundation shines when it comes to handling the rigors of off-road travel with motorized cargo on board.

Instead of relying on a run-of-the-mill frame, the people at Omega upped the ante for strength and safety in several areas, starting with the twin I-beam main rail frame, utilizing full-depth cross members and a unique all-steel grid placed between the rails and cross members. On top of the frame is ⁵/8-inch tongue-and-groove flooring, and below the chassis rests a pair of 5,200-pound-rated, Super Lube-prepped drop axles with self-adjusting brakes and the Equa-Flex equalizer suspension system.

Another small step toward safety





Most of the rear portion of the trailer is occupied with seating and motorized bed platforms. Small galley is across from the entry.

and longevity are the metal valve stems affixed to the vivid but appropriately matched aluminum wheels, and tires rated high enough to handle the weight without pushing the limits. The company also claims that by using a "loop" routing for the trailer-brake wiring, equal braking can be achieved at all four wheels, reducing possible flat spots in the tires.

There are an abundance of features built into the package, like the Toy Lok cable lock, the 4-kilowatt Onan generator, a 40-gallon fuel station with a pump, and an electric A-frame jack resting in front of three recessed and semi-aerodynamically covered 5-gallon LP-gas cylinders. Added to these conveniences are slam-latch equipped compartment doors, an exterior wash station, speakers, a retractable roof ladder, a 15-foot electric awning and an LED-lit wall section with all the electrical and cable receptacles necessary for hooking up.

Besides the got-to-have-it external creature comforts, it's impossible to ignore the unique aesthetics of the Toxic, including the raised front portion that at first sight resembles a fifth-wheel. And the wild blue-and-white graphics are definitely a departure from the norm and take on a whole different nighttime look when bathed in the under-chassis blue-LED lighting.

Once aboard the Toxic, it's easy to see that the relatively small interior is

Unique profile of the Toxic resembles a fifthwheel with wild-looking, colorful graphics. Concealed LP-gas cylinders are a nice touch. almost perfectly appointed. Standing in what we dubbed the Uni-Room is the combination of living room, dining area, kitchen and sleeping spaces all positioned into one big zone. To the left, the Confetti Espresso-decor recliners and hide-a-bed-equipped couch are reinforced by additional sleeping quarters overhead via the optional electric-motor-lifted beds. The main sleeping area is in the fifth-wheel-like master bedroom area up front, accessed by a couple of steps and fitted with a comfy queen-size mattress.

The natural-wood color overhead cabinets placed strategically throughout the interior blend nicely with the dark fabrics. Nestled in the cabinetry is a 12-volt DC flat-screen TV coupled with a DVD/CD stereo system with Bluetooth and satellite-receiver connections. On the kitchen side, which is rather compact, additional items can be stored in the cabinet that sits under and in between the sink, stove and microwave. The 6-cubic-foot refrigerator is mounted on the opposing side. In

an effort to consolidate limited space, Omega opted to put a decent size convection microwave in the traditional spot for an LP-gas oven.

The bath area can be found on the way to the bedroom. Inside the cubicle on the left are the toilet and shower, nothing special here, but there's enough room to function without too much claustrophobia. Across the aisle is the lavatory with a sink and counter, but don't expect to spread out.

Out back, the ramp leads to a space that can be configured to handle smaller toys. Furniture will have to be rearranged, but that process is not too difficult. While the Toxic comes equipped with a good array of standard features, an extensive list of options includes a higher-end sound system, a larger air conditioner, a solar charging system, an air compressor and heated holding tanks, to name a few.

It's easy to see that Omega took a different approach in building its Toxic toy hauler, and no doubt its unique profile and flamboyant graphics will be the talk of locales frequented by off-roadtoy enthusiasts who will be impressed with the company's innovation thinking as it re-enters the RV market.



REFRIGERATOR WARDROBE

Exterior Length 25' 2"

Exterior Width 8'

Interior Height 6' 8 75"

FLOORPLAN BY BILL TIPTON

Exterior Width	8'
Interior Height	6' 8.75"
Exterior Height	11' 7"
Freshwater Cap.	116 gal.
Black-/Gray-Water Cap.	47 gal. / 47 gal.
LP-Gas Cap.	15 gal.
UVW	6,560 lbs.
Hitch Weight	1,080 lbs.
GVWR	11,480 lbs.
MSRP, base	\$33,150

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EIGHT WEEKS IN AUSTRALIA

A two-month journey in the land Down Under presents numerous national parks, coral gardens of the Great Barrier Reef and a sanctuary of diverse habitat for unique wildlife



ustralia. Just the name conjures up visions of kangaroos and koalas for many folks. For me, it was wanting to hug a wombat. For my husband, Mike, it was not as specific. He just wanted to experience the country and see the unique wildlife. And so we checked off another place to visit on our bucket list when we headed to eastern Australia last September.

We put a cover over our Lance travel trailer before leaving, knowing it would be winter when we returned. It was nearly fall at home in Colorado but spring when we arrived in Cairns, Queensland. Our plan was to spend two months camping along the eastern Australian coast. We rented a camper van and headed to the nearest campground to get to know our new home on wheels.

Australia is known as the land Down Under. It shows up on a globe below the equator and is the opposite of the Northern Hemisphere in terms of seasons. At home, winter means heading south for RV snowbirds. In Australia, it's the reverse. We started our journey in the north where RVers (called "caravanners" in this part of the world) were enjoying warmer climes. As we journeyed south, it got cooler as we headed into late spring and early summer.

One of the toughest things about traveling in Australia was driving on

the "wrong" side of the road. Equally difficult was remembering that the wiper controls are on the left side of the steering wheel and the blinkers on the right. But driving on the left is doable; it just takes more brain power.

Although, for the most part, the Pacific Highway — the major road between Sydney and Brisbane — is wider, smoother and speedier than Australia's tourist drives, we traveled the latter whenever possible because they are much more scenic and gave us chances to see more of the country's amazing wildlife.

There are too many fascinating things to do and see in Australia to mention them all here, so I've narrowed the list to some of my favorite places.



CAIRNS

From Cairns in Far North Queensland, we drove a twisty road to nearby Kuranda and hiked at Barron Gorge National Park, a lovely park with gorgeous waterfalls. Another favorite activity was meandering around the free botanic gardens in Cairns. The gardens are a great place to photograph many species of birds.

CAPE TRIBULATION

Before driving south to Melbourne, where we would later return our camper van, we headed north to Cape Tribulation. Along the way we stopped at Mossman Gorge to walk the boardwalks and paths past strangler figs and ancient rainforest.



(Above, from left) A handler arouses a toothy crocodile at the Australia Zoo in Queensland. The zoo is run by the family of the late Crocodile Hunter, Steve Irwin. A flying fox at the beachside town of Byron Bay, New South Wales. A koala mom with a baby riding piggyback amble through Flynns Beach Caravan Park at Port Macquarie in New South Wales.

The next morning we met up with a guide and went birding on the Daintree River. I photographed a freshwater crocodile eating a saltwater crocodile, as well as both azure and sacred kingfishers.

The following day, after crossing the river via a short ferry, we had ice cream at Floravilla. This is a must-do. as they have some of the best ice cream in the country.

As we journeyed to our northernmost point, we walked the boardwalks at Daintree National Park. While hiking the Marrdja Botanical Boardwalk, I photographed a 4-foot-long lace goanna, or monitor lizard.

Farther north, we walked the Dubuii and Mangrove boardwalks and went to the lookout at Cape Tribulation. Spending the night there, we enjoyed the stars of the Southern Hemisphere.

PORT DOUGLAS -GREAT BARRIER REEF

On the walk back to Pandanus Tourist Park from downtown, it got dark, and we watched as thousands of flying foxes soared overhead. Flying foxes are among the largest species of bats and

(Left) Eastern gray kangaroos and rock wallabies at sunrise on the beach at Cape Hillsborough National Park in Queensland. (Right) A southern cassowary walks the beach at Etty Bay, Queensland. These flightless birds can reach 6 feet in height.

feed on flowers, fruit and nectar.

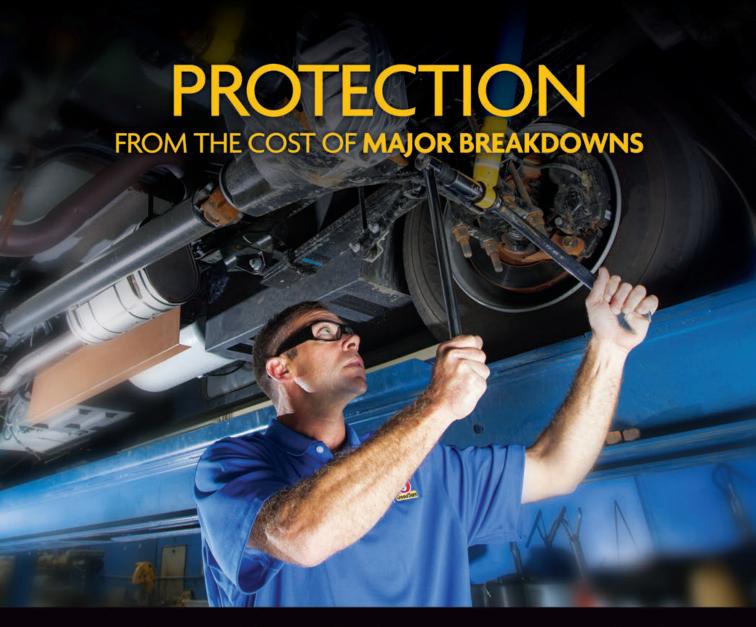
We'd spent the day on the Silversonic, a 95-foot-high catamaran, snorkeling along the Great Barrier Reef at Agincourt ribbon reef sites. We saw giant clams, whitetip reef sharks and many different kinds of colorful fish.

ETTY BAY

We traveled inland a bit to see emus at Mareeba and platypus at Yungaburra, but headed back along the coast at Etty Bay, south of Innisfail. Located along the Cassowary Coast, Etty Bay is a true gem.



July 2016 TRAILER LIFE 55



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EIGHT WEEKS IN AUSTRALIA

That morning we saw two nearly 6- foot-tall cassowary birds and heard of a third cassowary that had four chicks. The birds walked through the caravan park and strolled along the beach to everyone's delight.

TYTO WETLANDS

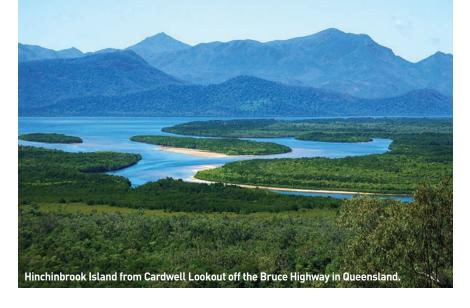
While staying at Palm Tree Caravan Park just south of Ingham, amazing birds surrounded us, and a lone spectacled flying fox hung in a nearby bottlebrush tree.

Earlier, when walking around Tyto Wetlands in Ingham, we observed lots of wallabies and birds. A birder's paradise, the reclaimed wetlands are home to more than 230 species of feathered flyers.

MAGNETIC ISLAND

While staying two nights at Rowes Bay Beachfront Holiday Park in Townsville on the Queensland coast, just across the road from the beach, a 20-minute ferry ride got us to Magnetic Island.

There, we fed curious rock wallabies at Geoffrey Bay. Holding carpet pythons



and blue-tongued and shingleback skinks at the island's Bungalow Bay Koala Village was a highlight.

Bungalow Bay has a small campground, but it was fully booked during our visit. If sites are available, RV's can be transported to the island on the *Fantasea* passenger and car ferry.

BILLABONG SANCTUARY

One of our best wildlife experiences was at Billabong Sanctuary, a hands-on kind of place south of Townsville. We

got to pet a wombat, koalas, a saltwater crocodile, a sulphur-crested cockatoo and a red-tailed black cockatoo. Plus, I got to hold and hug a wombat and a koala, and have my photo taken with them for a mere \$33.

CAPE HILLSBOROUGH

This national park is of volcanic origin and is a beautiful place for kayaking, paddleboarding and hiking. Camping at the adjacent Cape Hillsborough Nature Tourist Park, we saw birds and butterflies. Getting up at 5:30 the next morning, we watched about a dozen kangaroos and wallabies on the beach at sunrise.

FRASER ISLAND

We crammed two days of adventure into one with family-owned and -operated Unique Fraser Tours. Our guide, Troy, was not only knowledgeable, he was an excellent driver and easily maneuvered the very sandy roads. He showed us amazing views, Eli Creek and the SS Maheno ocean-liner wreck. The last stop was Lake McKenzie, a perched lake where the waters were super-clear.

(Clockwise from above left) Barron Falls cascades through lush tropical rainforest at Barron Gorge National Park in Queensland. A typical carefree seaside scene at Airlie Beach, also in Queensland. A humpback whale flips his flukes with Port Macquarie in the background, New South Wales.





Sydney



VICTORIA

Melbourne

NATURAL WONDERS IN THE LAND DOWN UNDER

Surrounded by the Pacific and Indian oceans, Australia has some of the most varied natural environment and unique wildlife on the planet. The Great Barrier Reef, the world's largest coral reef and living structure, runs parallel to the Queensland coast.

TIN CAN BAY

While searching for koalas in Pioneer Park in Maryborough, we saw a kookaburra kingfisher bird emerging from a tree burrow. We stayed the night so we could feed dolphins in the morning.

Australian humpback dolphins are endangered, but they usually come to Tin Can Bay each day for fish. There were nine dolphins in the pod, but only about four or five came in to eat fish and visit with the people who pay \$5 to view them and another \$5 to feed them. It was an awesome experience, the feeding is well organized, and the utmost respect is given to the dolphins.

AUSTRALIA ZOO

We spent two lovely days at the Australia Zoo, home of the late Crocodile Hunter, Steve Irwin. With spacious animal exhibits, it's one of the best zoos and is a superb place for photography. There's so much to do, including petting koalas, and feeding and petting kangaroos and wallabies.

RYRON RAY

Our first main stop in New South Wales was Byron Bay, a hip town with lots of backpackers. We stayed at Glen Villa for three nights, and while we were within easy walking distance of town, it seemed we were worlds away with quiet nights. We parked our van on the first day and didn't move it until we headed farther south.

During our stay, we had delicious baked goods and gelato, and walked it all off. One day we walked about 6 miles to the Cape Byron Lighthouse and back. Along the way we saw courting crested tern males offering little fish to potential mates.

Humpback whales cruised by the most easterly spot in Australia. One morning we went out with the folks from Cape Byron Kayaks in search of the underwater residents — humpbacks, dolphins and turtles. We saw about nine humpbacks, some of them rather close.

The next morning we were picked



(Above, from left) A crimson rosella at Booderee National Park on Jervis Bay on the coast of New South Wales. Booderee is home to more than 200 species of birds. An Australian fur seal in New South Wales. The now-protected seals get their name because they have two layers of fur, with an undercoat so dense and thick that the skin stays dry when the seals are underwater. Common wombats, among the largest burrowing animals, carry their young in front pockets of skin, like kangaroos. The SS Maheno shipwreck at Fraser Island in Queensland is a landmark attraction. The ship washed ashore during a 1935 cyclone.









up by the folks at Byron Bay Eco Cruises and Kayaks for a fun half-day birding adventure up the Brunswick River.

PORT MACQUARIE

Staying at Flynns Beach Caravan Park sounded good because we read that there were koalas in the park. We figured we'd check it out, not really believing that after weeks of traveling through Australia we would find our first koala in the wild, but we did! We saw a male the first day, and a mom and her baby the next. The third day we headed farther south.

Visiting the koala hospital on the

north shore of Port Macquarie was a treat, and we highly recommend it.

THE ENTRANCE

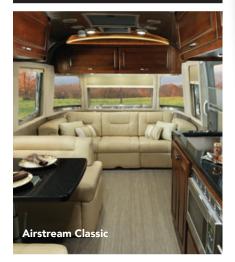
Another one of the highlights of our trip was watching the daily pelican feeding at the Entrance waterfront in New South Wales. With a beautiful

IT GOT DARK, AND WE WATCHED AS THOUSANDS OF FLYING FOXES (ALSO KNOWN AS FRUIT BATS) SOARED OVERHEAD.



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EIGHT WEEKS IN AUSTRALIA



backdrop along the coast, the pelicans show up at 3:30 p.m. for free fish. The event makes for a fun time and is an excellent photo opportunity. We spent the night across the bay at Dunleith Caravan Park where pelicans hang out at the waterfront sites.

BOODEREE NATIONAL PARK

This park at Jervis Bay was a great

place to camp and hike, and I could have spent a lot more time there. At the park we visited the only aboriginal-owned botanic gardens in the country. And while we hoped to see little blue penguins at Murrays Beach, known as the jewel in Booderee National Park, we didn't get lucky, though I did get to photograph swamp wallabies and colorful parrots.

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CAMPING DOWN UNDER

It's easy to go RVing in Australia, or "caravanning," as they call it. We reserved a camper van six months ahead of our arrival from one of several companies that specialize in Class B motorhome rentals. The country has many RV parks, most of them offering powered campsites as well as communal camp kitchens with toasters and a whole lot more. If you enjoy camping for free, Australia also has plenty of places to boondock.

Campin Australia

Directory and mobile app of RV parks, public campgrounds and free campsites, plus roadside rest areas, visitor information centers and interactive maps. www.campinaustralia.com.au

Explore Australia

Travel-planning guide with details about national parks, natural wonders and wildlife watching, as well as places to stay, including dog-friendly and easy-access campsites. www.exploreaustralia.net.au

Tourism Australia

In addition to places to go and things to do, Australia's official tourism website provides information on currency, customs, travel visas and time zones for foreign visitors.





(Above, from left) Paddleboarding the Brunswick River on the coast of northern New South Wales. Looking for crocodiles on the Daintree River in Queensland from an electric boat, the *Solar Whisper*. Cape Byron Lighthouse in New South Wales is Australia's most easterly light tower.

PHILLIP ISLAND

Phillip Island, southeast of Melbourne, is home to aptly named little penguins (*Eudyptula minor*), the smallest of the 17 species of penguins. The Penguin Parade, when the little penguins return to their island home at sunset, is one of Australia's most popular tourist attractions.

We joined eight others, many of whom were penguin lovers like me, for an Ultimate Adventure Tour where we spent more than three hours with our guide, Ben. He told us all about the little penguins (also called little blues) and outfitted us with rain gear (storms had been brewing earlier), night-vision glasses and even headsets so we could listen quietly while sitting on the beach waiting for the penguins to emerge from the sea.

During the day, we walked around the Nobbies, the headland on the southwestern tip of the island, searching for young penguins hiding in burrows and waiting for their parents to return in the dark to feed them.

Over the course of two months in Australia, we enjoyed everything from the tropics in the north to temperate weather in the south, and were constantly amazed by the unusual wildlife and friendly folks. We sampled lots of great food, especially burgers adorned with beetroots and the chips we call fries.

Good on ya, mate — we'll be back! ₽





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THE EVOLUTION OF RVING

AS TRAILER LIFE CELEBRATES ITS DIAMOND ANNIVERSARY, WE TAKE A LOOK AT HOW THE RECREATIONAL VEHICLE INDUSTRY HAS CHANGED WITH THE TIMES

he year is 1941. President Franklin D. Roosevelt is inaugurated for his third term. The United States officially joins the second World War. And a brand-new publication called Western Trailer Life marks its premier issue with 20 pages of content geared toward "trailer coaches." The monthly magazine, published by the Trailer Coach Manufacturers Association, sells for 10 cents, and a year's subscription is a full dollar. The seeds for what will become the most popular RV magazine in North America have officially been planted.

article by Kristopher Bunker

Three quarters of a century is a long time indeed. Nowadays, it seems that anything lasting 75 years is practically unheard of. Businesses shutter their doors. Start-up companies fold. Some marriages falter. And, yes, magazines close up shop, often forced out of operation by a lack of consumer interest, a drop in advertising revenue or the all-powerful Internet. And yet, *Trailer Life* continues to evolve. Survival at this point would be impressive, but the magazine





1908 Ford Motor Com-

pany introduces the Model T and makes car ownership affordable for the middle class.



1910

Pierce Arrow (above) and Los Angeles Trailer Works manufacture the first RVs for sale.



Glenn Curtiss designs the first fifth-wheel trailer, the Adams Motor Bungalo. Ford debuts its first truck, the Model TT, and recommends a driving speed of no more than 22 MPH.



1918

Chevrolet builds its first truck, the Model 490. Dodge Brothers Company comes out with a van, the Screenside.

1921

The Lamsteed Kampkar camper body, built by Anheuser-Busch, mounts on a Ford Model T with a pair of fold-down beds in the back, a two-burner stove and an 8-gallon freshwater tank.



1926

Chenango Camp Trailer Company introduces the first assembly-lineproduced RV, a fold-up tent trailer.

has actually prospered during its 75-year history, taking readers along for the ride.

Trailer Life owes its longevity to those readers, chiefly enthusiasts of RVs and the RVing lifestyle. To truly appreciate the storied roots of Trailer Life, it's important — and fun — to learn a little about the history of RVing, both before and after the magazine's debut.

MASS PRODUCTION

FROM THE MODEL T TO RVS

ne can only imagine that adventure-seekers have been utilizing some form of RV or another since the invention of the wheel, but the first to catch North America's attention is generally recognized as the Pierce Arrow Touring Landau. The vehicle, which made its debut at New York's famed Madison Square Garden in 1910, offered owners bitten by the wanderlust bug a rear seat that folded into a bed, a sink behind the driver (most likely, a chauffeur) and a chamber pot. The Touring Landau was built to hold multiple suitcases and provide a comfortable place to sleep for those making a journey of more than a few miles.

The newfound focus on overnight accommodations wasn't confined to motorized coaches, as camping trailers manufactured by Los Angeles Trailer Works and Auto-Kamp Trailers also found their way to America's streets around that time. In 1917, aviation

Known for its two-tone canned-ham travel trailers, Terry Coach Industries woos RV show-goers in the days of Marilyn Monroe.



the *trailer life* of but the magazine pioneer Glenn Curtiss invented the fifth-wheel hitch that would tow the Adams Motor Bungalo and later the Curtiss Aerocar.

Some of the more memorable models that followed are on display at the RV/MH Hall of Fame and Museum in Elkhart, Indiana, including a 1913 Earl trailer (believed to be the oldest non-tent travel trailer in existence), a 1916 Cozy Camper tent trailer (one of the first commercially produced RVs),

Lindbergh's *Spirit of St. Louis*), Byam purchased Bowlus' company, and the Road Chief-inspired Airstream Clipper was introduced in 1936.

Five months after Western Trailer Life's July 1941 debut, Japan bombed Pearl Harbor, and readers' interests shifted from seeking Mother Nature to serving Uncle Sam. Rationing of essential supplies, including aluminum, gas and rubber for tires, all but halted construction of RVs for consumer use.

portable showers and flushing toilets.

Having weathered WWII, Western Trailer Life was perfectly positioned to ride the RV and automotive booms that would last for the next few decades. In 1949, "Western" was dropped from the magazine's name, signifying a shift from a regional publication to a national monthly.

The 1950s was an important era for the RV industry. As travel trailers became more commonplace, manu-



1928

The hardtop Covered Wagon, a production travel trailer, debuts and soon gains popularity.

1929

The Curtiss Aerocar fifthwheel launches with three axles and independent suspension.



1931

Airstream founder Wally Byam moves his backyard business to the company's first trailer factory.

1935

The limitedproduction Hunt Housecar (right) comes with a shower and a toilet that slides into the wall. Chevrolet introduces the Suburban Carryall, precursor of the Suburban SUV.



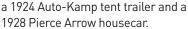
1937

Woodall's prints its first RV park directory, with one- to three-star ratings.



1941

Western Trailer Life launches in July. Shasta gets its start building military housing.



For the next few decades, the RV and automotive industries continued to evolve, as people yearned for more convenient, reliable and economical means of transportation. The Ford Model T, which began its run around 1908, brought car ownership to the middle class. As road travel became easier and more affordable, the RV lifestyle followed suit. Even after the stock market crash of 1929 devastated the economy, the RV industry managed to soldier on, albeit reservedly.

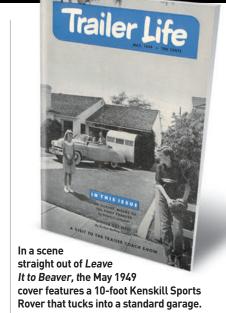
In 1929, Wallace Merle "Wally"
Byam built a teardrop trailer, the
Torpedo Car Cruiser, in his backyard
and later sold the plans, kits and trailer
shells. After some refinements, and collaboration with the designer of the 1934
Road Chief, William Hawley Bowlus
(who oversaw construction of Charles

But the U.S. Department of Defense needed housing for workers and their families, so many RV manufacturers turned their attention toward their patriotic duty and obliged.

MID-CENTURY MODERN

LUCY, DESI AND ART

fter the war, the desire for affordable vacation options resumed, among them a teardrop trailer that Kit Manufacturing initially offered as a do-it-yourself project and then put into mass production. Shasta got its start in 1941 building mobile housing for the military, then rolled out its first travel trailer, the Cozy Cruiser, in the mid-1940s. The late '40s saw many impressive RV developments, including the introduction of butane-gas cylinders (later filled with liquid propane),



facturers began hitting their stride with some now-classic designs. RVs were more aerodynamic and refined looking, and the rounded corners of "canned-

2016 DIFFERS FROM ITS 1941 DEBUT IN MANY WAYS, 'S ENTHUSIASM FOR RVS AND RVING IS UNCHANGED.

ham" trailers emerged as a popular design. Inspired by the smooth lines of the venerable Cadillac, entrepreneur John Crean began building RVs and manufactured housing, changing the name of the business he founded in 1950 to Fleetwood Trailer Company in 1953, later renamed Fleetwood Enterprises.

In 1954 RVing went mainstream with the debut of Vincente Minnelli's *The Long, Long Trailer.* The movie featured the husband-and-wife stars

MGM's 1954 comedy *The Long, Long Trailer* stars Lucille Ball, Desi Arnaz and a 1953 New Moon from Redman Trailer Company.

of the *I Love Lucy* show, Lucille Ball and Desi Arnaz, as a honeymooning couple towing a 36-foot Redman New Moon behind a Mercury Monterey convertible.

The year 1958 was a special one. Not only did the company that would eventually become known as Winnebago begin making trailers, but





1945
Kit Manufacturing starts building
Kit Kamper tear-drop trailers in an abandoned

fruit stand.



Ford and Chevy unveil their first postwar trucks, the F-Series and Advance Design.



-

1950

Entrepreneur John Crean and his wife, Donna, launch the company that becomes Fleetwood Enterprises.



Trailer Life's 10thanniversary issue includes a plastic sandwich plate — "an asset to any trailer."





1953

The Klingler Corporation builds the first Holiday Rambler, and later introduces aluminum framing.



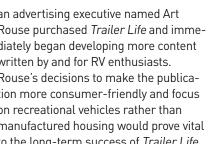
Trailer Life roadtests its first van conversion, a 30-horsepower Volkswagen Microbus.





an advertising executive named Art Rouse purchased Trailer Life and immediately began developing more content written by and for RV enthusiasts. Rouse's decisions to make the publication more consumer-friendly and focus on recreational vehicles rather than manufactured housing would prove vital to the long-term success of *Trailer Life*.

The 1960s continued the upward trajectory of the RV industry, and travel trailers remained king in the early part





1956 The first Aristocrat trailer hits the road. President Eisenhower establishes the Interstate

Highway System.

1959

Art Rouse takes over as editor and publisher after buying Trailer Life the previous year.





FLIGHT OF THE SILVER BULLET

Airstream is the only RV manufacturer that has managed to tough it out longer than Trailer Life. The company's dynamic founder, Wally Byam, got his start offering kit-built teardrops in the late 1920s, before rolling out the wood-frame Silver Cloud, followed by the Clipper, with its iconic aircraft-style riveted construction. Byam went on to shepherd Airstream caravans to historic international destinations.

In Trailer Life's 30th-anniversary issue, Art Rouse remembered Byam, who died in 1962, as "the man who in nearly everyone's opinion contributed most to the growth of the travel trailer industry. He ... spread the fame, fun and adventure of travel trailering across the whole United States ... and around the world."



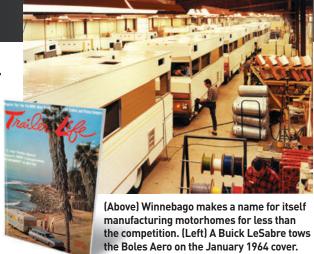
In the 1950s, Wally Byam (left, seated) leads foreign tours for owners of his famous silver trailers. Byam maps the 1963-64 Around the World Caravan (left) but succumbs to cancer before the tour.



of the decade. More focus was put on aesthetics and aerodynamics, as rounded fiberglass bodies made an appearance. Thermo-panel wall construction was developed in 1963 and is still used today.

The year 1965 saw all major automotive manufacturers offering trailer-towing packages on their new vehicles, although towing limits weren't considered as important then as they are now. The same year, Winnebago rolled out its first Class A motorhome.

In late 1968, in a move to increase *Trailer Life's* circulation, Rouse bought Griffin Publishing and gained control of *Trailer News* (previously named *Trail-R-News*) and *Camper Coachman* magazines, in addition to a fledgling RV-enthusiast group with fewer than 1,000 members called the Good Sam Club.





1961

Trailer Life turns 20. A two-year-old travel trailer manufacturer in lowa changes its name to Winnebago. Ray Frank introduces what will become the Dodge Motor Home, with assistance from Chrysler, later rebranded the Travco motorhome.



1964

Starcraft introduces a lifter system for tent campers designed by Lloyd Bontrager, founder of Jayco three years later. Brothers Tom, Keith and Claude Corson found Coachmen. Lance Camper ramps up to offer truck campers in 1965.

1966

Trail-R-News Publisher Art Griffin forms the Good Sam Club. David Garvin opens the first Camping World store, in Kentucky. Kenskill introduces a trailer tipout, a hand-cranked forerunner of poweroperated slideouts.



1967

The first Winnebago Brave rolls off the assembly line. The second-generation Chevy C-10 debuts with increased torque.

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THEN AND NOW: BRINGING BACK THE CLASSICS

INTEREST IN VINTAGE RVS HAS SPURRED A WAVE OF NEW MODELS WITH OLD-FASHIONED LOOKS





BOWLUS ROAD CHIEF

William Hawley Bowlus, Charles Lindbergh's aircraft engineer, built about 80 of the original Road Chief travel trailers before WWII. The modern incarnation, based on Bowlus' original designs and manufactured in Oxnard, California, has a starting price of \$137,000.





SHASTA AIRFLYTE

The year 1941 saw the launch of Shasta and Trailer Life. Shasta marked its own 75th anniversary by reproducing 1,941 classic 1961 Airflytes, an icon of the canned-ham style. Available in 16- and 19-foot lengths, the retro-chic remake sells for around \$17,200.





WINNEBAGO BRAVE

In 1967 the first Brave rolled off the line from the brand many consider the archetypal motorhome. Winnebago updated the Brave in 2015 with the nostalgic "flying W" emblazoned along the side but a price tag slightly higher than the original \$4,000 — just under \$100,000.

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LATE-CENTURY RVING

BOOM, BUST AND BOOM AGAIN

railer Life continued to flourish in the 1970s, and Rouse's acquisition of Trailer Topics and Mobile Life magazines further expanded readership. This decade will forever be associated with fuel crises, shortages that not only gave drivers a new 55-MPH speed limit but also had auto manufacturers downsizing cars (remember the Ford



1968

Carriage and Newmar present their first travel trailers to the public. Art Rouse acquires Griffin Publishing and the nearly 1,000-member Good Sam Club, and launches MotorHome Life, later renamed MotorHome.



1971

Trailer Life's 30thanniversary issue reviews Traveleze trailers from 1941 and 1971.

1972

Trailer Life and Good Sam produce their first annual RV park directory. KZ-RV launches. GMC rolls out its front-wheeldrive motorhome.



1973

Trailer Life publishes a 348-page May issue, the largest to date, as RV sales soar. The OPEC oil embargo causes sales to slump later that year.





1976

Jayco manufactures its first fifth-wheel trailer with a fullheight standup front bedroom.



Pinto, Chevy Vega and AMC Gremlin?).

RV manufacturers did the same, resulting in lighter-weight trailers and chassis-mounted Class C motorhomes. Harmon Shadow fifth-wheel trailers were introduced early in the 1970s, allowing owners to mount a suitable saddle on the roof of their car. Other mass-produced fifth-wheels that connected to a hitch mounted in the truck bed had greater success and longevity.



1979

The second oil crisis prompts *Trailer Life* to publish articles on solar power and alternative fuels.



1980

The owners of Hi-Lo purchase Airstream and launch Thor Industries.



THE GODFATHEROF TRAILER LIFE

Ithough Trailer Life's roots date back to 1941, it could be argued that the magazine as we now know it really began in 1958. That's when a Southern California advertising executive, Arthur J. "Art" Rouse, took a chance on a commodity he knew little about and bought this magazine. "I saw a great opportunity," Rouse told Trailer Life in an interview in 2006.

Not content to sit back and let somebody else run his business, Rouse was the ultimate hands-on owner and set out to learn about his new investment the only way he knew how: firsthand experience. "I fell in love with it, and I learned a lot," said Rouse. "My years of running *Trailer Life* were the best of my life."

Rouse's obvious affection for RVs and the RVing lifestyle was readily apparent in the magazine's pages, as he infused his stories with humor, sentimentality and enthusiasm, but he never shied away from giving readers accurate reviews of the products and services he tested.

Along the way, he not only founded *Trailer Life*'s sister publication, *MotorHome*, but also wound up owning the Good Sam Club. "At the time I didn't realize how good and how valuable Good Sam was," he said. Since then, the club has grown to 1.5 million members and become synonymous with the RV lifestyle.

Although Rouse passed away in 2007, his legacy remains. He published an autobiography, *My Life on Wheels*, in 1984. And in 1986, he was inducted into the RV/MH Hall of Fame in Elkhart. Indiana.



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In 1973 GMC introduced its
Model 230 and 260 coaches, which
flew in the face of many motorhome
designs of the time by offering
consumers a low-profile, front-wheeldrive platform. GMC sold furnished
motorhomes to consumers and bare
coaches to manufacturers, including
Coachmen, Foretravel and Winnebago.
Exteriors were painted in shades of
Buttercup, Frosted Mint and Sky Blue,
among other decade-defining hues.

Not even a slow economy could dampen the growth of the RV industry in the 1980s. Combining the first two letters of their names to produce the Thor Industries marque, Wade F.B. Thompson and Peter Busch Orthwein partnered in 1980 to purchase the then-struggling Airstream company and launch what is now one of the world's largest RV manufacturers. The two entrepreneurs would focus on quality and process improvement

to turn around the classic brand.

The EPDM roofing material for RVs was developed in this era and remains a popular option to this day. The 1980s also saw toy-hauler RVs, with drive-up ramps and garages, make their first serious impression on the market. Dodge added the 5.9-liter turbo-diesel engine to its light-truck offerings in 1989.

In its 40th year, *Trailer Life* would publish an interview with President

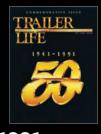


1981In its 40th year,
Trailer Life interviews
President Reagan.

1985

TrailManor introduces an innovative telescoping trailer. Fleetwood unveils what becomes its most popular motorhome, the Bounder.





1991 Trailer Life turns 50. 10-Minute Tech debuts with readers' RV tips.



1992
SunnyBrook develops an all-aluminum-frame trailer, and in 2010 becomes part of Winnebago Industries.



1997
Trailer Life's parent company purchases the Camping World chain of RV service and accessory stores.



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Reagan detailing his love for the outdoors and RVing, a major coup not only for the magazine but for the industry as a whole. Rouse's TL Enterprises and the Good Sam Club were sold to Adams Communications in 1988, and the company would become Affinity Group, Inc. (AGI) in 1992.

The 1990s would prove to be a decade of contrasts. The bigger-isbetter mentality of the early years led to the popularity of diesel pushers

in the motorhome segment, and the development of slideouts in RVs of all types, even truck campers. Floorplans were soon offered with as many as five slides, which extended and retracted with the help of hydraulic cylinders.

The latter part of the decade saw trends toward improved towing char-

The July 1994 issue pits Chevy, Dodge and Ford heavy-duty pickups against each other in the trailer-towing "Turbodiesel Showdown."





Dodge debuts

the four-door Ram Quad Cab with a set of smaller doors behind the main doors.



1999

Keystone RV introduces the Montana, now the best-selling luxury fifth-wheel, and in 2001 joins Thor.

2000

The Good Sam Club reaches the million-member mark and celebrates at the first Great North American RV Rally. Trailer Life and MotorHome are amona the event's sponsors.

2001

In Trailer Life's 60th anniversary issue, Publisher Bill Estes, first recipient of the **RVIA** Distinguished Achievement in Journalism Award, sums up the RV experience: "What a concept!"



2004

Heartland enters the industry with its signature Landmark fifth-wheel, and in 2010 is acquired by Thor.



2005

Warren Buffett and Berkshire Hathaway buy RV manufacturer Forest River, founded in 1996.

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In 1997 Trailer Life's parent company continued its expansion by purchasing the Camping World chain of RV retail and service stores launched in 1966 by David Garvin.

2007

The economic recession contributes to more than a dozen RV makers closing their doors in the nine years that follow, including Alfa Leisure, Carriage, Peterson, Teton Homes and Travel Supreme.



2008

EverGreen RV establishes its trailer business using environmentally sustainable composites instead of wood.

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ROLLING INTO THE 21ST CENTURY

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he next millennium would see a nation come together after an unspeakable tragedy, perhaps in need of a healthy distraction such as RVing like never before. Toy haulers would boost the market, as the RV industry saw a noticeable influx of new owners looking to enjoy domestic travel in every way possible, including off-pavement pursuits.

And though high fuel prices and a burst economic bubble would cause many longtime RV manufacturers to shutter their factories, many of the remaining companies began once again focusing on downsized units. These may have been lean times for many, but some saw this as an opportunity.

After joining forces with Keystone, Thor Industries acquired CrossRoads, Cruiser, DRV Luxury Suites, Heartland, Livin' Lite and K-Z, among other manufacturers, and would be ranked 668th on the 2015 Fortune 1000 list. Jayco purchased Highland Ridge and Entegra Coach and would become





2009

Allied Specialty Vehicles acquires Fleetwood Enterprises' motorized assets, and Heartland and Outdoors RV acquire its towable assets.

2011

As Trailer Life turns
70, Camping World
CEO Marcus Lemonis
assumes leadership of
the magazine's parent
company. The Good
Sam Club combines with
Camping World President's Club. Trailer and
fifth-wheel manufacturer
Augusta RV forms.

2013

Trailer Life's and Woodall's RV park directories merge to form the Good Sam RV Travel Guide. Winnebago introduces the Travato Class B, now its fastest-selling vehicle.



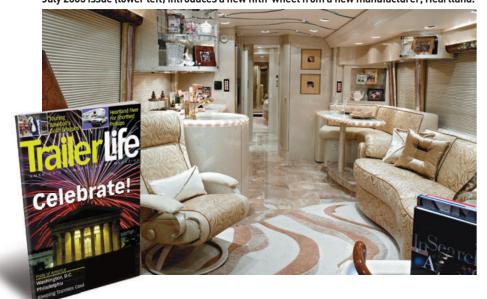


the largest privately held RV manufacturer. Berkshire Hathaway bought Forest River, a major presence in the industry. Fleetwood, once a Fortune 500 company, became a casualty of the recession, and its assets would be divided among Allied Specialty Vehicles, Heartland and Outdoors RV.

Tow-vehicle manufacturers

became more conducive to the RV market, with the major players offering integrated towing packages, trailer-brake controls and mounting systems for fifth-wheel hitches. Just before the end of the decade in 2009, Camping World became an official sponsor of the NASCAR Truck series, a move that would become even more

Toy haulers (top) and bus conversions (below) represent both sides of the RV spectrum. The July 2005 issue (lower left) introduces a new fifth-wheel from a new manufacturer, Heartland.





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significant for Trailer Life in 2010, as the magazine's parent company officially merged with Camping World to create the partnership they share to this day.

We're now more than midway through the second decade of the third millennium, and the RV industry continues to change with the times. Although it's still a good idea to visit the local dealership for a new rig, the digital age of the Internet has simplified the RV motorhomes include a dashboard touch screen, a backup camera and a tire-pressure monitoring system, among other technological innovations.

The 21st century has seen a marked shift in manufacturers going green, using eco-friendly composite building materials that have less impact on natural resources, and are lighterweight and more durable. Euro-style trailers with minimalist interiors, rounded corners and unconventional

2014

Ford introduces its 13thgeneration F-Series trucks and Ford-branded RVs from Livin' Lite. Highland Ridge RV launches. Omega starts production at the former Kit factory.



2015

Nest Caravans debuts a fiberglass trailer, and is purchased by Airstream in 2016. Vanleigh, founded by the Tiffin family, launches its luxury Vilano fifth-wheel.

2016 As Trailer Life celebrates its 75th year, the Good Sam Club and Camping World turn 50, and the National Park Service marks its centennial, the RV industry is booming once again, with 8.5 percent of U.S.

households owning

recreational vehicles.

shopping process. Many manufacturers offer an app specific to their products, so potential buyers can make informed decisions before hitting the lot and signing on the dotted line.

RV enhancements in this hightech era include state-of-the-art solar systems, on-the-go satellite TV and Bluetooth-enabled entertainment systems. Many new floorplans come with outdoor kitchens and entertainment centers, and are suitable for four-season use with doublepane windows, beefed-up insulation, and heated and enclosed holding tanks. Most new tow vehicles and

configurations are also setting trends.

Those looking for large, overthe-top floorplans can still get their wish, but thanks to new vehicles with greater towing capacities than in years gone by, these yachts-on-wheels are increasingly more manageable. Ironically, retro-style trailers remain in vogue, perhaps a nod to the simpler times of yesteryear.

RVing clearly has a long and storied history, and Trailer Life has been there for most of it. The industry will continue to evolve, as will the magazine, as long as people yearn for the great outdoors and follow the road to adventure.



Purple Line, Circle 131 on Reader Service Card

GOLDEN OLDIES

VINTAGE CAMPING TRAILERS STOKE OUR COLLECTIVE LOVE AFFAIR WITH THE MID-20TH CENTURY AND CONNECT ENTHUSIASTS FROM ALL WALKS OF LIFE

ith the popularity of vintage camping trailers exploding over the past decade, more and more enthusiasts are participating in the hobby, and still more are dreaming of getting a classic trailer of their own someday. Now deemed retro, trailers manufactured in the mid-20th century are easily recognized with their iconic "canned-ham" and "silver Twinkie" shapes and cozy Leave It to Beaver ambience. If you already appreciate these nostalgic pieces of our past, spotting them is comparable to finding a pot of gold hidden among the thousands of modern trailers roaming along North America's highways and byways.

Our family is immersed in the vintage-trailer scene. While traveling, we often play our own version of Slug Bug, seeking to be the first to spot a vintage trailer. In reality, it is three against one, as Paul, my husband, is the dominator of this game. Our two children try to take down the king for no reason other than to have bragging rights for having bested their dad.

Identifying trailers is natural for Angelo, 13, and Grace, 11, as they have

been camping in vintage trailers for the past 10 years. When both were in diapers, I wanted to go camping but was reluctant to return to a tent. In 2006, Paul found a 1962 DeVille trailer for sale just a few miles from our home. He purchased it for \$500 and excitedly towed it home, declaring it perfect for our family. We had no road map and no idea what the future held for us, as we started our adventure in this little trailer.

EARLY DAYS

In the early 1900s, Henry Ford's assembly line was pushing out cars at an unheard-of rate, making them more attainable for the middle class. Road conditions were continually improving, and towing a trailer behind a vehicle seemed like a convenient way for a family to vacation and see the country while bringing the essentials of home along with them. (I am sure I wasn't the only mother thinking I didn't want to sleep on the ground with small children.)

The earliest travel trailers were little more than a tent on wheels, and by today's standards, they left much to be desired in the way of creature comforts. These campers were often home-built trailers made to meet the individual owner's needs. Around 1916, several manufacturing companies were established, and camping trailers



began being mass-produced. By the late 1930s, these small-box trailers had evolved into homes on wheels. Units were being built with full kitchens, flushing toilets and exquisitely detailed designs to meet the needs of couples and families wanting to hit the road or have affordable housing.

Camping-trailer construction methods have long had close ties with the aircraft industry. The first riveted-aluminum camping trailer, the Road Chief, was built by William Hawley Bowlus in 1934. At Ryan Airline Company (later renamed B.F. Mahoney Aircraft Corporation), Bowlus supervised construction of Charles Lindbergh's Spirit of St. Louis. With his expertise in aircraft manufacturing, Bowlus used known technology to design an aluminum trailer that was emulated by many of the future trailer manufacturers, including Airstream.

After the bombing of Pearl Harbor, domestic manufacturing shifted to meet the demands of World War II.

With aluminum on the critical warmaterial list, travel trailer production was put on hold.

After the surrender of Germany and Japan, returning servicemen and their families were in need of homes, jobs and mobility. The camping-trailer industry boomed. Brands such as Silver Streak, Alaskan, Dalton, Boles Aero, Kenskill, Shasta and Aristocrat that are now coveted by trailer enthusiasts were all start-up companies during this time. Many were started in backyards, garages and empty sheds, while some, like Spartan, were a war manufacturing company's answer to how to use their facilities and materials in a postwar industry.

Wally Byam, the founder of Airstream, was a visionary in sharing the dream of trailer ownership. He wanted to open up the world to his customers and show them the possibilities. Byam left two manufacturing facilities in the hands of employees and took off on caravans around the globe.



This soon caused the Airstream name to be synonymous with adventure. After traveling across postwar Europe on a three-month tour, Byam led caravans into Central America, Asia and Europe. Airstreams and their owners were lined up and ready to see the world. The joy of exploration in a trailer has never wavered.

In the early 1980s, I was a young girl growing up in a small town in south-central Alaska. I remember being in





awe when the Airstream caravan came to town. Hundreds of silver bullets landing overnight in the middle of our small town presented a feeling of exploration. What were those things, and who were those people who had come to Kenai? As an adult, I now understand the wanderlust of caravanning and gladly join in the journey in one of our restored vintage trailers.

ESPRIT DE CAMPING

With childhood memories wrapped up in trailers manufactured from the 1940s through the late '60s, many baby boomers have a love affair with midcentury Americana. Vintage trailers' pink-sparkle Formica, boomerang laminates, curved wood paneling and aluminum wings are the epitome of what is idolized from that era. Walking

(Above, from left) Corey, Monica and Evelyn Bolen with their lovingly restored 1948 United and the miniature trailer Corey built for his daughter. Shasta owners Barry and Faye Holland pose with Flippin' RVs host Justin Scribner at the annual Trailerfest Rally in Lodi, California. For Tim and Pam Haworth, an aluminum 1950 Aljoa Sportsman is their home away from home. Caroline and Paul Lacitinola with daughter Grace and son Angelo, and the family's beloved 1948 Trailercraft.

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From the RV Sanitation Expert

into an old trailer triggers memories that may have been shelved for many years as individuals recall summers spent on the road with their families, playing cribbage with Grandma while eating cookies baked in the camp stove or fishing with Grandpa at a remote lake high in the hills.

Today, rallies and car shows across the continent give people the opportunity to reminisce about their time spent in a "trailer just like this." Rallies are typically weekend gatherings where owners bring trailers manufactured prior to the mid-1970s and spend the weekend camping together. Often rallies have an open house that allows the general public to come join in the fun as they look at the various models of trailers that have survived and been brought back to life, trailers that can once again be enjoyed as they were originally intended.

Each rally is slightly different, but they all host a group of enthusiastic trailer owners who are happy sharing



Jim and Shelley Luke bought this '59 Corvette after visiting a vintage-trailer rally. "As soon as we saw those little gems, we knew we had to get a trailer and be part of the fun," says Shelley.

stories and laughs with visitors, as well as unreservedly dressing up for dances, dog parades, pajama processions and queen contests. These events have become so popular that they sell out quickly and often have waiting lists the same day reservations are opened.

As hosts of the Trailerfest Rally in Lodi, California, we have more than 250 trailers registered for the October event with nearly another 100 on the waiting list. This hobby welcomes everyone. In our *Vintage Camper Trailers* magazine, it is not uncommon to find more than 80 rallies in 20 states inviting everyone who wants to join in the fun.

Rally-goers are as diverse as the trailers they own. This unusual cross section of the population makes for fun gatherings. While a large number of enthusiasts are retired folks and empty-nesters looking for a fun



Rescuing and restoring mid-century trailers is a labor of love for enthusiasts. (Right) The woodwork shines inside a 1950s Aljoa. (Far right) Another '50s classic, this Shasta trailer welcomes guests with a retro-style awning.

pastime, a growing number of younger families are getting into the mix. You can find almost every walk of life represented at trailer rallies. There are housewives, single parents, young families, doctors, dentists, welders, barbers, painters, chefs, working professionals and retirees.

We even have a few who enjoy making a political statement with their vintage trailers. One trailerite will change the picture of the president in his camper depending on where he is that weekend. If he is in a conservative part of the country, he hangs a picture of Ronald Reagan. If he lands in a liberal region, he puts up a picture of John F. Kennedy.

While a little quirky, these wide-



ranging personalities all add to the unique feel of a get-together that is hard to match anywhere else. For several days rally-goers are living next to people they have just met. Unlike regular camping, they already have a connection to their neighbors because they all love vintage trailers.

FACES IN THE CROWD

We have met people at these outings who have become like family. Often we get together outside of rallies just to hang out and enjoy each other's company. Some have even become surrogate grandparents, aunts and uncles to our children. This is a hobby that provides the participants an occasion to enjoy a real feeling of belonging. After all, we are a rather peculiar bunch who want to share in the preservation and joy of celebrating North America's golden past.

The Lambs are a four-generation camping family. Recently we met up with Steve and Debra, their son, Nick, and his wife, Nicole. It was a notable campout because it was the first time two-month-old Levi Lamb joined the family in vintage camping.





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Grandpa Steve recalls going on outings with his father, Jim, from the time he was about five years old. In 1969 Jim came home with a 1956 Chevrolet pickup that he still owns today. Not long after that, he purchased a 1940 teardrop trailer. Over the years, Jim owned a 1963 Aristocrat Lil' Loafer and a 1978 Nomad. And when he retired, he bought a 1984 Road Ranger. Though not quite "vintage," the 23-foot Road Ranger, hooked up to the '56 Chevy, traveled more than 90,000 miles during the following 13 years, covering 46 states.

Steve bought his first camping trailer, a 1971 Cardinal, when he was 18. A motorcycle rider, he spent a lot of time riding in the desert and enjoyed having a 16-foot trailer to stay in when a sandstorm would blow through. Later, he and Debra took their two children on numerous camping trips in various vintage trailers, including a 1965 Oasis, towed with their 1966 Ford F-100.

Memories of those trips spurred Nick to acquire his own collection of trailers. Currently, he tows a 1964 Aristocrat Mainliner with his 1964 Ford Ranch Wagon. Now the fourth generation, little Levi, is on his way to making memories that may inspire him to carry on the family tradition.

Another rally-going couple, Monica and Corey Bolen, restores vintage cars and trailers as a creative outlet. When we first met the Bolens years ago, they were towing their 1957 Jewel behind a custom 1928 Ford Model A.

They had just found a new listing for a 1948 United on Craigslist. Monica decided to be courteous and wait until 6 a.m. to call the seller. She was the first to call and was able to buy the vintage trailer. As soon as the Bolens cleaned up and repaired the interior, and applied two-tone exterior paint, they started reaping the benefits of their "new" old trailer. Corey even built their daughter, Evelyn, a miniature trailer so she can be wheeled around the car shows and rallies where her dad often performs with Nick Lamb as part of the

Vintage Vandals, a rockabilly band.

While writing our book, Vintage Camper Trailers, Paul and I interviewed hundreds of people about why they got into the hobby. We met one woman who said she had no direction in her life once her children left the house. She found an article about vintage camping and decided to give it a try. Knowing nothing about towing a trailer, she found how-to videos online and went for it. She said she learns something every time she goes out and has found that the vintage-trailer community is more than happy to help.

From first-time owners to life-long campers to enthusiastic admirers, there is place for everyone to join in the fun of making new memories while enjoying the trailers of yesteryear.

Vintage Camper Trailers

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NG MACHINES

hoosing the right vehicle to tow a trailer is vital for both safety and comfort on the road, especially if the trailer is a heavy fifth-wheel. When my husband, Mark, and I started shopping for a new one-ton truck to replace our 2007 Dodge Ram 3500, we visited more than 20 Ford, Ram and GMC/Chevy dealerships across the country. We logged more than 200 miles of test drives, as we narrowed the field of heavy-duty domestic diesels to tow not only our current 14,000-pound fifth-wheel but a much heavier one in the future. Reading the marketing literature, scouring online forums, and talking with salesmen and truck owners, we learned a lot about the features that make a heavy-duty truck a true towing machine.

Truck Bed

Our first decision was whether to buy a shortbed truck, which typically has a 6½-foot-long cargo area behind the cab, or stick with an 8-foot longbed. Longbed trucks can haul more and bigger items than shortbeds, but shortbed trucks can fit into smaller parking spaces. Plus, a shortbed truck's shorter wheelbase makes it easier to do U-turns and other driving maneuvers in tight spaces.

However, because the kingpin on a fifth-wheel is positioned over the rear axle of the truck, a shortbed runs the risk of hitting the overhang of the fifth-wheel with the back of the pickup cab when making tight turns. Sliding fifth-wheel hitches alleviate this problem, and some fifth-wheel manufacturers make the front ends of their trailers concave or pointed so the cab and trailer cannot meet except under extreme driving circumstances.

We tow our NuWa HitchHiker II more than 100 miles every week and did not want to change trailers to one with a front cap designed for shortbed trucks. We also didn't want to limit our choice of fifth-wheel hitches or reduce truck-bed storage or payload. So we came to the conclusion that a longbed was the right choice for us. For RVers whose truck is their daily driver and who tow less frequently, the shortbed might be the way to go.

Cab Size

We also needed to decide on the size and style of the truck cab. Standard two-door cabs have a single row of seats with little or no space behind them. Extended cabs add some space behind the seats. Crew cabs come with four full-size doors and roomy rear seats.

We rely on the back seat of our truck for hauling everything from groceries to laundry, so we focused our attention on crew cabs. Ram has an even larger style on some of its heavy-duty pickups, but the 2016 Mega Cab models are not available with a longbed, so that was off the table for us.

Rear Wheels

The next big decision was single rear wheels (SRW) or dual rear wheels (DRW). A DRW truck, also known as a dually, has a wider stance and is more stable towing through crosswinds than an SRW truck. It can also carry a heavier payload, allowing for a larger fifth-wheel trailer that has a heavier pin weight. Perhaps most importantly, a dually is safer if there is a blowout on a rear tire.

The disadvantages are that it is easier to bump or accidentally drive the rear wheels up on a curb, and you run the risk of clipping the rear fender at tollbooths and drive-up windows. Duallies can also struggle on two-track dirt roads with deep ruts, as the two pairs of rear wheels may be too wide to fit in the ruts.

ONE-TON TOWING MACHINES

We already had trouble doing tight turns in our SRW longbed and were concerned that a dually would have a larger turning radius. However, after many test drives, which included doing lots of doughnuts in parking lots, we determined that the dually longbed is no less maneuverable than an SRW longbed, because the overall length and wheelbase are the same. We would have to park in the back of parking lots whether we bought a DRW or an SRW.

Drive Type

Another important consideration was two-wheel drive (2WD) versus four-wheel drive (4WD). In our full-time RV lifestyle, we spend a lot of time on North America's public lands, exploring nature on remote gravel and two-track roads. A 4WD truck makes off-road towing much easier and opens up the possibility of driving (without the trailer) on roads that are not passable with a 2WD vehicle.



When towing a big trailer, a 4WD truck provides an even more important capability on access roads with steep inclines. We learned this on a gnarly single-lane mountain road in Utah where the grades were as steep as 13 percent. Putting our

3500 in 4WD low gear, we were able to creep down the mountain safely at 5 to 10 MPH, relying on the combination of the gearing and the exhaust brake to slow us down, even though our 14,000-pound house was pushing from behind. Amazingly, Mark never



had to touch the service brakes on the 6-mile descent.

Rear-Axle Ratio

The rear-axle gear ratio is a very important specification when it comes to the towing capacity of a truck. The rear-axle ratio is often expressed as just the first part of the ratio — for instance, 4.10. Of course, the actual ratio is 4.10:1 and refers to how many times the pinion gear (connected to the driveshaft) must turn to rotate the rear wheels one revolution. For example, a 3.42:1 rear axle requires the driveshaft to turn 3.42 times for the rear wheels to rotate one revolution.

So, with a 4.10:1 rear-axle ratio, the driveshaft spins more quickly at a given speed (the rate of the truck's wheel rotation) than it does with a 3.42:1. This results in three things. First, a truck with a 4.10:1 rear-axle ratio will get a heavy tow load moving more easily than one with a 3.42:1 and can ultimately haul heavier trailers.

Second, the engine will rev higher at all driving speeds, whether the truck and trailer are starting at a standstill, are slowly climbing a mountain or are passing another vehicle on the highway. Third, a truck with a 4.10:1 rear axle will be less fuel-efficient because the engine will turn faster and burn more fuel.

Among the Big Three truck manufacturers, Ram offers the most rear-axle options: 3.42, 3.73 and 4.10. The difference between a 3.42 and a 4.10 in otherwise identical models can be a truck rated to tow a 20,000-pound trailer versus one rated to tow a 30,000-pound trailer.

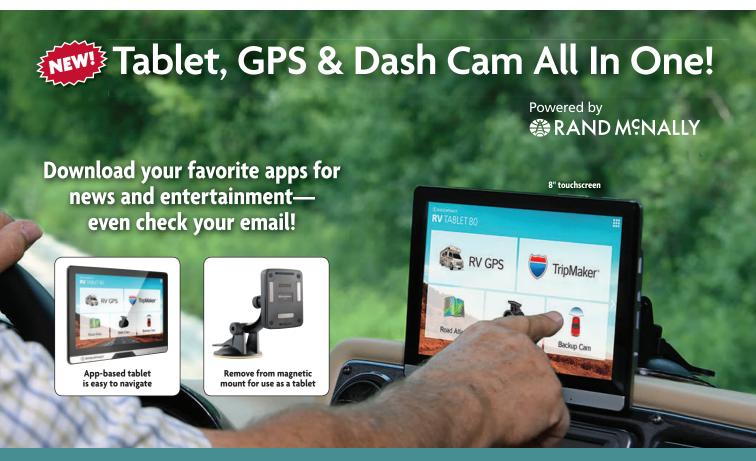
Another consideration when selecting the rear-axle ratio is the predominant type of driving the truck will be doing. The vast majority of our driving and towing is on secondary roads that have speed limits of 45 to 60 MPH and are often hilly. On the few occasions that we tow on an interstate, we rarely exceed 65 MPH.

Our 2007 truck had a 3.73:1 rear axle and a six-speed automatic transmission, and we found the engine tended to lug and rev too low at speeds between 40 and 65 MPH. Mark frequently used manual override to select a lower gear to keep the engine in its power band of 1,800 to 2,300 RPM.

In test drives of new Ram trucks with the 4.10:1 rear axle, we found the new Aisin AS69RC transmission operated at a higher RPM at every speed than our old truck, making it a good option for our driving habits. For RVers who tow lighter trailers and drive the truck solo primarily on interstates at highway speeds up to 75 MPH, a 3.42:1 or 3.73:1 rear axle may be preferable.

Torque and Horsepower

Torque is a measure of the force it takes to rotate the wheels and indicates a truck's ability to pull hard at a low RPM. Horsepower measures the torque available at each RPM. The maximum horsepower



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ONE-TON TOWING MACHINES

(Right) Four-wheel drive makes it easier to tow a heavy trailer up steep inclines. (Below) Visiting a certified scale ensures that a new truck-and-trailer combo aren't overweight.

rating indicates how fast a truck can accelerate at high RPM — for instance, when passing another vehicle. Both are important considerations when choosing a heavy-duty truck for towing.

General Motors powers the Chevy Silverado and GMC Sierra 3500 HD with its 6.6-liter Duramax V-8 turbo-diesel engine, which provides 397 horsepower at 3,000 RPM and 765 lb-ft of torque at 1,600 RPM.

Ford's turbo-diesel Super Duty trucks are driven by the 6.7-liter Power Stroke engine, which is also a V-8 but offers 440 horsepower at 2,800 RPM, earning best-in-class bragging rights. The Super Duty delivers a stout 860 lb-ft of torque at 1,600 RPM, significantly more than GM's one-ton trucks.



The 6.7-liter Cummins in the Ram 3500 is an inline six-cylinder turbo diesel used throughout the commercial trucking industry. Paired with the Aisin AS69RC transmission, the high-output (H.O.) version has the highest torque rating among the 2016 diesel pickups, 900 lb-ft at 1,700 RPM, measured at the crankshaft. The H.O. engine also generates 385 horsepower at 2,800 RPM.

We logged more than 200 miles of test drives, as we narrowed the field of heavy-duty diesels to tow our fifth-wheel.



Make, Model and Options

While all of the domestic one-ton trucks are powerful tow vehicles, the reliability of the Cummins engine, its high torque rating and our generally positive experience towing with our 2007 Dodge Ram ultimately swayed us to choose a 2016 Ram 3500 Laramie 4WD crew cab longbed dually with the Aisin transmission and 4.10:1 rear axle. With these options, our truck can tow a 30,130-pound trailer and a payload capacity of 5,680 pounds. It also has a gross combined weight rating (GCWR) of up to 39,100 pounds.

To equip our new heavy-duty towing machine, we chose the puck-style hitch mounts that allow a matched fifthwheel hitch to be installed or removed from the bed of the truck simply by turning four levers and lifting it in or out. This eliminates the need for

permanent hitch rails in the bed.

The exhaust brake built into the turbo on the Cummins engine has two modes, one for maximum braking power and the other to maintain a given speed on descents. We also ordered the new auto-leveling suspension that uses air bags to raise and lower the rear end of the truck slightly, similar to a semitrailer. And we opted for two cameras, the standard backup camera on the rear bumper and an optional cargo camera aimed at the bed of the truck.

The Ram also comes with an elaborate electronic-data center that provides everything from satellite radio to GPS navigation to independent-seat climate control. With heated and vented leather seats, and a heated steering wheel, our new truck is not only powerful but is also a comfortable and elegant ride.

Heavy Haulers

The 2016 crop of heavy-duty one-ton pickups offers considerable towing capacity for RVers hauling heavy loads. The right one for you depends on the weight of your trailer, your travel habits, what you can afford to spend and personal preference. No matter what tow vehicle you choose, make sure it is properly equipped to handle the weight of your trailer. \blacksquare



Ford Super Duty F-350/F-450

The F-Series Super Duty is America's best-selling heavy-duty pickup. The one-ton F-350 and F-450 come in a variety of cab and bed configurations and a choice of single or dual rear wheels. Towing technology includes an integrated trailer-brake controller, Tow/Haul mode, Hill Start Assist, Trailer Sway Control (SRW only) and Dynamic Hitch Assist via the rearview camera. An optional trailer-prep package provides under-the-bed hardware for mounting a fifth-wheel hitch in the truck bed. Horsepower is rated best in class, and Ford claims class-leading fuel economy.

 Conventional Towing19,000 lbs.* Fifth-Wheel Towing26,500 lbs.* *maximum ratings available



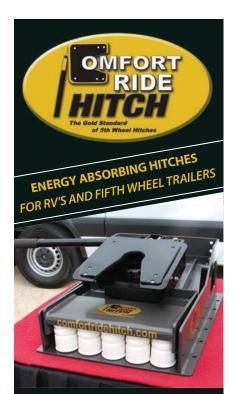
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www.comfortridehitch.com 1-844-873-5010

ONE-TON TOWING MACHINES



General Motors 3500HD

The Chevrolet Silverado and GMC Sierra 3500HD come in regular, double and crew-cab styles with standard 8-foot truck beds (a 6½-foot bed is available in the crew cab) and an optional dual-rear-wheel axle. Features like Trailer Sway Control, Digital Steering Assist, Hill Start Assist and Tow/Haul mode combine with an integrated trailer-brake controller and diesel exhaust brake to make towing easier. New for 2016, an optional trailer package includes a frame-mounted hitch platform, a bed-mounted trailer harness and a spray-in bed liner.

Conventional Towing20,000 lbs.*
Fifth-Wheel Towing23,200 lbs.*
*maximum ratings available



Ram 3500

Available with single or dual real wheels in four cab choices, including the roomy Mega Cab, the heavy-duty Ram 3500 offers a high-output Cummins turbo-diesel engine paired with the Aisin AS69RC transmission to generate best-in-class towing and torque for hauling heavy trailers. The smart diesel exhaust brake allows for less aggressive use of service brakes and increased stability on descents, and the new three-link front suspension contributes to a more cushioned ride when towing.

*maximum ratings available

Stay Tuned for the 2017 Super Duty

Choosing a new truck is a really important step for safe and enjoyable RVing. Later this year, *Trailer Life* will be doing a full test of the highly anticipated 2017 Ford Super Duty. The all-new design features a heavy-duty boxed frame and aluminum-alloy body, making the truck the most advanced yet, according to Ford.



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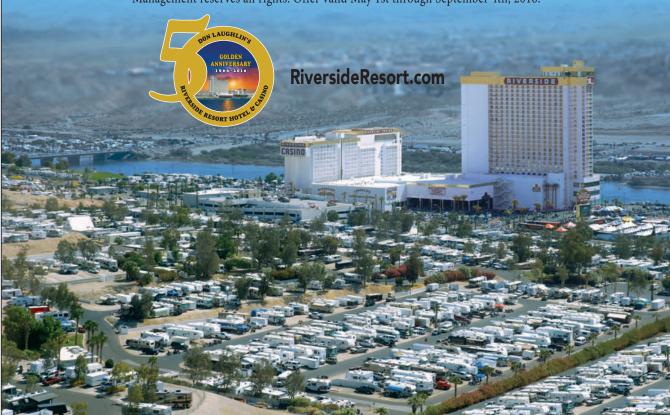
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VERMONT'S CAPITAL

America's smallest state capital, Montpelier offers big-time fun with first-rate restaurants, museums, galleries, music and a historic statehouse that commands the city, all set against an idyllic New England backdrop

The people's house: Vermont's goldleaf-domed capitol. Montpelier is a state where participatory democracy rules from village to village. Jefferson envisioned the
United States becoming: a
small society of independent
and self-reliant farmers and merchants.
Montpelier, the country's smallest state
capital, with a population approaching
8,000, has that feel, making good on the
vision of the nation's third president.

Montpelier and its surrounding environs make for a memorable RV destination, with shops, restaurants, campgrounds and all sorts of outdoor recreation. The region has a number of highly rated RV parks, and for those who prefer a more isolated camping experience, Little River State Park in nearby Waterbury provides a beautiful public campground.

Nearby are Stowe, another picturesque New England village, and impressive Mount Mansfield, the highest peak in Vermont at 4,393 feet. A toll road and gondola lead to trails that reach the summit for panoramic

views. Ben & Jerry's ice cream factory in Waterbury is a fun and tasty stop for everyone.

Once a farming community with roots going back to the early 1800s, the area suffered massive flooding in 1927 that caused extensive property damage and loss of lives. Another major flood in 1934 drowned the town of Waterbury. These natural disasters became the impetus for construction of the Waterbury Dam, built between 1935 and 1938 by the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) and the U.S Army Corps of Engineers, creating 860-acre Waterbury Reservoir. At its zenith, the CCC camp was a thriving community of 2,000 men and 80 buildings. Now only a few concrete foundations and solidary chimneys remain.

Little River State Park is located in Mount Mansfield State Forest, just off Interstate 89 in Waterbury, about 15 miles from Montpelier. Reaching the campground requires a



ASSETS

3½-mile drive over dirt-packed Little River Road. Nevertheless, it is one of the largest and most popular parks in central Vermont. The campground includes 81 tent and RV sites, sans hookups, and four restrooms, three with hot showers for a fee.

On the shores of Waterbury Reservoir, the state park has two beaches, a boat launch and boat rentals. It is centrally located to major attractions in the Montpelier area, but after a long haul from New Jersey, my wife, Linda, and I decided a relaxing swim was in order. Then we'd plan our next day's agenda, which, naturally, included visiting the capital city.

Just east of Montpelier, in Barre, is the impressive Rock of Ages Quarry. It's the world's largest open-face granite quarry with a depth of 600 feet. Narrated shuttle tours are

provided, and you can take a selfguided factory tour and watch artisans sculpt and polish the internationally renowned Barre granite. A stop at the visitor center allows you to view exhibits, watch a video about the operation and tour the gift shop.

From there it's a short drive to Montpelier. The city's slogan, "A little capital goes a long way," is a play on words that is representative of this unique state. Small in size and population, Vermont is America's most rural state, yet it is rich in sophistication, political activity and contradiction. Although its population is considered liberal overall, Vermont has few gun restrictions for ownership or to carry. Residents run the gamut from small farmers to independent shop owners, professionals and hippie entrepreneurs. Most decisions are voted on directly by the people in town hall meetings, bringing to life Jefferson's vision of an independent, self-reliant citizenry providing local rule.

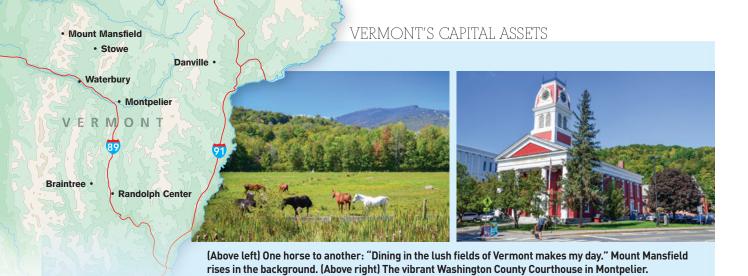
It's difficult for many outsiders to fathom a capital city with fewer than

8,000 people, but with Vermont's total population of only 625,741, it's not that surprising. Linda and I were most impressed with the statehouse, a Greek and Renaissance Revival building completed in 1859. Its gold-leaf dome actually has real gold in it.

Contrasted against the deep-blue sky and green trees of Hubbard Park, the statehouse symbolizes democracy and seemed to sing to us. We contemplated Martin Luther King Jr.'s words, "Let freedom ring from every hill and molehill ... from every mountainside ... let freedom ring."

Freedom extends to the fee-free guided tours of the statehouse, which are offered from July through October, Monday through Saturday. With marble floors, spiral staircases and carved wood trim, the interior is as impressive as the exterior. We were able to visit the ceremonial governor's office, the Senate Chamber, and Representatives Hall, the meeting room for the Vermont General Assembly. On a previous visit many years ago, my tour guide was the mother of Patrick Leahy, now Vermont's





senior U.S. senator — I bet that would never happen in a big state!

Only a few steps from the statehouse is the Vermont Historical Society Museum, whose mission is to emphasize "Freedom and Unity." The museum's multimedia exhibits represent Vermont history from the 1600s to the present. You can walk through a full-size Abenaki wigwam and see the re-created Catamount Tavern, famous for being the gathering place of Ethan Allen and his Green Mountain Boys. Allen and 83 of his militiamen captured New York's Fort Ticonderoga from the British, giving the Continental Army its first victory during the Revolutionary War. The Green Mountain Boys also captured Crown Point, another British

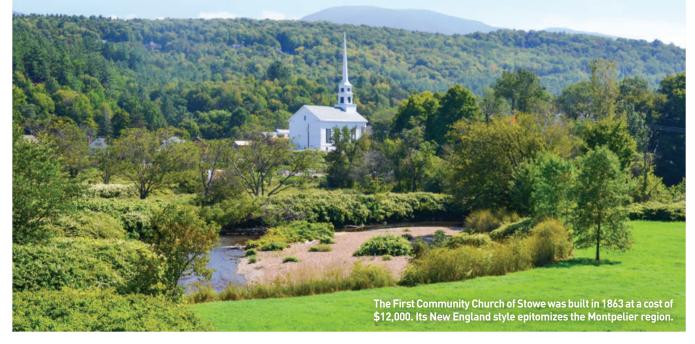
stronghold in the Champlain Valley.

For a hawk's-eye view of Montpelier, visit Hubbard Park, with 7 miles of hiking trails and a 54-foot observation tower offering views of the city's church spires. Reaching the tower requires about a 20-minute round-trip walk. As an alternative, drive to the Cliff Street overlook for a view.

Experiencing downtown Montpelier on foot is easy, as it is only about five blocks long, yet it is filled with unique restaurants, stores, historic buildings and a lively music scene. We enjoy people-watching, and the city's colorful blend of artists, businesspeople, government workers, college students, outdoor enthusiasts, musicians and aging hippies make it all the more fun. Some of the downtown venues have live entertainment on weekends, and when the weather warms up, evening concerts take place on the statehouse lawn.

Julio's Cantina, Mexican Cuisine and Margarita Bar has indoor and outdoor dining next to the Book Garden bookstore ("Where ideas grow") and the Vermont Trading Company, all worth a look-see. On Saturdays at the Capital City Farmers Market, more than 50 vendors showcase products that include hand-dyed wool hats, raw goat milk, cheese and, of course, maple syrup, among other delights.

In 2009 the Vermont General Assembly passed the Farm to Plate Initiative to encourage a sustainable agricultural economy. Subsequently, a number of farm-to-table businesses





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have sprung up in Montpelier, such as the Hunger Mountain Coop market, deli and café, which carries 2,000 local products, and Kismet, a restaurant offering artisanal meals made with fresh, local organic ingredients.

Should you need a relaxing cool-down from your walking tour, Wrightsville Beach Recreation District is 6 miles north of Montpelier on State Route 12. Here, the north branch of the Winooski River has been dammed to create a reservoir. There is a beach, a boat launch and boat rentals that include canoes and kayaks, plus an 18-hole disc-golf course, a picnic area and multiuse trails. Be aware that dogs are not allowed from Memorial Day through Labor Day.

We headed west for a different way to cool down by visiting the famous Ben & Jerry's ice cream factory in Waterbury. The 30-minute guided tour includes a free sample of ice cream (you can buy more outside), an explanation of the manufacturing process and a company history video.

As we learned on the tour, Ben and Jerry are two self-proclaimed misfits and childhood friends from Brooklyn, New York, who had failed at everything they tried. However, after successfully completing a \$5 correspondence course about ice cream, they decided to open Ben & Jerry's Scoop Shop in Burlington, Vermont. With their hippie philosophy and cleverly named flavors like Cherry Garcia and Chunky Monkey, they soon developed a cult following, and the ice cream became a popular brand.





A must-drive in the Montpelier area is the Stowe Mountain Resort Auto Toll Road, open from late May through mid October, weather permitting. RVs aren't allowed on the steep 4.5-mile dirt and gravel road, so take your tow vehicle to experience the awe-inspiring views that lead up to the 3,850-foot-high parking lot. To reach the actual 4,393-foot summit of Mount Mansfield requires a 2.8-mile round-trip hike, mostly above the

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tree line. On a clear day, the summit offers impressive views of the Green Mountains, Lake Champlain, Quebec's Mount Royal in Quebec. New York's Adirondack Mountains and the White Mountains in New Hampshire.

The mountain is said to look like the profile of a face, with the peak being the chin. Hiking the ridge north on Long Trail takes you through an alpine environment that is more typical of arctic areas 1,500 miles to the north. For us, the first 360-degree view came after a 15-minute walk, and the

next 360-degree view came another 10 minutes later. Since it was quite warm and hazy, we opted not to hike all the way to the summit. However, the view on clear days is said to be well worth the effort, but be prepared for weather changes that can be abrupt and extreme, even during the summer.

You can take it easy on the Gondola SkyRide for great views without the walking and enjoy lunch at the Cliff House Restaurant. For the more adventurous, six tree-to-tree aerial courses and a zip-line await at Stowe's

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www.vtstateparks.com/htm/littleriver.htm



VERMONT'S CAPITAL ASSETS

TreeTop Adventure, open from June 25 through September 5 this year.

After leaving the mountain, we stopped briefly in Stowe Village, a quaint town with shops, restaurants, bicycle paths and country churches. The town seemed to have been invaded by the Redcoats — British cars and Union Jacks were everywhere. Then I spotted a sign proclaiming exactly that: Stowe Village was hosting its British Invasion, New England's largest U.K.-lifestyle event. The annual gathering of Anglophiles and British automobiles takes place September 16 though 18 this year.

Heading back to Little River State
Park, we observed a steady stream
of classic British cars advancing
on Stowe. We could not help but be
amazed at the uniqueness of the
Montpelier area, with its elegant capital
city, scenic mountains, convenient
parks and diversity of activities. I was
already thinking about what I wanted to
do on our next visit.





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CHUCKING CONTROL

Comfort Ride Hitch uses proprietary air cells to soften the ride when towing a fifth-wheel trailer

ifth-wheel hitches have evolved over the years to make the process of connecting the trailer to the truck easier and more efficient. Robust weight ratings have been applied to many of these hitches, and most articulate to make hitching on uneven surfaces less complicated. From here, additional features like air bags have been incorporated that aim to smooth out the bumps on roads and create a better ride — and take

out some of the fifth-wheel jouncing that can lead to premature wear and tear.

Comfort Ride Hitch, a small company based in the Midwest, has been working with air-bag-equipped hitches for 20 years. Seven years ago, the company discovered an alternative that improves the ride substantially. The Comfort Ride hitch now uses proprietary air cells that add durability and longevity, while eliminating much of the unwelcome chucking and bounciness experienced by fifth-wheel owners.

The key is the air cells. These round, 5-inch-tall cells are made of solid polymer with millions of microscopic holes inside that absorb energy. Air bags have a good track record in various automotive segments, including their use in fifth-wheel hitches, but air cells are maintenance-free, require no air compressor and can never leak or blow out. They only discolor, turning yellow, after being exposed to sunlight for a while, but there's no degradation in function.

Since traditional air bags displace energy, they also tend to react to bumps and irregularities in the road more slowly, which can actually lead to a rougher ride

1) Removal of the saddle lightened the load so the hitch was easier to lift into the truck for mounting. The first hitch was powder-coated, which gave way to zinc-plating in subsequent models. The result was a smoother action for the mechanism. 2) Height adjustments are made by moving the hinged plate to various holes in the main structure. The saddle height can be adjusted from 12 to 20 inches. It takes two people to complete this process.





CHUCKING CONTROL







3) As part of the height-adjustment procedure, the bars below the air cells can be configured to level out the hinged plate. Two bars are available, but none were used to set the height to the lowest point. 4) We used one of the bars to hold the hinged plate up while making the adjustments and removing one of the air cells. 5) The air cells must be compressed from 1 to 2½ inches to ensure that the hitch will absorb the maximum road shock. A tape measure is used to determine the amount of compression after retracting the landing jacks and placing the total hitch weight on the saddle.

when the bumps are back-to-back. Since the air cells are constantly working to neutralize road bumps (including the infamous concrete highway-expansion joints), the ride can be much smoother.

The Comfort Ride hitch is not a design clone of most of the hitches on the market. It looks different, almost bulky, and it's made from high-strength A36 steel, which contributes greatly to the 180-pound total weight. Earlier models were powder-coated, but the company has settled on zinc-plating with a second coat of yellow chromite, followed by a clear sealer, for a number of reasons, including the fact that the lack of powder-coating keeps all the parts moving freely, without the potential restriction caused by the thick layer of paint.

We first installed the earlier powder-coated Model 245 hitch but swapped it out with the newer version after a few trips. Installation is very straightforward, and if your Ford or Ram truck is fitted with the in-bed puck system, it's just a matter of ordering the right hardware and pinning the hitch in place. The truck we used had the standard fifth-wheel rails, and the Comfort Ride hitch was easily positioned and pinned in place without additional hardware. The company can also adapt its hitch to the B&W flush-mount system.

Getting the hitch up into the bed will take some work because of the weight, and it's best to use a forklift or a couple of competitive weight-lifters. The saddle can be removed to lighten the load, but you're still hefting quite a bit of weight. Once the heavy lifting was over, the hitch was pinned in place within a few minutes.

Since we were also using a Sidewinder kingpin box, the hitch height needed to be adjusted to a lower point. It comes from the factory set at 16 inches high, which is the most common height. To make the adjustments, we needed to lower the hinged plate to the bottom holes, getting the most reduction in height. This process is fairly easy, as long as you have a helper. It can be done with common hand tools, but we elected to use a cordless impact driver for most of the nuts and bolts.







6) The lever to open and close the jaws is made of two pieces and is connected by a spring. 7) After inserting the end loop of the spring in the hole, the wire is bent closed using a Vice-Grip Pliers. 8) While the handle is not the most attractive arrangement, it works exceptionally well, especially when reaching over the wheel well on a dually truck.

The hitch is adjustable in $1\frac{1}{2}$ -inch increments, and the height can be set between 12 and 20 inches. To get the reduction we needed, the bar that's mounted below the air cells was removed completely and the cells placed on the bottom plate. This bar can be configured to accommodate height adjustments, and there's an additional bar available for other configurations. This process is very simple and took only a few minutes.

When all five air cells are in position, the hitch is rated at 24,000 pounds with a 5,000-pound pin-weight capacity. The number of cells needed is determined after hitching up for the first time, which will impact hitch height. We started with three cells after validating that compression (with the hitch weight on the truck) was within the 1- to 2½-inch specifications. But after the initial test drive, we discovered that four air cells did a better job of squelching chucking.

Once the height and compression are set, it never needs to be changed unless a new trailer is being towed. There is no shelf life for the air cells, and they carry a lifetime guarantee. This is in contrast to air bags, which are susceptible to dry rot after five to seven years.

Hitching and unhitching are what makes or breaks any trailering product, and the Comfort Ride hitch is

about as easy — and simple — as it gets. An extra-long handle operates the 1-inch jaws that wrap the kingpin with very tight fit tolerances. This handle is kind of funky and probably doesn't represent the high quality of the hitch as well as it should. But looks are deceiving because it works well — and makes it easy to reach from the side of the bed, especially if the truck is a dually.

Pulling back on the handle releases a pin, which re-engages through the adjacent collar when the jaws are securely wrapped around the kingpin. At this point the jaws will be completely closed and the handle locked in place. The mechanism has an auto-lock feature as the kingpin is driven into the saddle, but the user might have to push the handle back a smidge to verify a complete lock, even though travel is assisted by a spring. We found this to be a nonissue.

The four-way-articulating saddle makes hitching a breeze, and combined with an ultra-smooth mechanism and an antifriction pad that's already attached, the process takes only one attempt — provided the kingpin is lined up properly and the flat surface of the kingpin box is only ¼ inch from the saddle. We were surprised by how easily the wedge on the Sidewinder fit into the slot of the saddle. The



9) When the lever handle is pulled back, the pin releases the mechanism and auto-locks when the jaws are secure around the kingpin. The jaws can be locked open, but the pin must be released before hitching the fifth-wheel. It may be necessary to nudge the lever forward against the hitch frame to ensure the jaws are properly locked. 10) Comfort Ride Hitch offers a wedge for those using the Sidewinder kingpin box. The wedge is sized perfectly to slip into the saddle without binding.





company can provide a custom-cut wedge for Sidewinder users. Once hitched, the breakaway cable can be connected to the carabiner on the end of the handle.

Disconnecting the trailer is just as easy, after removing the weight off the hitch saddle and leaving a small gap. It's best to put the transmission in Neutral and then Park to remove any pressure on the jaws before pulling the handle to disengage the pin and moving the arm forward. The trailer's wheels should be chocked first.

We tested the Comfort Ride hitch over 1,000 miles of California highways, which are notorious for potholes and expansion joints. Virtually all chucking was gone, except on extremely bad sections of highway, and then chucking was less noticeable than with a standard-type hitch. Overall, the

ride was as smooth as it could get in a dually truck. There was no noise from the pin in the coupler, and we experienced no creaking or groaning.

Three models are available, but the 245 is the most versatile, because by removing air cells, it can be adjusted to handle trailers that weigh as little as 10,000 pounds. The hitch sells for \$1,999, with free shipping to residents of the Lower 48 states.

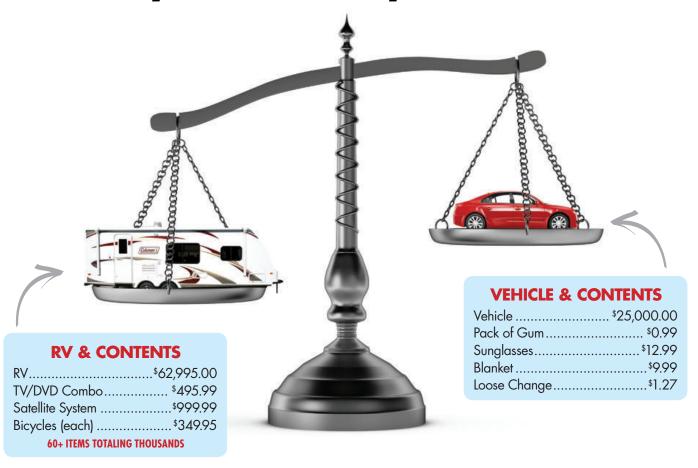
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Just Add Water

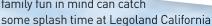
Splish-splash across the States to experience 10 wet-and-wild adventures, from taking an underground boat tour to cascading down high-speed water-slides — in the dark! — to just soaking in hot springs or relaxing poolside

summer is in full swing, and while there are plenty of things to do on land, adding a little water to the family vacation could very well make it even more enjoyable. Here are 10 hotspots to cool off at this season. Go ahead and take the plunge!

egoland Splash Zoo

California

Southern California is a prime destination to catch the wind and waves on the state's seemingly endless miles of coast. Those with family fun in mind can catch



Resort Water Park in Carlsbad. Located 85 miles south of Los Angeles and 35 miles north of San Diego, the water park has a huge 45-foot-tall tower with four main slide rides designed to keep kids and adults entertained in the creative world of Lego. Water lovers also get a thrill on Orange Rush, the family tube slide where up to four people can ride together, and the single-rider, open-body Splash Out slide that

descends 240 feet to the pool below.

True to its name, the Build-A-Raft River is where children build their own rafts made out of soft Lego bricks before floating down a lazy river. The park also features two water-play areas for toddlers, Duplo Splash Safari and Splash Zoo, with downsized slides and interactive characters modeled after the pieces found in Lego Duplo sets.

Colorado

For a total-immersion experience, consider a trip to Glenwood Springs. An hour's drive north of Aspen and three hours west of Denver, the town offers several

options for enjoying the restorative power of water.

At Glenwood Hot Springs, you'll find one of the world's largest mineral-spring pools, as well as a therapy pool that averages temperatures above 100 degrees F. The hot-springs





vapor caves at Yampah Spa are natural underground steam baths that were used by Ute Indians as a source of rejuvenation and healing. And the recently opened Iron Mountain Hot Springs offers 16 soaking pools rippling with iron-rich mineral water. The pools range from 99 to 108 degrees F, and are nestled along the banks of the Colorado River with mountain views.



Connecticut

America's oldest and longest-running amusement park, Lake Compounce in Bristol supplies not only theme-park rides but also a number of ways to splash around between Memorial Day and Labor Day. Lake Compounce's Crocodile Cove, the state's largest water park, presents the Mammoth Falls family water adventure, the high-speed Lights Out slide through darkness, and Clipper Cove's 300-gallon water bucket, water cannons and slides. The amusement park also features Bayou Bay, where visitors can splash in the surf, grab a tube and hit the waves or find a spot to relax in the sun.

Traveling 20 miles north to New Hartford, you'll find that tubing down the Farmington River is another popular summer pastime. The 3-mile float is filled with splashing fun from three sets of wild rapids.

Florida

Many vacationers flock to Orlando for theme parks such as Walt Disney World, SeaWorld Orlando and Universal Orlando, But for RV travelers who pine for a true central Florida outdoor experience, we recommend putting Seminole County on your destination

list. Promoted as Orlando's Natural Oasis, the county extends acres of wilderness for hiking and wildlife observation, and plenty of water activities on miles and miles of river.

One watery attraction can be found at Wekiwa Springs State Park, with its spring that provides 42 million gallons of water to the Wekiwa River each day. The park's kidney-shaped swimming area varies in depth from less than a foot to 5 feet, with a small 15-to-20foot-deep cavern at the source of the spring. The cavern extends deeper into a cave, which can be explored in great detail. For more recreation, try horseback riding in the park or paddling down the gentle Wekiwa between banks framed with sabal palms.

If wildlife is your adventure, pay a visit to Lake Jesup, a Seminole County favorite famed for having the highest alligator lake population in North America. The Geneva Wilderness Area, a scenic 180-acre property south of Geneva, features a variety of lakes, ponds and other waterways, all supporting an equally diverse collection of wildlife.

Idaho

If you find yourself on a landlocked journey through the Intermountain West, consider taking some time



to experience the waters of northcentral Idaho. In and around Kooskia (population, 600), you'll avoid the crowds and traffic of national parks at peak travel seasons but still find the tranquility and adventure of life on the river.

Kooskia is situated within the Nez Perce Indian Reservation, just beyond the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness, where the South and Middle forks of the Clearwater River meet to become one. A fly-fisherman's paradise, the rivers brim with Chinook salmon, steelhead, rainbow trout and cutthroat.

Kooskia is also home to River Dance Lodge, a water-focused destination offering guided rafting trips through the Lochsa River's Class IV rapids and gentler float trips on the Lower Selway and Clearwater rivers, as well as kayaking, tubing and fly-fishing excursions. Trails to mineral hot springs include the easy half-mile hike to Weir Creek's clothing-optional spring-fed pools. In addition to rental cabins, the lodge has RV and tent campsites and a shower house but no hookups.



Kayaking on central Florida's Wekiwa River, one of Seminole County's spring-fed waterways.



Kentucky

An hour's drive north of Nashville. Bowling Green's Beech Bend Park makes for an adventurous family getaway with plenty of fun on the water. If you're in town between May and September, Splash Lagoon Water Park is the place to be on a hot, humid day. Four new rides opened the floodgates this year, starting with the 500-foot-long Cyclone Saucers water slide and its 55-foot vertical drop. Tidal Wave takes riders up and down a wall of water, Riptide plummets through darkness, and Polynesian Plunge descends into a swirling bowl of water. Gung-ho family members will also appreciate the Ragin' Rapids water slides, Surf's Up Wave Pool and the giant tipping bucket at Tiki Island. When it's time to relax, there's the Lazy River and the giant leisure pool. The National Corvette Museum is also located in Beech Bend Park.

Bowling Green offers another watery attraction at Lost River Cave. Here, Kentucky's only underground boat tour takes visitors on a cavesystem excursion on a river that Ripley's Believe It or Not claims is the shortest and deepest in the world. The Kayak the Cave tour is a unique flat-water experience that is suitable for first-timers and advanced kayakers alike, and participants see the cave from a new perspective.

For more underground fun, nearby Mammoth Cave National Park preserves the world's longest known cave system. Oregon

The Pacific Northwest is a beautiful place to visit with no shortage of watery wonders. For starters, the spring-fed McKenzie River in the Cascade Range presents recreational activities from fly-fishing off a historic driftboat to rafting Class III and IV rapids, all in a truly scenic setting. The moderate 2.6-mile Waterfalls Loop trail follows the river under a canopy of fir and cedar trees to a pair of thundering white-water cascades, Sahalie and Koosah falls.

A two-hour drive west to to the central coast leads to the charming seaside town of Florence. From there, the rugged cliffs along U.S. Route 101, the Pacific Coast Scenic Byway, offer classic tourist attractions like the Sea Lion Caves, Heceta Head Lighthouse and incredible RV-accessible beach stops where you can camp under the trees and splash in the waves. Enjoy your choice of beach camping with an iconic ocean view to the west or pursue calm lakes east of Florence.

Texas

If you're researching places to enjoy fun in the waves, chances are, you've

already come across the Schlitter-bahn Waterpark and Resort in New Braunfels. In 1966, along a stretch of a tree-lined, spring-fed river in the Texas Hill Country, Bob and Billye Henry and their three children began creating what would eventually become the world's first water resort and the nation's most popular summertime water park. Since what they were building had never been attempted before, the Henrys relied on their own vision of combining water fun and resort accommodations into a family destination.

Half a century later, it certainly seems like the Henry family was onto something, as Schlitterbahn now offers more than 70 acres of family fun, thrilling adventure and relaxation. Nestled along the banks of the Comal River, the New Braunfels resort features heated swimming pools, kids' water playgrounds, epic river adventures, and plenty of spots to enjoy a moment's relaxation by the water. Part of the resort opens for spring break each year and on weekends starting in late April. Then from Memorial Day through Labor Day, the park is open daily.

Beyond the New Braunfels location, Schlitterbahn has three more





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Texas water parks, in Corpus Christi and on Galveston and South Padre islands, plus a fifth destination in Kansas City, Kansas.



Virginia

A little more than two hours from Washington, D.C., and home to a national park, the Shenandoah Valley is a family-friendly region that offers myriad outdoor activities. One fun water-focused destination is Massanutten Resort. In addition to more than 6,000 acres focused on outdoor adventures, the resort is also home to an indoor and outdoor water park.

Open inside year-round and outside from Memorial Day through Labor Day, the Waterpark at Massanutten features tubes, body slides, the Blue Ridge Rapids lazy river, and Massanutten Meltdown, an area packed with water cannons, waterfalls and a giant tipping bucket. For members of your travel party who like surfing, the Pipeline FlowRider attraction lets them ride the waves indoors year-round on specially designed boards.

Ulisconsin

If you're in the Midwest, traveling a far distance to a seaside destination can be expensive and time-consuming. For a closer trip focused on fun in the water anytime of year, consider visiting Wisconsin Dells, billed as the Waterpark Capital of the World. Reasonably priced and family-friendly, Wisconsin Dells has a vast number of watery attractions set against a backdrop of breathtaking rock formations and sandstone cliffs along the banks of the Wisconsin River. Some of the area's most soughtafter man-made attractions include extreme plunge slides, tube rides, racing speed slides, bowl drops, water

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www.glenwoodcanyonresrot.com

Gypsum

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860-567-2119, www.cozyhills.com

Bristol

Bear Creek Campground at Lake Compounce

860-583-3300, www.campbearcreek.com

FLORIDA

Sanford

Wekiva Falls Resort

352-383-8055, www.wekivafalls.com

Twelve Oaks RV Resort

800-633-9529, www.twelveoaksrvresort.com

IDAHO

Grangeville

Bear Den RV Park

208-983-0140, www.beardenrv.com

Kamiah

Long Camp RV Park

208-935-7922, www.longcamprvpark.com

KENTUCKY

Bowling Green

Beech Bend Family Campground

270-781-7634, www.beechbend.com

Cave City

Singing Hills RV Park

270-773-3789, www.singinghillsrvpark.com

OREGON

Eugene

Eugene Kamping World

800-343-3008, www.eugenekampingworld.com

Premier RV Resorts-Eugene

541-686-3152, www.premierrvresorts.com

Shamrock Village Recreational Vehicle Park

541-747-7473, www.shamrockvillagepark.com

Florence

B&E Wayside RV Park

roller coasters, an indoor surf machine, massive wave pools and lazy rivers.

All told, Wisconsin Dells has more than 200 water rides and holds the titles of America's largest outdoor water park (Noah's Ark Waterpark), America's largest indoor/outdoor-combo water park (Wilderness Hotel and Golf Resort) and Wisconsin's largest indoor water park (Kalahari Waterpark Resort Convention Center).

With nearly 100 restaurants close by, a wide range of shopping options and world-class spa facilities, this travel destination may be more tempting than driving hundreds, if not thousands of miles to a seaside resort. Most of the outdoor water parks and recreation areas are open from Memorial through Labor Day, and many indoor attractions remain open year-round.

541-997-6451, www.bandewaysidervpark.com Heceta Beach RV Park

541-997-7664, www.hecetabeachrvpark.com Pacific Pines RV Park and Storage

541-997-1434, www.pacificpinesrv.com

TEXAS

New Braunfels

Hill Country Cottage and RV Resort

830-625-1919, www.hillcountryrvresortnb.com

San Marcos

Pecan Park Riverside RV and Cabins

512-396-0070, www.pecanpark.com

VIRGINIA

Mount Jackson

Shenandoah Valley Campground

540-477-3080

www.shenandoahfamilycampground.com

Verona

Shenandoah Valley Campground

800-310-2580, www.campingisfun.com

WISCONSIN

Wisconsin Dells

Christmas Mountain Village Campground 608-253-1000, www.christmasmountainvillage.com Sherwood Forest Camping and RV Park

877-474-3796, www.sherwoodforestcamping.com





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H₂O ON THE GO

RV water filters make removing impurities and improving taste as quick and easy as turning on the tap

ater is the lifeblood of any self-contained RV. Not only is drinking at least eight glasses of water every day suggested for good health, water is also used for cooking, bathing and cleaning. Water that is murky is not pleasant, and when it takes on strong odors, especially chlorine, it's hard to drink without holding your nose. Add cysts, bacteria and viruses to the equation, and finding pure water these days can be quite the challenge.



When we're at home, the water is usually provided by a municipal system or from a well. If you're lucky, the water will be clean and drinkable, but if it's not, you have the option of installing various systems that can treat the water effectively. When traveling, water quality will be unknown until you hook up and turn on the faucet, and then you still will have no idea if the water is actually safe. There are many campgrounds where drinking out of the tap is not a problem and the water is clear and tastes good. Unfortunately, water that is high in sediment but still drinkable can wreak havoc on faucets, showerheads

and even the toilet valve. Water that's contaminated can get you sick and spoil a trip.

Ideally, some type of onboard filtration or purification system — whether permanently mounted or portable — should be considered for protection against bad water when hooking up at campgrounds, as well as when filling the water tank from unknown sources.

Choosing a filtration system for your needs will be an individual process, and there are a few questions that must be answered before proceeding. How much volume of water will be used? How often

is the RV used? What level of purification is required for your needs? Do you want to filter the entire RV or just the cold side of the galley faucet for cooking and drinking purposes? Perhaps adding an auxiliary faucet for drinking water alone would be ideal. Cost can be a factor as well, but there are many different options on the market to suit your needs.

Having absolutely pure water in an RV is not easily attainable. The best system for purification is reverse-osmosis, but these systems are expensive, take up valuable space and use a lot of water. Distillation provides the purest









1) Typical standard (10-inch) canisters are connected with a brass fitting for convenience and easy handling. Water hoses can be connected to brass fittings on the inlet and outlet of the canisters. 2) While it is OK to lay the canisters flat on the ground during use, many owners rig up systems to keep them upright. Here, an oblong plastic bucket was cut to accommodate the two canisters. 3) Brass quick-connectors make setup and takedown quick and clean. 4) A special plastic wrench is used to loosen the filter housing from the top plate with the fittings. An O-ring seals the two pieces without overtightening.

H₂O ON THE GO

water, but having such a system in an RV is not practical. Water softeners remove only calcium, the stuff that makes the water hard and leads to clogged faucets and showerheads.

There may be a multitude of contaminants found in city-water supplies. Commonly identified biological contaminants include cysts, protozoa, chlorine, Giardia, bacteria and viruses. The best defense against bad water is to use a sediment filter set up in front of another filter designed to capture biological contaminants. A single in-line filter cannot perform the task that multiple-canister systems are capable of.

The following filters are the most commonly used by the RV community.

Sediment Filters

Every RV should have a good-quality sediment filter. These filters are designed to remove dirt, sand, minerals, metals and other similar contaminants that can create problems with the water. Smell and taste will pass through them, however. The most popular systems use two canisters, one with a filter that traps the sediment followed by a filter that improves taste. It's recommended that the cartridge be at least able to filter out anything larger than 5 microns. The life of these cartridges is dependent on usage, but they generally need to be replaced when the water flow slows down.

Carbon Filters

The second filter in a good two-cartridge system should be carbon. It should be rated at .5 microns and be capable of removing lead, heavy metals and cysts — all contributors to bad taste. When choosing a carbon filter, go with a solid carbon-block product because it removes much smaller contaminants than granulated carbon filters. Water that's forced through a solid block of carbon will be stripped of many more contaminants when compared to the water that flows in and around granules. Water that comes in contact with carbon will also taste better, generally.

In-Line Filters

Basic in-line filters will treat water to a lesser degree, and for some owners it may be all that is necessary, depending on the water source and how often they use their RVs. These





5) A sediment filter is used in the canister closest to the water source. Compare the filter in the canister to the new filter on the left; after only five weeks of service, it's easy to see why a sediment filter is needed. The filter should be replaced when water flow slows down. 6) A charcoal filter is used in the second canister. This filter will remove lead, heavy metals and cysts that taint the water and contribute to bad taste.

types of filters can also be used to fill your RV's water storage tank from a home or campground source.

When shopping for an in-line filter, choose a model with KDF additives. This cartridge will have zinc and copper additives that resist bacteria growth incorporated into the carbon filter.

These types of filters are particularly good for occasional use. In-line filters are the biggest culprit for diminishing water volume and flow, and the problem is compounded as the filter clogs with sediment and particles. High-quality filtration is not feasible with an in-line filter, simply due to its small size. However, these cartridges can help improve taste to a small degree but will not remove chlorine or other biological contaminants.

Ceramic Filters

Ceramic cartridges are the kings of submicron filtration. A micron is equal to one-thousandth of a millimeter. Ceramic filters, in a candle configuration, will remove biological contaminants and chlorine, and they can be cleaned and reused for many years with great success. While there are a number of these filters on the market, the Doulton cartridge is said to be best for purification. Ceramic candles impregnated with silver nitrate will prevent the growth of algae and mold.







7) Carbon filters used in the jumbo canister last much longer and will not restrict water flow. 8) In-line filters help but are designed for light-duty service in RVs that are used infrequently. Always look for an in-line filter with KDF additives, which help retard bacterial growth.
9) Filters that purify water can be routed through an independent faucet that's used for drinking and cooking. In most cases, it's not necessary to purify water for the entire RV, which will shorten the life of carbon and ceramic filters.



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10) For this RV, which is lived in full time, jumbo canisters are mounted under the sink. Jumbo canisters can also be set up outside to service all the faucets in the RV. 11) Ceramic candles can be cleaned with a special brush. Keeping the ceramic filter clean will add years to the service life. This filter has been in full-time service for eight years. 12) Six Rio 2000 ceramic candles are used inside this jumbo canister. This filter configuration provides the purest water without going to a reverse-osmosis or UV system.

A ceramic filter, used in conjunction with a sediment and carbon filter, will provide the greatest protection against bad water for any RV, even in areas where the water supply is not up to strict quality standards. Only a reverse-osmosis system or ultraviolet light can improve on the filtration and protection afforded by ceramic filters.

Use and Care

Standard- or jumbo-canister-type systems are typically found on the market. The standard 10-inch versions are available at most home-improvement stores, Camping World and RV-supply stores. These are generally the most popular models used by RVers. A single standard canister can be used with a sediment or carbon filter. A double standard-canister system can be equipped with the sediment and a ceramic solid-carbon block or even a hybrid ceramic/carbon-block filter.

Full-time RVers, or those who spend long periods of







time on the road, should consider the jumbo canister, like those marketed by the RV Water Filter Store. These canisters are designed to treat larger volumes of water and are capable of the best filtration possible over a longer period of time. The best jumbo-filter combo canister contains a plastic block that holds six ceramic candles. The water flows into the canister and passes through each candle. The added bonus of the jumbo canister versus the standard canister is that the volume and water pressure are not restricted.

When setting up a system for an RV, most owners

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position the filters outside, in line with the water hose. Standard ¾-inch brass fittings make hookup simple, and the use of good-quality quick connectors add convenience to the process. Many users build boxes or supports to hold the filters upright, which can be done by modifying milk crates or buckets. While this keeps the filters off the ground, it's not necessary; most filters will do just fine lying on the ground in a horizontal position.

Protection from direct sunlight is more important. Filters that are shielded from the sun will last longer and resist growing algae and other similar stuff inside that can plug the cartridge(s) prematurely. This can easily be done by placing the filters under the RV when in service, by building them into a compartment or by placing a cloth or sunscreen material over the filter housings. While it's best to drain the filters prior to storage, this is not necessary, except to keep water from running all over the compartment when

storing portable systems.

Tip: Install a strip of masking tape on the canisters and write the date the filters were last serviced. It's best to service the filters before the water flow becomes too restricted.

When shopping for any type of water filter, check for the National Sanitation Foundation (NSF) certification. The NSF thoroughly tests filters for flow rates, chlorine removal, taste, odor and particulates. For instance, a Class I filter can remove 75 to 100 percent of chlorine. A Class II removes 50 to 75 percent, and Class III will remove 0 to 50 percent of the chlorine.

To test chlorine-removal effectiveness, we visited an RV park where the chlorine smell was exceptionally strong, rendering the water almost undrinkable. After running the water through the ceramic-and-solid-carbon-block jumbo-canister system, the smell was gone and the taste was as that from bottled water.

Not only will an effective system

ensure that the water is safe, regardless of region and source, but weight, space and cost considerations will be minimized. Think of how many bottles of water you would have to buy and store to supply enough drinking water without having to run to the market every couple of days.

While a variety of these types of filters are on the market for stationary homes, the best places to shop for RV systems are RV-supply stores and specialists like the RV Water Filter Store, which has become a recognized expert in RV water filtering and purification, and has provided valuable information to the RV community for many years.

Sources

Camping World www.campingworld.com

Discount Filter Store www.discountfilterstore.com

The RV Water Filter Store www.rvwaterfilterstore.com



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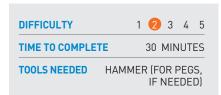
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Instant Archway

Let's Go Aero's collapsible shelter connects to the door side of the RV and provides protection from the elements for outdoor lounging



ost of us RVers would like to believe that we're truly equipped and prepped for nearly anything ol' Ma Nature can toss our way, within reason, of course. As is often the case, the weather can throw a curve ball when you're getting ready to eat outside or just lounge around. Most of us use the patio awning and put up sunshades or even wind-block panels, but now there's a unique product that marries a portable canopy to the RV and provides extra outdoor space, protected from the elements.

Let's Go Aero, a company out of Colorado, where outdoor living rules, has developed a tent-like shelter, the ArcRV Side Room, that turns into a portable extension when tethered to its RV Connector. Attached to the RV, the ArcRV Side Room becomes a completely sealed 6-by-10-foot shelter

DON'T PITCH A FIT » Assembling the shelter is like erecting a tent, using poles and straps to form the nylon structure. The process is less difficult if time is made to read and follow the assembly instructions beforehand.



With the door and screen zipped into place, the shelter is complete and can be used as an extra room or an outdoor sanctuary protected from the elements.

(measured at the base) that offers almost 9 feet of headroom. While some might consider the structure a room extension, it can also be considered a mudroom, which is commonly used in cold-weather regions.

The shelter is made of 2,000mm coated polyester and rip-stop nylon, which is very strong and weather-resistant. The fabric, much like a tent, is held in place with steel and fiber-glass poles and a whole bunch of shock

cords with C-clips.

As simple a concept as this tentlike shelter seems to be, reading the instructions will be mandatory. If you don't, you'll be reminded of how much "fun" it is to erect a tent that you haven't used for years, and end up fumbling your way into frustration.

The process begins by connecting the lower portion of the frame via the two G-labeled poles and setting up the tapered structure. This is followed by



adjusting the webbing straps to match the taper and locking them in place between the notch rivets. You'll need to study the Step 4 cover-install section of the instructions before proceeding. This will make the next steps a little easier and greatly reduce the need for repetitive reference to the instructions. From here, continue working with every intersecting pole except B, C1 and D, which will be used right after the tent cover is installed.

At this point, the door/screen panel and the RV Connector can be applied to their respective ends. The door/screen is attached by way of zippers, which adds security and stability. The RV Connector attaches to the rear framing poles from inside using all of the integrated C-clips. Once it is clipped into place, the straps are adjusted and the buckles are applied where necessary.

The giant elastic 5-by-7-foot Stretch Sleeve is now pulled over the lower edge of the entry step. That's it,





Once the basic structure is in place, the RV Connector kit is used to mate the shelter to the RV. A stretch sleeve is pulled over the entry steps for stability. The ArcRV Side Room and the RV Connector can be stuffed into their respective bags for storage and transporting. All the components will actually go back into the bags without undue manipulation.

other than driving in some of the included stakes for additional stability.

Although the ArcRV Side Room and RV Connector are made of good materials and the build quality is excellent, they command a rather hefty price tag of \$429. The ArcRV, which weighs 27 pounds and comes with a handy carry bag, was originally designed for use on Sprinter-based Class B motorhomes, and while there are patents pending for the product and its intended use, the

collapsible room can be adapted for trailers and fifth-wheels, as long as the height requirements are met.

Having the ArcRV in place allowed us to extend our time outdoors, whether to escape the harsh midday sun or block the wind during the evening. It's even a great place to house kids who prefer to sleep outdoors.

Let's Go Aero

877-464-2376, www.letsgoaero.com







Best of Both Showerheads

I like the convenience of a fixed showerhead as well as a portable handheld sprayer, so I modified the handheld one in our RV. I used CPVC pipe and fittings, and purchased a showerhead with an on-off valve.

I connected the pipes and the new showerhead to the existing faucet's vacuum breaker, and attached it to the wall and ceiling with pipe brackets. Using the shut-off valves, I can select which showerhead to use.

I spent about \$20 for a small showerhead, plus the cost of the other small parts, and the dual setup works great!

Lawrence Eastham Bardstown, Kentucky

Sliding Doors Stay Put

After breaking several plastic latches on the sliding-glass doors on our RV's wardrobe and having to replace the mirror on one of them because of the broken latch. I decided to make a more positive restraint to keep the doors in place while traveling.

My fix requires three parts. One is a drain-stopper handle found on the back of most



bathroom faucets and available at hardware stores. The other two pieces are faucet washers that fit tightly on the round rod of the stopper handle.

With both closet doors pushed to one side, I drilled a hole through the track cover attached to the wall that is in front of the door, about ½ inch away from where the doors are when both are flush. The hole needs to go all the way through and be low enough in the track to stop the doors from sliding. Place one washer on the stopper handle to protect the front of the track cover and insert the handle into the hole, then put the second washer on the stopper. Now the doors, with one door open, are securely locked in place for travel. Bill McHale, Copperopolis, California

CPAP Machine Shelf

The May issue of Trailer Life included a letter from Louise Clark bemoaning the lack of a convenient shelf to support a CPAP machine near the head of a bed in most new RVs. Here's a simple and inexpensive solution that I use in my RV.

Cut a piece of 3/8-inch plywood wide enough to support the CPAP machine, making it about 3 feet long. Round the edges and corners, sand it lightly, apply a



little stain and polyurethane or lacquer from a spray can, and you have the finished shelf. When it's dry (you don't want it to stick to the mattress!) slip the plywood between the mattress and the mattress support — or the box spring for the high-enders. Leave enough of the surface out to hold the CPAP machine, and you've installed your new shelf.

I added a 12-volt DC outlet beneath it so I can plug in the CPAP machine when we're dry camping. Many CPAP ventilators are powered at 12 volts DC or have a 12-volt DC adapter available from the manufacturer.

Norm Anderson, Minnetonka, Minnesota 🗭

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



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MSRP: \$299, 800-882-1204, www.hayesbc.com/products/controllers/sway-master Circle 168 on Reader Service Card



What's Cookin'?

RV chefs can become the talk of the campground with mouthwatering roasts, fish and veggies prepared using the sous-vide method, a cooking technique that requires precise temperature monitoring. To start, seal the prepared food in a plastic bag and place it in a steel pot filled with water, then click the magnetic ChefSteps Joule in the bottom of the pot. The 11-inch immersion wand heats the water and keeps it at the right temperature. A free Apple or Android app controls the wand from a smartphone.

MSRP: \$299 (includes shipping and membership), 206-905-1099, www.chefsteps.com/joule Circle 169 on Reader Service Card



Rust Not, Waste Not

A big headache for RVers is keeping rust at bay from items stored outside the living area of the trailer. An easy solution: Place a few Zerust vapor capsules close to the tools, recreational gear and other things you need to protect. Zerust capsules release a nontoxic, odorless vapor that surrounds the surface of nearby metals and electronics, creating an invisible rust and corrosion shield, according to the manufacturer. When the stored items are exposed to outside air, the vapor molecules are said to dissipate harmlessly. The adhesivebacked VC2-1 capsule is designed to protect a radius of 2 feet.

MSRP: \$6.49

330-405-1965, www.zerustproducts.com Circle 170 on Reader Service Card



Bar Booster

It can be frustrating making phone calls or going online at a campground only to have the connection dropped because of poor cellular reception. That frustration can be relieved with the RV 4G Signal Booster from WeBoost. The palm-size wizard works with all cellular carriers to extend range, provide faster downloads and get more talk time in weak-signal areas, according to WeBoost. Whether you're posting vacation photos, screening movies, checking email or chatting on the phone, the device is designed to help convey a stronger, more reliable signal so you can stay connected wherever you roam.

MSRP: \$399.99

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Travel Light

Few LED flashlights are better suited for RV use than the multifunctional Secur SP-4004. It's a 220-lumen torch with a built-in power pack and a USB port to charge tablets and smartphones. Made from fireproof ABS and aviation aluminum, and powered by a 5,200-milliamp lithiumion battery, the 6.25-inch by 2-inch SP-4004 has low, medium, high and flashing-light modes, and incorporates an emergency window breaker and a seatbelt cutter. An ideal flashlight to keep in the tow vehicle's center console or glove compartment, the SP-4004 weighs just 6 ounces.

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GENERAC



Spring into Action

Tired of fighting rear-end sag when hooking up a trailer to a coil-sprung Ram 1500? TufTruck's TTC-1211 coil-spring replacement kit is designed with towing in mind. These heavy-duty springs are engineered to significantly increase rear-end support and ride quality on 2009 to 2016 1500s at stock ride height. Installation is straightforward and doesn't require replacing the original shocks. While the progressive-rate springs have 50 percent greater carrying capacity, they are not intended to increase load ratings or hitch-weight capacity, according to TufTruck. But they will keep Ram half-tons on the level when pulling a trailer. TufTruck also makes kits for other domestic pickups and vans.

MSRP: \$288.95

800-667-6167, www.tuftruck.com Circle 173 on Reader Service Card



A Cooler Cummins

The Cummins cooling system was designed to adequately cool a 300to 350-horsepower engine. But the rear two cylinders have been known to heat up when horsepower is increased with aftermarket tuners or equipment, potentially leading to piston failure. These rearmost cylinders can suffer from a lack of coolant flow and therefore experience the highest temperatures. Fleece Performance Engineering offers a solution with its Cummins Coolant Bypass for 1994 to 2016 engines. The bypass kit uses a secondary thermostat instead of coolant pressure to ensure consistent cooling across all six cylinders. The kit comes with high-quality O-ring fittings and hose connections with braided hose.

MSRP: \$366.45

855-839-5040, www.fleeceperformance.com Circle 174 on Reader Service Card



Always on Guard

Installing a rock guard behind your truck's rear wheels is a good way to prevent road debris from eating up the finish of your trailer. Smart Solutions makes a full-width rock quard specifically for dual-rear-wheel trucks, aptly named the Dually Guard. For maximum protection, the 3/8-inchthick molded-rubber flap extends 94 inches at the bottom, covering the dual wheels on both sides, and tapers to 70 inches at the top for unimpeded exhaust airflow. Stiffening bars molded into the flap increase its ability to deflect rocks at interstatehighway speeds. Now available at Camping World, the Dually Guard mounts on the truck's hitch receiver and can be removed easily.

MSRP: \$119.95

630-775-1517

www.smartsolutionsrv.com Circle 175 on Reader Service Card



Tanks for the Ride

Carrying an extra 70 gallons of fuel in your diesel truck can be a big plus, particularly when towing for long distances where refueling might be a concern. Having a place to safely store tools in the back of the truck is another plus. Transfer Flow's aluminized-steel 70-gallon Toolbox and Refueling Tank Combo provides both. The toolbox section of the over-the-bedrails box is adjustable, so the combo fits long- and shortbed domestic pickups. The TRAX 3 monitoring system automatically transfers fuel from the auxiliary tank to the truck's tank and comes with a dash-mounted LCD display so you always know how much fuel is in both tanks.

MSRP: \$1,999.79. 800-826-5776, www.transferflow.com 🗭

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Bunk Ladder



Dometic's reputation for reliability, convenience and comfort is field-tested tough by all of the company's RV appliances and accessories on the road today.

Enjoying the open road and all the freedom it offers leads to camaraderie and friendship, a chance to join in the true RV fellowship through a shared sense of community. Though no two destinations are the same, your pop-up, travel trailer or 5th wheel is what you rely upon the most. While weather and geography can make your stays on

the road challenging, if the RV and its components work well, then most likely your trip will be a good one.

In 2016, Dometic's wide range of products will help you experience new adventures in style. These easy-touse products offer the value and durability owners want for their active trailering and outdoor lifestyle.

Awnings



Dometic's awnings set new standards in innovation. Dometic's complete line of patio, door and window awnings help improve the comfort level of your RV.

In terms of innovation, the 9100 Power Awning with Power Channel Technology breaks new ground. Using Dometic's patent-pending Power Transfer Module, the Power Channel system transfers 12V power from the vehicle through the 9100 Power Awning's roller tube to run multiple and different types of accessories up to 15 amps, such as fans, lights and speakers, from anywhere on the tube.

An independently-powered LED light strip, located in the roller tube, provides ambient lighting. Lighted switches alert you when the LED lighting and PowerChannel are in use, and there are no visible wires.

D Dometic

The PowerChannel Rail (2' and 4' lengths) allows for the use of these convenient accessories inside the RV and also could be used in your residential home. The PowerChannel Rail makes it easy to set up a fan, add lighting and listen to music indoors, and it's also a great place to store your accessories when the awning is stowed. Look for new, exciting PowerChannel Accessories from Dometic!

The 9100 Power Awning (also available in a manual version) opens and retracts with ease by pressing a wall-mounted switch. It features stylish and rugged single-sided or double-sided vinyl fabric.

The Dometic 9500 Power and Manual Case Awnings offer the same easy deployment, rugged construction and style, with heavy-duty, double-sided vinyl Linen Fade fabric. Lateral arms are designed to withstand heavy use, and the manual pitch adjustment helps you enjoy shade any time of the day. Plus, the automatic Rain Shed prevents rainwater from pooling on the awning. These awnings are perfect for those who want to avoid the arms of a traditional awning.

For convenience and added ease, open and close your awning in seconds with the NEW G-Series Geared Awnings' patent-pending separable crank handle, with only seven steps compared with 12 steps on torsion-spring models.

The easily operated Sunchaser, 8500 and 9000 awnings stand apart in terms of performance and style. RV owners just need to snap the handle apart, put one end of the shaft into a $\frac{1}{4}$ " drive screw gun and the other end into the cone-shaped guide on the awning, and press the trigger. Or, keep the handle together to crank the awning manually. A self-locking safety system increases reliability and keeps the awning roller tight. Existing manual awnings can be easily upgraded to this technology with a conversion kit.

The Dometic Veranda Room makes your RV patio awning into a comfortable screened-in enclosure free from flying insects, and increases your living space. Thanks to the NEW patent pending connection system, setup is fast and simple, and the Veranda Room can now be installed on most any Power Awning and to traditional manual awnings. Or, reduce the sun intensity by more than 50 percent with the simple-setup Veranda Shade, which comes in a kit with all tie downs and stakes.

For windows, the Deluxe Plus and Elite Window Awning offer a patented, easy-to-use PermaLoop pull strap. Both styles provide privacy, protect your furniture and draperies from sun damage, and allow open windows during gentle rains.





Slidetoppers

To shield the top of RV slideout rooms, stain- and mildew-resistant vinyl SlideToppers function by extending automatically to keep water and debris from entering the RV when the slideout is retracted. Stylish and attractive, SlideToppers enhance the look and value of your RV, and extend the life of seals and gaskets.

The Deluxe EZ features a vinyl weathershield and reflects heat and light to help keep the interior cooler. An anti-billow mechanism holds the stain and mildew resistant vinyl canopy snug, and the EZ design is a complete kit that is quicker and easier to install than earlier versions. All SlideToppers are available with hardware and fabric colors that include polar white, black, champagne and satin.



Refrigerators





Dometic has been perfecting RV refrigeration since the 1950s. The New Generation refrigerator series increases storage space but not the outside dimensions thanks to advanced insulation technology. Available in 7 cu. ft. & 9 cu. ft. sizes, the self-locking door handles are designed for easy use and access.

Dometic brings the power of compressor cooling to the Americana, the most popular line of built-in RV refrigerators. Available in 6 and 8 cu. ft. (170.l and 226.5 l) models, the exterior dimensions remain the same as similar models, but there is more storage space inside the Americana DMC.

The Americana DMC's large, smooth internal surfaces replace the cooling fins of absorption models. This provides more storage space inside both the freezer and fresh-food compartments.

The 5 cu. ft. Freedom retrofits older models of similar size and runs on 110-volt or LP.

Portable Freezers/Refrigerators

Freedom

Never buy ice again with the new CFX Series of Portable Freezers/Refrigerators. The CFX is available in six sizes, from 27 to 86 quarts (26 to 95 liters), and utilizes a fully hermetic WAECO compressor with integrated control electronics and low-voltage protection.

The lineup includes the CFX-28US, CFX-35US, CFX-40US and CFX-50US, and the two largest CFX models, the CFX-65DZUS and CFX-95DZUS, have CoolFreeze DUAL-ZONE capability. This offers 3-in-1 versatility that no other portable cooler can match, allowing you to use the CFX as a cooler and freezer with separate compartments for refrigeration and freezing; as an "all cooler" with entire area dedicated to refrigeration; as an "all freezer" with entire area dedicated to freezing.

CFX models come with a soft-touch digital thermostat, and can be controlled with a Wireless Display, except for the CFX-95DZUS, which can be remotely monitored and controlled by a NEW mobile app. A quick-chill turbo function runs compressors at maximum performance until desired temperatures are reached, from -8°F to 50°F. CFX units can run on 120V AC, 12V DC or 24V DC power.



Portable Ice Makers

Dometic's HZB-12SA Stainless Steel Portable Ice Maker is smaller than other units and makes ice in less than 13 minutes. Also available in new red (HZB-12RD) and teal (HZB-12TL) colors, its compact size makes it perfect for stowing in an RV, boat or even a car. It produces 26 lbs. of ice every 24 hours, and a removable basket holds 1.8 lbs. of ice.



Microwaves

Quick, convenient microwave cooking is available with standard, convection and over-the-range sensor models. All offer touchpad controls, multi-stage cooking, one-touch reheat and popcorn buttons, and user-friendly features.

Dometic's DCM series microwave ovens are offered in models that offer regular cook mode only, and models with grill and convection functions. All DCM series microwaves offer a 1.1 cubic foot capacity and 1,000 watts of cooking power. Ten adjustable power levels let you boil, reheat, defrost, and more. These ovens have nine pre-sets, and the control panel features a digital timer and digital clock with LED readout.





As a perfect cooling solution for fifth wheels, travel trailers and motorhomes, the Blizzard NXT has a powerful motor and fan. It's the newest in Dometic's line of rooftop air conditioners, heat pumps and RV climate control systems, and uses the most advanced technologies, including environmentally friendly R410A refrigerant.

The Blizzard NXT provides an industry-leading 350 CFM airflow and advanced engineering that maximizes airflow around the evaporator coils for better performance.

Expanded polypropylene (EPP foam) construction provides better insulation, plus reduces weight and unwanted condensation. Use of heavy sheet metal is minimized to improve performance and eliminate noise issues. It's available in white/black or black/black with A/C and heat pump models available in capacities of 13,500

and 15,000 BTUs

The Brisk II and Penguin II line of air conditioners offer reliable climate control that makes life on the road more pleasant. The well-designed Brisk II Air Conditioner is the result of two years of re-engineering. One of the most popular and most imitated RV air conditioners, the Brisk II is the smallest 13.5K rooftop unit available. The Brisk II Heat Pump offers 15,000 BTUs of heating and cooling from a single unit.

The Brisk II uses its smart design, tighter specification allowances and improved materials to maximize air flow and performance. This RV A/C unit offers a 15% air flow increase and is 19% lighter than previous models, making it the smallest 13,500 BTU rooftop unit available. The Brisk II Heat Pump offers 15,000 BTUs of heating and

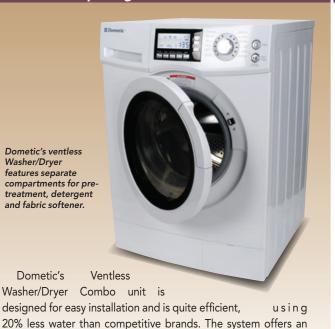
Dometic

cooling from a single unit.

The Penguin II low-profile RV rooftop air conditioner is a versatile cooling system that is thermostatically controlled in a multi-zone system with the Comfort Control Center II Thermostat or the Dometic Single Zone Liquid Crystal Display. Its low profile is less than 10 inches in height, and the sleek, contemporary shroud reduces drag for improved mileage. In a non-ducted single-zone system it can be controlled by the Universal Air Distribution Box with Cold-Shot Technology.

Controlling the temperature has never been easier, thanks to the CT (Capacitive Touch) Thermostat, Bluetooth-enabled and offering remote control using a free Dometic app. Using the advanced technology of capacitive sensors instead of physical buttons, gentle taps on three input areas of the control give you access to all the climate control features.

Washer/Dryer Combo Unit



easy-to-read LCD for monitoring and has programmable frequent user settings for added convenience.

The system has a 15-pound capacity and cycle-timer display with complete alarm notification. An ergonomic door handle and

with complete alarm notification. An ergonomic door handle and easy drainage and service access are other benefits. The unit also features three separate compartments for pre-detergent and fabric softener.

Central Vacuum Systems



Dometic InterVac RVacTM and RVacTM Plus vacuum cleaners easily install under seats, in closets or storage compartments. The RVacTM line provides powerful suction and comes with a 40-foot flexible stretch hose that retracts to 10 feet, a pistol grip, and includes a range of tools to vacuum hard-to-reach places.

For RVs that can benefit from two or more remote hookups, the RVac™ Plus is an expandable system that allows for location flexibility because of its multi-port design. The RVac™ Plus can be used with the VacPort™ central vacuum baseboard accessory (sold separately). This accessory is also compatible with all household central vacuum systems. The VacPort™ is built of rugged polycarbonate and activates with the slight touch of the toe, so you can sweep dirt directly toward the opening and let the power of the vacuum do its job.

Mobile Electronic Safe



Storing electronic devices is easy with the Dometic Mobile Electronic Safe. Cushioned felt padding protects contents and there's enough space for a 17" laptop. Predrilled holes, two on the bottom, two on the back wall, allow for secure installation of the 31-pound safe.

Sanitation

Dometic has toilets for RVs of all sizes, including the fully featured 320 (the industry's No. 1 Gravity Discharge Toilet) and the 310 with full-sized 100% vitreous ceramic bowl, easy foot-pedal operation and unique removable components that simplify winterization. Joining the 310 is the 300 ultra-light toilet with powerful triple-jet rinse action. The 300 model offers an innovative drop-away ball and valve system plus a full-size bowl.

The Dometic 320 series features an elongated, deep ceramic bowl and enameled wood seat that offers comfort surpassing many smaller RV toilets. The pressurized full-rim flush delivers a bowl-clearing rinse every time. An ergonomic one-direction foot pedal action results in easy, hands-free flushing for added sanitary benefits. The 320 is available in white or bone colors, and standard or low-profile heights.

The Dometic 310 series toilet is the best of all worlds. A value-priced toilet, the Dometic 310 features revolutionary PowerFlush Technology and a ceramic bowl. The European styling comes in a white or bone finish, and features a full-size, residential-type seat.



D-Line[™] Products

Campers and outdoor enthusiasts no longer have to sacrifice effective cleaning and sanitation products in order to be eco-friendly. Dometic introduced its new D-Line™ series of eco-friendly and campground approved products, so named for their powerful impact as an RVer's "first defense" against dirt and odors.

This powerful array of Dirt Defense cleaners and Odor Defense

tank treatments are formaldehyde-free, campground-compatible, nature-friendly and professional strength. These effective products include: D-Line Premium Holding Tank Treatment, 3 'n 1 Bowl Cleaner



and Tank Treatment, Non-toxic Clean

'n Green Holding Tank Treatment, Gray Tank Odor Treatment and Toilet Bowl & Seal Cleaner.

Another popular D-Line product is the extra soft and absorbent Ultra Enviro-Soft toilet tissues. They break up quickly to prevent clogs and have 500 sheets per roll.

D-Line RV Cleaning products include the new RV Wash 'N Wax Cleaner, a professional

strength, multi-purpose wash formula. Other RV cleaning products include: NEW Advanced AC Coil Cleaner, Slide Out Seal Saver, Slide Out Lube & Protector and RV Roof Cleaner & RV Roof Sealer.

Camping World offers consumers a tremendous value on Dometic products, with a Lowest-Installed Price Guarantee. Camping World provides a large selection of Dometic products to ensure you can find the right accessory, right now.

New product development and existing product improvement never stop at Dometic. With more than 80 years in the RV industry, Dometic is poised to grow and evolve with the changing needs of RVing and camping families. For more information about these and other Dometic products, simply log on to http://www.campingworld.com/Dometic

Engine Overheating

Summer months, high temperatures and hauling a large trailer or a heavy camper all put a tow vehicle's cooling system to the test. If there are any weak points, there's nothing like a scorching hot day and a steep grade to find them.

Engines under full load produce a tremendous amount of heat. Roughly two thirds of the fuel burned goes directly into waste heat; the rest drives the vehicle. So it's no wonder vehicles can overheat. But with a bit of care and maintenance, most of the problems that cause overheating can be avoided.

An engine's cooling system is essentially a loop that moves heat from one place to another, and a problem anywhere in the loop can stop it from working properly. Heat from combustion and friction is absorbed by liquid coolant as it flows through the engine, circulated by a water pump located at the front of the engine. The coolant flows through passages designed to be near the engine's hottest areas for effective heat transfer. This heated coolant is then circulated through the radiator, after it passes through a variable restriction called a thermostat. As the heated coolant flows into the radiator. the heat is transferred to the radiator fins and given off to the air that flows through the fins. One or more fans aid airflow when the vehicle isn't moving or is moving slowly.

Most modern vehicles sold in North America are engineered and tested under stringent conditions to verify that the cooling system is able to deal with maximum rated loads in extremes of hot and cold. Testing is conducted in places like Alaska in winter and Death Valley in summer. To ensure engine reliability and avoid

When topping up with an aftermarket coolant such as Havoline Universal (right), make sure it meets the vehicle manufacturer's original specification. Prestone Radiator Flush and Cleaner (far right) and similar products remove deposits in aging cooling systems.

overheating, it's important to operate within the load limitations.

When vehicles are new, they typically don't have problems with the cooling system, but as they age, things tend to deteriorate. Sound familiar? Let's take a look at each component and what can go wrong.

Generally, if an engine runs at normal temperatures at road speeds but gets too hot when idling, the fans are providing insufficient airflow through the radiator. Engines that run hot on the road but don't get too hot at idle usually have working fan systems but may have a partially clogged radiator (inside or out) or other problems restricting flow or heat transfer.

Coolant that comes in new engines is usually a 50-50 mixture of a special ethylene-glycol antifreeze formula and water. This ratio typically provides freeze protection down to minus-34 degrees F and boil-over protection up to about 264 degrees F (at sea level with a 15-PSI radiator cap). The mixture also includes chemicals designed to lubricate water pumps and prevent foaming, rust and corrosion. Ratios up to 70 percent antifreeze and 30 percent water are sometimes used in extremely cold climates. However, a 50-50 mix is recommended for the best all-around performance. Water can be





used in an emergency but should be replaced as soon as possible.

As coolant ages, it becomes more acidic, which causes corrosion. Coolant should be drained and the system flushed every few years, following the intervals recommended in the owner's manual or service guide. Old coolant causes rust and clogs the radiator passages. Special coolant-condition test strips are available at auto-parts stores. Coolant should also be tested with a hydrometer for freeze protection (which also equates to boiling protection).

Always use a coolant approved by the engine manufacturer. Some engines require low-silicate coolant, and some diesels require a coolant that contains cavitation-erosion inhibitors. Cavitation erosion is a very damaging problem that occurs in some diesels when coolant flashboils inside the running engine due to shock waves during the combustion cycle. The explosions make the block ring like a bell at a certain natural frequency and can actually remove metal. Special additives help reduce the problem.

When topping up a cooling system, it's convenient to use 50-50 premixed antifreeze. If you add straight water, you will dilute the antifreeze protection, and if you add straight antifreeze, you may end up with too strong a mixture that reduces heat transfer.

The thermostat is normally closed when it is cool and begins to open up before the coolant reaches normal operating temperature, which is about 195 degrees F in most modern engines. Thermostats are often blamed for hot-running engines by

those who don't really understand how they function. As a result, some people take them out, although this practice causes the Check Engine light to come on with modern engines. Thermostats have a finite life and can stick open or shut (or in between) when they fail. If in doubt about the cooling system's thermostat, replace it.

To provide sufficient cooling, many tow vehicles rely on large mechanically driven fans that require a lot of power to turn at high speeds. A fan clutch drives the fans when they are needed and lets them freewheel to save power and fuel when they are not.

Many vehicles have auxiliary electric cooling fans that may operate when the air conditioning is on or the engine's coolant reaches a certain temperature. These fans are controlled by thermal switches, which in turn operate a relay that controls their heavy current demand. Many engine-control computers also activate these relays. If an engine runs hot, check to see if the electric fan





(Above, left to right) Cracks and corrosion are signs that a radiator should be replaced, ideally with a heavier-duty one. Regular maintenance of the radiator and air-conditioning condenser, including removing bugs and other baked-on debris, can help prevent overheating.

comes on. If it does not, check the fuse before beginning extensive troubleshootina.

As you drive, make monitoring your temperature gauge and warning lights a routine part of your scan, the same way you check the mirrors. Trust your instruments. As soon as there is any indication of impending overheating, reduce power and see if the temperature goes down promptly. If it does, especially when climbing

a grade, maintain the reduced speed (if necessary, switch on the warning flashers for safety) and investigate the problem as soon as possible.

If the engine does not cool down with reduced power, pull over as soon as possible, keeping in mind that seconds count. Park in a safe spot and activate the flashers. Open the hood and allow the engine and drivetrain to cool down.

Sometimes the temperature-gauge

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Going Places

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indication will vary rapidly back and forth. This often signals that air is (or combustion gases are) trapped in the cooling system. This can be caused by a loss of coolant or a "blown" head gasket and needs to be checked right away.

If the cause of the breakdown is a burst coolant hose or another problem that will prevent coolant circulation, shut the engine off immediately. If the engine overheated from pulling a steep grade on a hot day but still has coolant circulating in it, it's actually better to allow it to fast idle than shut it off. Stopping the engine will cease coolant circulation, and coolant that is then trapped in the hottest parts of the engine will likely cause it to boil over. Diesel engines that are hot should also be allowed to idle because the oil that circulates through the turbocharger will stop circulating, and may oxidize and damage the turbo.

Never open a radiator cap when the engine is hot; it can flash-boil and cause severe burns almost instantly.



The Mityvac MV4525 cooling-system tester provides feedback on pressure, vacuum and temperature, and performs refills.

Wait until the engine has cooled enough that you can rest the palm of your hand on the radiator before carefully unscrewing the cap. This can take an hour or more from shutdown. Wrap a rag over the top of the radiator and slowly release pressure before opening. The cooling process can be speeded significantly by pouring water over the radiator, but do not pour water on a hot engine; it may crack it.

There are a few things you can do out on the road if your vehicle starts to run hot. If you see that coolant temperature is rising precipitously, shut off the air conditioner, switch to the vent position and open the windows. Don't use the defrost position because it also activates the air-conditioning compressor, which puts an additional load on the engine and creates more heat. In a pinch, running the heater can actually reduce engine temperature significantly, as the heater core works as a small radiator to remove heat into the cabin. It may not be comfortable, but neither is standing along the side of a highway. I've used the heater a number of times to nurse a vehicle over a tough grade on a hot day.

If leaks occur, fix the problem by replacing a leaky water pump, hoses,







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faulty clamps and freeze plugs, or have the radiator repaired. I don't recommend using stop-leak products because, in addition to clogging up leaks, they also tend to clog radiator and heater core passages, which prevents heat transfer.

Sometimes engines that are starting to have a head-gasket leak will cause all sorts of weird cooling system woes, including intermittent overheating and swinging temperature gauges. Coolant can leak into combustion chambers, causing steam in the exhaust, misfiring and loss of power, or it can leak outside or into the oil.

Always look for telltale signs of coolant and oil contamination. When oil gets in the coolant, or vice versa, it causes a nasty looking frothy "milkshake" mixture that is damaging to the engine, especially when it's in the oil. If this is noted, take the vehicle out of service immediately to limit damage until repairs are made.

Radiator caps are designed to allow a certain amount of pressure (usually 14 to 17 psi) to build up as the engine heats, which raises the boiling point of coolant. The caps have seals that deteriorate over time, and their ability to retain pressure may fade. There are special pressure and cap testers, but it's actually cheaper to replace a cap than to pay a shop to test it, and then it still may need replacement. So if you suspect it, replace it.

Mechanical fans usually have clutches that are thermostatically controlled and engage more fully when high temperatures are sensed. As they age, the sensors may fail, the viscous fluid may leak out, and the bearings may get loose or fail completely. Sometimes the blades then destroy the radiator, the hood or both.

Electric fans are often used as auxiliary cooling units, mounted either next to the mechanical fan or on the front of the radiator to blow back through it, which also cools the air-conditioning condenser mounted ahead of the radiator. Watch and listen for fans to come on. With mechanical fans, if the fan clutch is working, the fan will start to roar as the engine is

fully warmed and revved up, and some people mistake this sound for downshifting. You can also lay a piece of paper in front of the radiator and note how the suction changes. Also look for bugs, paper and other debris clogging airflow in front of the radiator and airconditioning condenser.

Automatic transmissions and particularly torque converters produce a lot of heat under a heavy load, and this heat is transferred into the radiator via the transmission cooling lines that connect to the radiator tank. If too much heat is going into the radiator, it will overheat the same as if the engine caused it directly. Some truck owners solve this problem by installing auxiliary transmission coolers with thermostatically controlled fans.

There are a number of things you can do, even on the road with limited tools and equipment. If an engine is hot but the upper radiator hose is cool, it indicates a lack of coolant flow. It could be due to low coolant level, a thermostat stuck closed or a water pump that's not working. Look for leaks and puddles underneath. Follow to the source to locate the exact problem.

With the engine off and the key removed, check the condition and tightness of the drive belt. Look for cracks in the underside and make sure the tensioner is working properly. Also check the condition of the radiator and heater hoses. Many lower radiator hoses come with steel springs inside to prevent them from collapsing and pinching shut when coolant is flowing fast. Sometimes the springs rust away and allow the hose to pinch shut only when running hard. Check by squeezing the hose in the middle.

Right after the engine is shut off (within seconds), check for cool and hot spots in the radiator. An infrared thermometer gun works well on this, but it can be done by hand. Clogged tubes will be cool. As radiators get older, they tend to clog up with mineral deposits. This insulates them and reduces their ability to transfer heat to the air flowing through them.

Chemical flushes may help

somewhat, particularly if there is just a modest buildup. However, usually when the engine is running too hot or overheating, the buildup is heavy enough that it needs to be removed mechanically. The end tanks are taken off the radiator and it's "rodded out," which entails physically scraping out the buildup inside the tubes. A radiator shop can determine if your radiator is a candidate for this procedure.

The next step is to "recore" a radiator, which replaces the center finned tube section but reuses the end tanks. If this is not possible, then complete radiator replacement is the final option. When replacing a radiator, check to see if a heavier-duty version is available. These typically are thicker and have an extra row of tubes that dissipate heat better and provide more cooling effect.

Restrictive exhaust systems and clogged catalytic converters can create backpressure that results in hot running. Gas engines that run lean or have retarded ignition timing may also run hot. Another thing to look for is missing plastic panels and rubber sealing strips that may have helped direct the airflow through the radiator.

When the temperature gauge starts to go into the red zone, "gethome-itis" strikes many drivers, and they try to keep the vehicle going to their destination at all costs.

Those last three words are the most important in the whole sentence, because a ruined engine will likely cost thousands of dollars to repair, with weeks or months of the vehicle being out of service. Sadly, it happens every day, but it's totally avoidable.

If you continue to drive an overheated engine, it will begin to destroy itself. The valves and pistons get so hot that they expand and start to seize in their bores and guides. The cylinder head(s) begins to warp and then may crack. It's far better to pull over and have the vehicle towed to repair a minor problem, such as a burst hose or stuck thermostat, than to drive a few miles further before being towed and need the same repair plus a new engine.





Progress Manufacturing, Circle 146 on Reader Service Card

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RV camping, hunting, fishing, tailgating or special events—wherever the road takes you, Champion lets you bring the power with you. Let's hit the road.





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HITCH-WEIGHT QUESTIONS

My wife and I are new to RVing and are looking to buy a small travel trailer. We are considering the WD1710 and WD1780 models of the Winnebago Drop. Dry hitch weights are 295 pounds and 355 pounds, respectively. Our tow vehicle is a 2015 Chevy Equinox with a 3.6-liter V-6. The salesman at the RV dealership checked the hitch and determined it to have a capacity of 400 pounds.

My question has multiple parts. First, when an RV manufacturer indicates a hitch weight, what is included in that weight? Is the weight the physical coupler itself, or does it include what would be mounted on the A-frame, such as the LP-gas cylinders and battery? What are the consequences if the hitch weight exceeds the capacity of the hitch? Is there an acceptable margin of overage? Finally, would a weight-distributing hitch make a difference?

Our first choice would be the 1780, because it is longer and has a slide-out. However, we do not wish to compromise either our safety or our vehicle.

Doug Grove, Harrisburg, Pennsylvania

A Hitch-weight reporting is a bit dodgy, Doug. Typically, the hitch-weight figure comes from a trailer with no options (such as an air conditioner), the water and LP-gas cylinders empty, and no battery (or batteries) — but not in every case. Ask your dealer what those manufacturer fig-



ures include, or better yet, ask the manufacturer.

If in doubt, you may need to add the weight of the LP-gas (at 4.2 pounds per gallon), water (8.34 pounds per gallon) and battery (about 50 pounds), as this will add to the hitch weight, particularly if the water tank is ahead of the axle. Some dealers have a portable scale that can be used to measure the hitch weight.

A weight-distributing hitch doesn't remove any hitch weight; it just distributes that weight more evenly between the tow vehicle's front and rear axles.

The worst effect of overloading a hitch assembly is complete failure, but that's rare and would require some significant overloading. That said, it's always a good idea to avoid exceeding a manufacturer's ratings, including hitch weight. Keep an eye on those numbers, and you'll be OK.

— Jeff Johnston

EXTRA TRAILER STORAGE

We have a 2014 Keystone Hideout 30RLDS. We like the layout of the trailer, but there is not a lot of storage. I was thinking about the truck-bed storage that slides in and out, and mounting something like it under the trailer behind the axles. Is there anything like that on the market, or would it be something that would have to be fabricated? Would this create towing or balance issues?

Tyler Simmons, Madrid, Iowa

As far as we know, there's no commercially available add-on storage product such as you've

described, Tyler. You'd need to have something custom-fabricated to handle the storage container, but that will call for some investigation, and weight and loading evaluation.

As for towing stability, the only problem that might occur would be if you add too much weight behind the axles and significantly reduce hitch weight. Keep the hitch weight at a minimum 10 or 11 percent of the trailer's overall weight to ensure the best towing stability. If you install this storage device, keep it as close to the axles as possible to reduce the leverage effect of the weight. And, of course, always pay attention to the trailer's GVWR and the truck's towing capacity to avoid overloading. — **J.J.**

DECAL DISINTEGRATION

We have a 2006 Okanagan Eclipse ECL26RLS. We have liked this travel trailer since day one and have always been greatly impressed with the builder, West Coast Leisure Homes in Penticton, British Columbia. Unfortunately, they became victims of the economy and were forced to close shop in 2008.

The decals on the trailer are in bad shape — fading, cracking and peeling — but how do we get replacements? I've searched, but I can't find anyone with any information. The only Okanagan dealer in Southern California closed in 2007. Do you have any ideas or suggestions as to how we can get replacement decals?

Marvin Duncan, Corona, California

THE TECH TEAM



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

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

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A Your situation is fairly common, Marvin. Once a manufacturer is gone, proprietary parts such as decals are usually gone with them. You can still find standard parts such as refrigerators, water heaters and other components, but those decals are elusive.

Have you tried looking for any old Okanagan dealers beyond Southern California? That may help. There are also several obsolete RV-parts retailers, which can be found by an Internet search, but finding the right make and model parts for your RV would be a long shot.

A supplier of custom decals may be your best option at this point. It may be possible for a decal maker to use photos of the trailer and measurements of the old decals when new to help recreate its decals or perhaps have a complete new set made and installed to

freshen the trailer's overall looks. That way, all of the decals would be of the same quality and ensure your RV looks good for years to come. — J.J.

SETTINGS FOR RAM BRAKE-CONTROLLER

Regarding the "Ram Integrated Brake Controller" question from W.F. Andrews in the April issue, the brake controller on the Ram comes set for small, light trailers. To change it for heavy trailers, go to the Settings menu, then Trailer Brake, then Trailer 1, then Braking, then Heavy Electric. For my 16,000-pound Montana, I have set the number to 8.5, and this works well.

Dave Thompson, Haynesville, Louisiana

Thank you for the procedural update, Dave. I'm glad it worked for you and hope this helps other readers. We've received quite a few letters like yours in response to that RV Clinic letter. This falls into the when-in-doubt-read-theowner's-manual category. — J.J.



ALUMINUM-SIDING OUESTIONS

We have a 2003 30-foot Sandpiper fifth-wheel. It has aluminum siding, which seems to handle the elements very well. We have had no leaks or bad dents from the long trips we have taken hauling it from coast to coast. The newer fifth-wheel trailers all have fiberglass siding, which raises the question of which is the better material. I know several owners with fiberglass siding have complained of fading, which we have not had with our aluminum siding. (Fading decals are another story.)

A Fiberglass siding and moldedfiberglass end caps can chalk and fade with age, so that's something to consider when choosing an RV. As for which one is better, there are pros and cons for each type of siding.

Corrugated aluminum is durable, less costly and can be easier to repair by replacing individual panels. Fiberglass makes for a smooth, glossy finish, can be repaired with standard automotive



bodywork techniques, and looks sleek and modern. Fiberglass is also more expensive and can be a bit heavier due to the lauan wood backer normally used as part of the fiberglass panel.

Choosing the siding for a new RV is just one consideration among many other factors to be considered. Both materials work well, so either one can be part of a satisfactory purchase. — J.J.

SHOCKS AND AXLE DROP

My fifth-wheel trailer is designed so that when a tire goes flat or blows out, the rim doesn't get damaged. The shock holds up the wheel. Most trailers don't have shocks, but they certainly dampen the road impact on things inside. Seldom have my dining room table or chairs moved around.

Eddie Brackett, Fairfield, California

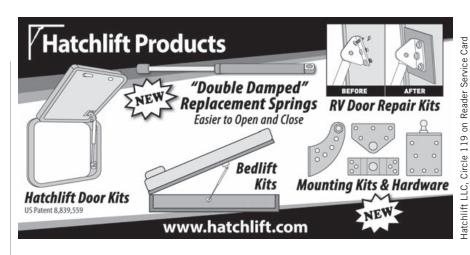
It seems like your trailer's shock absorbers do as you suggest, Eddie, by limiting the axle's downward travel after a tire goes flat or disintegrates. Note that this works only on double- or triple-axle trailers and does not apply to single-axle trailers!

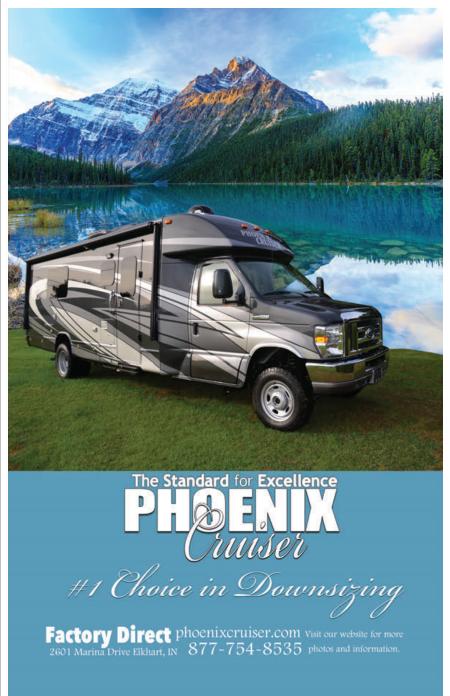
If you want another alternative to keep the axle's end and wheel from dragging, try using a fabric suspension travel limiter. Do an Internet search for "suspension travel limiter strap," and you'll find a variety of sizes and options available, mainly from the shops that cater to off-road and performance autoracing enthusiasts.

These straps typically have steel mounting plates on each end drilled to accept a suitable mounting bolt. You'll need to determine the maximum downward axle travel that works for the situation, and then match the trailer suspension and frame dimensions to the right size limiter strap. You don't want to limit axle travel to the point that the tires don't stay firmly on the ground at all times. If in doubt, a specialty chassis or trailer frame and suspension shop can help with this type of project. — J.J.

END-CAP CLEANUP

I've been reading with interest the com-





ments concerning end-cap oxidizing and dulling in the November, January and April issues. I have a 2004 Keystone Cougar fifth-wheel, and after the first year or so, it had the same problem. I also tried myriad products to bring back the luster.

What I ended up using (and I know that you will discourage its use) is the commercially available red Scotch-Brite pads left over from my machine-shop

days. I know they are abrasive, but that is the point. To get the shine back, you have to remove the oxidized surface; you cannot polish oxidization.

It doesn't take much elbow grease — just a gentle once-over with the Scotch-Brite and a running-water hose, and you can see the white oxidization melt away, as well as all of the bugs and road tar. I gently go over the Cougar decals on the end cap without

damaging them. After they dry, they will look dull again, but a good Carnauba paste-wax application and buffing will bring back the original or an even better shine.

I don't think this will help Jim Panter ("End-Cap Encore," April), since his is clear down to the gray primer. It has worked for me and a neighbor for the past 10 years or so. If readers are at their wits' end over their end caps, I'd say it is worth a try. Just remember to be gentle.

George Nachtsheim, Littleton, Colorado

You're right, George, we wouldn't recommend this process because it uses an abrasive cleaning pad, and that's contrary to the recommendations of most RV manufacturers. However, it works for you, and that's what counts.

It's possible that another reader may want to try the procedure on a small, out-of-the-way part of a similarly oxidized RV. As you suggested, it takes a gentle touch, and that's the difficult part for some people to accomplish. With care, it may be worth a try. — J.J.



BATTERY-DISCHARGE TIP

This is regarding Alan Layman's "Battery Discharge" letter in the April issue. Like Alan, I own a 2015 Cougar XLite 28SGS fifth-wheel. He forgot to mention that all three slides can be operated with the factory-installed battery cut-off switch in the Off position.

A solution is to install another battery cut-off switch in the battery compartment. This is very (continued on page 153)

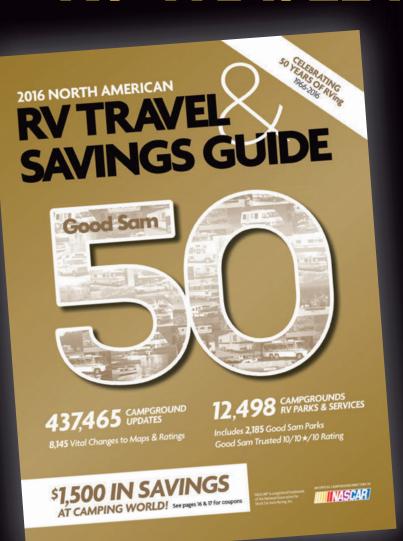








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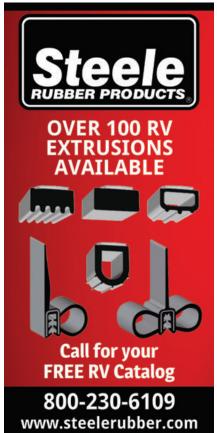
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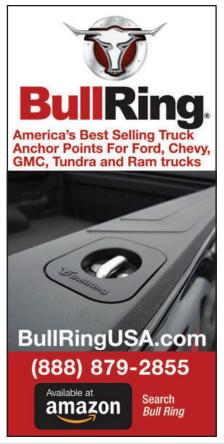
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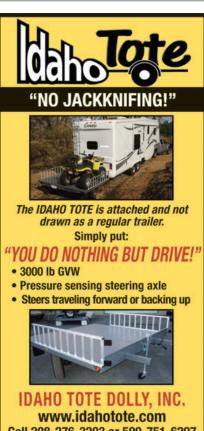
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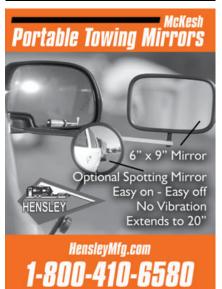
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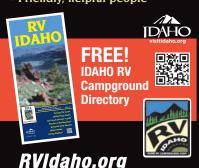
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(continued from page 148)

simple and should be possible for a novice to accomplish, since all wiring is exposed in the compartment.

In the photo, the black wire on the bottom left comes directly from the battery. The black wire on the right of this same terminal goes to the factory-installed cut-off switch. The black cable coming off the top of this terminal is the one that powers the slides and auto-leveler system. Simply installing another cut-off switch will kill any drain on the battery.

I hope the attached photo and explanation will help Alan with the solution. **Thomas Gamache, Camarillo, California**

Thanks for writing and including the photo, Thomas. Since you have the same model, this is a helpful tip. — **Ken Freund**

CHARGING 6-VOLT BATTERIES

I was reading the February issue and your reply to Dale DeKay's "Battery Maintainers" question about using a maintenance charger on his truck with two 12-volt batteries connected in parallel.

We have two 6-volt batteries connected in series in our trailer. If a person connected a 12-volt DC maintainer to these 6-volt batteries by connecting the red lead to one battery's positive post and the black lead to the other battery's negative post, would this connection provide a maintenance charge to both batteries? Or would you recommend using a 6-volt DC maintainer and charging the batteries separately after disconnecting them from each other?

Barry Webb, Anchorage, Alaska

As long as the two 6-volt batteries are connected in series (by a wire running from the positive post of one to the negative post of the other), you can treat them like one 12-volt battery and just use one 12-volt DC maintenance charger. — K.F.

SMOKING FORD DIESEL

I own a 2008 Ford F-250 Super Duty with the 6.4-liter diesel engine. The truck now (continued on page 155)

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(continued from page 153)

has 106,000 miles on it. It is strictly a stock engine with no aftermarket additions, and it has been serviced in accordance with the manufacturer's recommendations.

Starting at about 50,000 miles, the truck began putting out clouds of bluegray exhaust smoke. The smoking lasts just a few minutes and happens only occasionally, but it is now becoming more frequent. There is so much smelly smoke that I'm embarrassed to be seen behind the wheel when it occurs.

The engine has an exhaust filter, but it is prior to the DEF requirement for diesel engines. I've discussed the problem several times with my dealer's diesel service adviser and have been told it's a normal part of the exhaust filtering process, even though it didn't happen when the truck was newer. In the most recent conversation, I asked what I should do when the smoking starts, and the unsatisfactory answer was to keep driving until it stops.

Is this really normal for this Ford diesel, and if it is, is there anything I can do to stop the smoke?

Lew Pinsker, Flemington, New Jersey

Unfortunately, just because someone's title is service adviser doesn't necessarily mean he or she is an expert. At many dealerships, the service adviser is basically a salesperson for the service department and does not have any mechanical experience. What I have found at many dealerships is that it's difficult to get to communicate directly with the technician who will be working on the vehicle, and this leads to many communication problems and a missed diagnosis.

Engines that burn their own lubricating oil generally create bluish-gray smoke, whereas excessive fuel in a diesel generally gives you black smoke. However, you didn't mention that it was consuming a lot of engine oil, and the mileage is relatively low, so I'm going to assume that the engine is not burning oil and the smoke is caused by excess fuel and not motor oil.

This intermittent smoke is likely caused by one or more sticking fuel

injectors. These babies are very expensive, even rebuilds. So I recommend that before you opt for costly injector replacement, try running some injector cleaner (added to the fuel tank) through the engine for several fill-ups.

You can check with your dealer for Ford-approved products. Many owners have reported good results with Sea Foam, Hot Shot's Secret Diesel Extreme, BG 244 or Royal Purple Max-Tane. — K.F.

FORD HESITATION

We have a 2011 Ford F-350 Super Duty with 21,000 miles on it. It has a hesitation problem when we stop or when we turn a corner and start to go and then let off the accelerator and start again. It doesn't do it all of the time. Sometimes this hesitation will last for two or three seconds. I've had people almost run into me when this happens. When the engine picks up speed again, it spins the tires because

my foot is on the accelerator.

I've taken it to my Ford dealership four times, and they say nothing is wrong. I'm worried I am going to get in an accident. When towing, there's a total weight of about 20,000 pounds with the truck and trailer, and this hesitation problem is scary. It does it even when I'm not towing.

Ron Heddinger, Eugene, Oregon

A You didn't mention which engine your Ford has, gas or diesel. Since the diesels don't typically suffer from true hesitation (they don't have throttle plates like a gas engine), I'm going to assume you have the 6.2-liter V-8 gas engine. You also didn't indicate whether the Check Engine light is on, so I'm assuming it isn't.

Hesitation on fuel-injected gas engines often involves a dirty mass airflow (MAF) sensor or gummed-up throttle bodies. This type of problem usually doesn't set a trouble code that turns on the Check Engine light. So I'd start by cleaning the MAF sensor with CRC MAF cleaner spray or an equivalent. You can do an Internet search for how to perform this procedure, as there are many free how-to videos and photos.

Another possibility is that the transmission is slipping and then grabbing, which would make the wheels spin when it catches and grabs. It could be something as simple as low fluid. Try going for a test drive with service personnel from the dealership. If you just dropped off the truck and asked them to "Take a look at it," it's likely the truck was not seriously road-tested. If this is the case, and cleaning the MAF doesn't solve the problem, I suggest you insist that the service manager accompany you, since this would be the fifth time there. Or perhaps better yet, go to another dealership. — K.F. 🗭

HAVE A QUESTION? Email our experts at rvclinic@trailerlife.com or write to RV Clinic, 2750 Park View Court, Suite 240, Oxnard, California 93036. Include your full name and hometown. Selected letters will be answered in the magazine, but time does not permit individual replies. No phone calls, please.

LEGAL NOTICE

If You Own or Owned a Norcold 1200 Series, N6 Series, or N8 Series Gas-Absorption Refrigerator or Cooling Unit, You Could Get Benefits From a Class Action Settlement.

There is a proposed settlement in two class action lawsuits against Norcold, Inc., Thetford Corporation, and The Dyson-Kissner-Moran Corporation ("Defendants") concerning three models of gas absorption refrigerators (1200, N6 and N8 series) for use in recreational vehicles ("RVs"), such as motorhomes, travel trailers, and boats. Those persons included in the settlement have legal rights and options and deadlines by which they must exercise them.

The United States District Court for the Central District of California authorized this Notice. The Court will have a hearing at the Santa Ana courthouse on September 16, 2016 at 2:30 p.m. to consider whether to approve the settlement so that the benefits may be paid.

What Are The Lawsuits About? The lawsuits claim that Defendants 1200, N6 and N8 series gas-absorption refrigerators share a safety related defect in the cooling unit which, in certain circumstances, causes the boiler tubes to corrode and leak flammable gas, exposing consumers to the risk of fire. The lawsuits seek compensation for economic losses related to the purchase of Norcold Gas Absorption Refrigerators or Cooling Units. The lawsuits do not allege class claims for personal injury, wrongful death or damage to property other than the allegedly defective Norcold Gas Absorption Refrigerators or Cooling Units themselves. Defendants deny any wrongdoing and have denied all allegations in the Complaint and asserted many defenses. The Court did not decide which side was right. Instead, the parties decided to settle the class claims. Who Is Affected? Subject to certain limited exclusions, you are included in the settlement if you:

 Currently own, or formerly owned, a Norcold 1200 Series Gas Absorption Refrigerator or Cooling Unit that was manufactured between January 1, 2002, and October 1, 2012; OR.

 Currently own a Norcold N6 Series Gas Absorption Refrigerator or Cooling Unit, or N8 Series Gas Absorption Refrigerator or Cooling Unit, that was manufactured between January 1, 2009, and December 31, 2013.

This settlement does not involve class claims for personal injury, wrongful death or damage to property other than to the Norcold refrigerator they own, owned, or may own in the future. Such claims are reserved.

What Does The Settlement Provide? The proposed settlement provides for an "all-in" Common Fund totaling \$36,000,000 to resolve all eligible class claims of 1200 Series, 800 Series and 600 Series gas absorption refrigerator owners and to fund all administrative and legal costs associated with the proposed settlement. To receive a share of the Monetary Fund you must submit a Claim Form by August 26, 2016. Payments will vary depending upon several factors, such as the number of claims submitted and other adjustments and deductions in accordance with the Allocation Plan described more fully in the detailed Notice and Claim Form available at www. NorcoldClassAction.com. In addition, Defendants will provide, at Defendants' sole expense, a three-year extended warranty to class members who own N6 and N8 Series gas absorption refrigerators manufactured between January 1, 2009 and December 31, 2013, for a cooling unit that fails due to a leak.

What Are Your Options? Submit a Claim. If you don't exclude yourself, you may submit a Claim Form by August 26, 2016 to receive any benefits for which you are eligible. Do Nothing. You will remain in the Class and will not be able to sue Defendants about the issues in the lawsuit, but you may not receive certain benefits for which you may be eligible. Exclude Yourself. If you do not want to be part of the settlement, you must exclude yourself by August 26, 2016. You won't be able to get any settlement benefits, but you keep the right to sue Defendants about the class claims in the lawsuit. Object. You can object to all or part of the settlement by August 26, 2016, if you don't exclude yourself. Enter Appearance. Enter an appearance through your own lawyer at your own expense. Otherwise you will be represented by court-appointed Class Counsel, Zimmerman Reed LLP.

A detailed Notice and Claim Form containing everything you need is available online at www. NorcoldClassAction.com. You may also call 1-877-449-8550 to request a copy. The detailed notice describes how to exclude yourself, submit a Claim Form and/or object to the proposed settlement. We encourage you to read and review it in detail.

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The Sound of Nashville

Tennessee's Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum is home to one of the world's most extensive musical collections, chronicling the history of the genre from the early 1900s



fter visiting museums and theaters. and even old recording studios in Nashville, Tennessee, I have probably seen most of the fabled quitars and sequined jackets that exist in the world. If glitzy, showy, classy and dignified can all be used in the same sentence to describe any one place, Nashville is it.

Music is a \$4 billion industry here.

Historically, it's country (in the days of Roy Rogers and Gene Autry, we called it cowboy music), but in the last decade jazz and blues have found their place in Nashville. It's also home to the Gospel Music Association and the International Bluegrass Music Association.

Music's broad range and the overlap of genres are obvious when visiting the Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum in downtown Nashville. Election to the Hall of Fame is the highest honor in country music, recognizing an artist's contribution over the length of his or her career. Careers sometimes allow for significant crossover. A good example is Elvis Presley, the undisputed king of rock 'n' roll, who was elected to the Country Music Hall of Fame in 1998.

The Hall of Fame is in a rotunda adjoining the museum. It's a space of special beauty and dignity. Members' plagues are placed randomly, and the room is circular to ensure that every plague has a place of equal importance. It honors performers and others in the industry, reflecting country music's state as both art and enterprise.

The Hall of Fame and Museum is a block off Broadway, home to Nashville's popular honky-tonks. Walking Broadway one afternoon, past a row of open doors, I got samples in sound bites of musicians at work. I was told that since supply far exceeds demand, they get paid little.

Hundreds of fine musicians live here — some prosperous, some struggling — and I met a few. They know each other and speak highly of the talents of their colleagues, apparently not seeing them as competitors. That may be because they view themselves as unique what they have to offer is unlike that of everybody else.

One of these musicians works in the museum as a guide. He plays with the band of John Carter Cash, the



(Top) Several Nashville attractions like the George Jones Museum depict the careers — and wardrobes — of country music's finest. (Above) A two-story wall at the Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum displays all of the genre's gold and platinum records.

only son of June and Johnny Cash. "We do some traveling," he said. "Unfortunately, John doesn't need the money, so we don't work much.'

This museum has been called the Smithsonian of Country Music because of its unrivaled collection and dynamic, state-of-the art galleries. Two floors of exhibits from the early 1900s to the present chronicle the history of country music, with permanent and rotating displays. Elvis Presley's gold piano and his white Cadillac with a gold interior, as well as a mock-up of Taylor Swift's motorhome are some of the personal items you'll find here.

A bus takes tourists from the museum for tours of Studio B, opened in 1957 by RCA. It is known as the Cradle of the Nashville Sound. The Nashville Sound is a style characterized by strings and background vocals that established this town as an international recording center. More than 35,000 songs were recorded in Studio B, and 1,000 made the charts of the Top 10. Here, Elvis recorded "Are You Lonesome Tonight" and another couple hundred songs.

Our tour guide was a woman in her 20s, and she had a memory that was an encyclopedia of country music. She knew the names of every artist who ever recorded at the studio, the songs they recorded and the year each recording was made. If she was asked a question about some obscure musician, she always knew how that artist fit into the music history of Nashville. For many in this town, music isn't just a living; it's also a way of life.

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