

GALLEY GEAR: 25 MUST-HAVE KITCHEN GADGETS

TRAILER LIFE

FOLLOW THE ROAD TO ADVENTURE

JUNE 2014

Upscale Downsizing

Toyota Highlander Limited + TrailManor 2417 Sport



Bedtime Story

RV Mattresses Uncovered

Breathing Easy

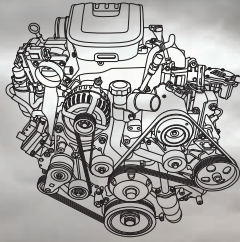
Power Up With Cold Air Intakes

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- ▶ C&O Canal, Maryland
- ▶ Viking Trail, Newfoundland
- ▶ Hot Springs, Arkansas

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THE NEW 2015 SILVERADO HD. OUR STRONGEST EVER.



FIND **NEW** ROADS™

Chevrolet Motor Division, Circle 108 on Reader Service Card

CHEVROLET





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On the cover 2014 Toyota Highlander Limited and the TrailManor 2417 Sport near California's Los Padres National Forest. Photo by Scott Hirko



Powerful Ford E-450
(or Mercedes 3500) chassis



Patented *one-piece*
hand-laid fiberglass shell



The luxurious, easy-to-drive,
Coach House Platinum

Nobody else manufactures a motorhome this way

Most motorhome bodies are made of multiple pieces of fiberglass that are joined together — and every joint is a potential leak or squeak.

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Our one-piece shell is more costly and difficult to make, but we wouldn't have it any other way. Nor would our loyal cus-

tomers, some of whom are now driving their fourth or even fifth Coach House!

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Coach House
PLATINUM



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COACH HOUSE PLATINUM (FORD)

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That Special Image

An RV takes you on exciting adventures; capturing the moments with a digital camera keeps the stories alive



Pictures make memories. They also unleash artistic creativity, which most times can tell a story without words. It's probably safe to say that more photos are being taken today than ever before. Everyone has a camera, or at least a smartphone that can record images, both still and moving.

I became hooked on photography while in grade school, when my father gave me his old Argus 35MM camera. Funny how a simple gesture can transcend into a career path. While my father never got to see the results of his intuition, he must have sensed my interest in photography — a hobby that led to a career in photojournalism. I've burned a lot of film in my life.

Amusingly, my grandson will probably have no idea what film is; it seems like smartphones have taken the place of familiar "toys" that we gave our kids when they were young. Yeah, I know, that's progress.

For me, the transition to digital was a little painful, since the early years of print reproduction were less than stellar. As technology advanced, the images got better, and today it's hard to decipher the differences between film and a digital image. My old-school attitude drives me to believe that film is still better, even though almost extinct, but what the heck, I still like vinyl better than CDs and MP3 files for music reproduction. At the risk of dating myself, it might have something to do with the fact that I started my photographic career capturing images on black-and-white 4x5 film through a Speed Graphic camera. Nevertheless, I've fully embraced digital photography for magazine and online publication.

No doubt, taking "selfies" and pictures of people doing just about anything is all the rage these days. As RV owners, a digital camera can be an indispensable tool. Logging images for future trips and making digital notes to support repair procedures are two of many uses that come to mind. But telling a story is my favorite, so we've teamed up with Powerhouse Generators to look for outstanding images as part of the *Trailer Life* Wherever Adventure Takes You photo contest (see details on page 12). We're looking for digital images that not only visually describe exciting RV adventures but make fellow RVers want to be there.

The grand prize is a \$5,000 RV-accessory shopping spree. You've got until July 31 to find that special image, and we'll publish the winners in the October issue. Give it a "shot." 📷

— Bob Livingston, publisher

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DID YOU KNOW?

RVs were referred to as house trailers or house cars until after World War II. With the growth of manufactured units for residences, recreational trailers became "travel trailers" in the postwar years.

**TRAILER
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FOLLOW THE ROAD TO ADVENTURE

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Sharing family traditions

Courtesy of Cummins Onan

RV QG 3600 LP



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Trailer for Two

I thought I would add my opinion to those in April's *Letters* column suggesting topics for coverage in *Trailer Life*. My wife and I travel alone exclusively and would like to see articles about travel trailers in the 20-foot range set up for couples only (no need to sleep six in our trailer!). We see lots of other retired couples on the road and wonder why trailer manufacturers don't seem to have products aimed at our needs.

R.J. Harper, Portland, Maine

RVs with Twin Beds

In regard to Mr. Giono's request in the April issue for units featuring twin beds, I recommend the Heartland Wilderness model WD 1950 RB. It's also fairly light and compact — 4,000 pounds and 22 feet. I've inspected one in person, and it's a very nice trailer.

For those looking for a unique teardrop-style trailer, I suggest checking out the Safari Condo Alto. The unusual feature is that the entire roof raises to provide headroom. It's manufactured in Quebec, Canada, but I understand they are available for sale to U.S. residents. We saw one in Fort Stevens State Park on the Oregon coast. The owners were a couple from Quebec who had been out traveling for several months.

Paul Wilcox, Troutdale, Oregon



Pikes Peak Camping

Having spent a couple of weeks in the Pikes Peak region this past summer, I would like to add some personal observations to the April article *Colorado Rocky Mountain High* by

Nebraska's Landmark

I have enjoyed reading *Trailer Life* for many years, so I was especially excited to see James Richardson's article about Scotts Bluff National Monument in *Around the Bend* in the April issue. I spent 10 years living in the shadow of the monument, from junior high through college.

I would like to add a few comments to Richardson's story. The view from the top of the monument is indeed spectacular. The North Platte River, the site of the Oregon Trail, the cities of Scottsbluff and Gering, Nebraska, and the many farmsteads and irrigated farmland make for a great 360-degree panorama. On a clear day, one can see Laramie Peak, Wyoming, a 10,276-foot mountain 70 miles to the northwest. Be sure to spend time in the visitor center to see artifacts and a movie about the history of the monument.

Travelers should also visit Chimney Rock National Historic Site, about 25 miles to the east. The pioneers following the Oregon Trail and the North Platte River could see this unique geological structure ahead of them for miles and miles, as they made their way westward.

In addition to the RV park in Scottsbluff, mentioned at the end of the article, there is also Robidoux RV Park in Gering, about 3 miles from the entrance to the monument.

Bob Wilkie, El Dorado Hills, California



PHOTO BY JAMES RICHARDSON

Irene Middleman Thomas.

There is a new and very nice campground in Cheyenne Mountain State Park, just south of Colorado Springs and a short distance off State Route 115. It has both pull-through and back-in paved sites with full hookups, including some for large rigs. I would recommend a reservation during the summer months, as it was full most of the nights we spent there in mid-August. The sites are on the east flank of the mountain with beautiful views of the valley.

Since the author's mention of Golden Eagle Campground implies an endorsement, I would like to add my own observations. We spent several days there before finding the state park. The entrance road is gravel, up a steep hill and has two sharp turns. Some of the sites are not level and consist of fine dirt that

gets on everything. On the plus side, the people in the office were very nice, and the insect collection is interesting.

Jack Schmotzer, Alliance, Ohio

Setting the Tone

Pamela Selbert's article on Crowley's Ridge in the April issue certainly sets the tone for a visit there.

I'm supporting Errol Schafer's comment in the *Letters* column — a map would add a clearer mind's-eye view and understanding of the areas traveled. Check out *Rider* motorcycle magazine for excellent examples of mapping the routes traveled. A very good story, just the same.

Donald Jacobs, Woodbine, Maryland

Donald, see pages 21, 27 and 36 for maps accompanying this issue's three destination features. — Editors

Special Thanks

We want to share a positive experience we had with Lippert Components (LCI). We own a 2013 Coachmen Chaparral fifth-wheel. While vacationing in Arizona, the landing gear jammed while leveling.

Knowing the Chaparral was one month out of warranty, we first called Alex Blanco from Happy Daze RV in our hometown of Livermore, California. Blanco was familiar with our RV from warranty work done previously. He contacted Lippert Components, the manufacturer of the landing gear and explained our situation. LCI was kind enough to pay for parts as a gesture of goodwill.

We then contacted Ann and Phil's Mobile RV service in Quartzsite, Arizona. Phil and I were able to remove the left gear leg, and Phil then drove me to Lifestyle RV where I purchased a new landing gear leg, which he and I then installed on the Chaparral.

Upon returning home, we contacted LCI and spoke to Jeff Marner, a tech service rep. He explained what was needed for a claim, and we emailed that, along with the receipts for parts and labor, which I included to establish that the work was done.

We received a prompt reply from Marner stating that LCI would pay for parts and also reimburse us for the full amount of labor for a total of \$493.18. It was totally unexpected but sure appreciated!

We extend a special thanks to all involved. The community of RV folks is truly special indeed!

Brian and Debbie Hernandez
Livermore, California

More Reviews

I'd like to see more reviews of RVs with features, specifications and

comparisons. I know it's *Trailer Life*, not *Trailers*, but please include more reviews.

B. Hogue, Canon City, Colorado

Picture Perfect

I am often amazed at how beautiful the background photos are in advertisements placed in *Trailer Life*. (The Chevy ad on the inside cover of the March issue is wonderful.) I would like to see some mention of where these locations are, as I'd like to visit some of these places.

Kevin Weseman, Beeville, Texas

Warranty Info Swap

In April's test of the Winnebago Trend 23L, we reversed the warranty information for the chassis and coach. The Trend has a 12-month, 15,000-mile warranty, and the powertrain is three years and 36,000 miles. — Editors

TALK TO US!

Write to: *Trailer Life*, 2750 Park View Court, Suite 240, Oxnard, California 93036 or email info@trailerlife.com. Please include your full name and location.

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If it flies, you'll find it at Oshkosh's 62nd annual EAA AirVenture, from this meticulously restored P-51 Mustang (above) to the impeccably choreographed U.S. Air Force Thunderbirds (right).



Winging Over Wisconsin

More than just an air show, Oshkosh's EAA AirVenture is one of the Midwest's must-see summer spectacles

article by Valerie Law

For seven memorable days each summer, a small Midwestern town on the shores of Lake Winnebago has the distinction of running the world's busiest airport. That's the week that EAA AirVenture Oshkosh, the largest air show of its kind in North America, touches down at Wisconsin's Wittman Regional Airport.

AirVenture is a gathering of aircraft seen nowhere else in the world. Everything from home-built flyers and classic biplanes to historic fighters and cutting-edge prototypes is packed into 1,500 acres. EAA stands for Experimental Aircraft Association, and AirVenture showcases a vast fleet of eclectic and one-of-a-kind planes among the more than 10,000 aircraft on display.

Held July 28 through August 3 this year, AirVenture is a bucket-list destination for pilots and aviation enthusiasts, but it's not just for airplane

geeks. Each year half a million people, including more than 30,000 RVers, make their way to Oshkosh for the chance to see those magnificent men and women in their flying machines.

Daily air shows wow the crowd with daring aerobatics, wing-walkers, skydiving teams and hot-air balloons. Seaplanes take off from a nearby cove on Lake Winnebago, easily reachable by shuttle buses. And the Wednesday and Saturday night air shows light up the sky with flashy pyrotechnics.

Everyone in the family will stay busy with activities ranging from aircraft rides and outdoor movies to the KidVenture area with hands-on activities. The onsite AirVenture Museum opens its doors to an impressive collection of more than 200 planes, plus flight simulators and half a dozen movie theaters.

For RVers, Camp Scholler is the

best way to experience this high-flying event, with breathtaking views of the airborne action and easy access to all the activities on the ground. Trailers, motorhomes and tents of all sizes form instant neighborhoods complete with free Wi-Fi, food concessions and two general stores.

To plant stakes at Camp Scholler, one member of each RV group must purchase a \$40 annual EAA membership and pay the site fee. For Good Sam members, the Good Sam Club is offering a six-month EAA membership for \$10 that entitles them to purchase AirVenture admission and book Camp Scholler RV sites at discounted rates. Good Sam members can take advantage of the deal by clicking on the AirVenture link at www.goodsamclub.com/chapters.

EAA AirVenture Oshkosh
www.airventure.org

Rockwood Roo Hybrid Travel Trailer

Rockwood, a division of Forest River, has been in the business of providing outdoor fun for RVers for more than 35 years. For camping enthusiasts looking to transition from a traditional tent to an RV, Rockwood offers the Roo, an expandable travel trailer, also known as a hybrid, that offers full amenities but still allows an open-air environment for outdoor lovers.

This hybrid trailer is equipped with fold-down bunk ends that provide added sleeping capacity without taking up valuable floor space. An innovative bunk-end latch system that's accessible from the ground is designed to make setup and closing easy.

Standard interior features include a bunk fan and light for each bed, LED lighting throughout, a three-burner gas range and a microwave. The Roo's floor, roof, front and back are aluminum-framed and vacuum-bonded to ensure a lightweight yet strong structure.



Some Roo floorplans have side slideouts and front decks with a 1,300-pound capacity that allow you to bring along an ATV or other toys. The 25-foot, 4,365-pound (dry weight) 233S model provides a third fold-down bunk for added sleeping capacity (2014 MSRP: \$25,475).

www.forestriverinc.com



Picture This

Send your best RV shots to *Trailer Life's* Wherever Adventure Takes You photo contest

Keep your digital camera handy this summer, and you could be the winner of *Trailer Life's* Wherever Adventure Takes You photo contest. Any time your travel itinerary leads you to a photogenic location — from a breathtaking waterfall to a spectacular sunset to a particularly grand campsite — point your camera toward your RV and the scenic backdrop and click. Then send us your best shots for a chance to win a \$5,000 RV-accessory shopping spree and other prizes.

Prizes

- Grand Prize: \$5,000 shopping spree at any authorized Powerhouse Generators dealer
- Three Runners-Up: Powerhouse 2000Wi generator
- 10 Honorable Mentions: Coleman SunForce solar panel kit

Rules

- All photos require the inclusion of an RV. The RV does not need to be the primary focus but must be at least partially visible in the photo.
- All photos must be submitted in high-resolution digital format.
- All photos submitted will become the property of *Trailer Life*.
- Photo contest entrants must be 18 years of age or older.
- Photo submission deadline is midnight, Pacific Coast Time, July 31, 2014.
- Winners will be announced in the October 2014 issue of *Trailer Life*.



How to Enter

- To enter online, visit www.trailerlife.com/wherever-adventure-takes-you, complete the entry form and upload your photo.
- To enter by mail, provide your photo on a CD, DVD or flash drive (will not be returned) and mail it to *Trailer Life* Wherever Adventure Takes You photo contest, 2750 Park View Court, Suite 240, Oxnard, California 93036. Include your name, address, phone number, email address and a photo caption.

RVs Go Hollywood

Opening July 18, Disney's new comedy-adventure, *Planes: Fire and Rescue*, stars a pair of animated RVs reliving their honeymoon at Piston Peak National Park. Harvey and Winnie (voiced by real life husband and wife Jerry Stiller and Anne Meara) met more than 50 years ago when Harvey managed an RV tire store and Winnie was his showroom model. Now celebrating their golden wedding anniversary, the couple meets Dusty Crophopper (Dane Cook), as a wildfire starts to rage in the park.

Dusty, a famous air racer, joins forces with Blade Ranger (Ed Harris), a veteran fire-and-rescue helicopter, and his firefighting crew of Dipper (Julie Bowen) and a lively bunch of all-terrain vehicles known as the Smokejumpers. This fun-for-the-whole-family movie is a sequel to the 2013 Disney film *Planes*. www.disney.com/planes



NEWSWIRE



Grand Design's New RV Facility

RV manufacturer Grand Design Recreational Vehicles recently opened a third production facility in Middlebury, Indiana. Don Clark, president and co-owner of Grand Design RV, said, "The overwhelming demand by dealers and retail customers for Grand Design's Reflection mid-profile fifth-wheels necessitated the opening of our third facility. We are now producing our popular Reflection fifth-wheel brand on two production lines." Clark also anticipates opening an additional product line this year. So far, 70 employees have been hired for the new plant, and more will be brought on board in the future. Clark said, "We feel blessed to have been able to attract the excellent employee base we now have." Clark and Grand Design co-owners Ron and Bill Fenech attribute the company's accelerated growth to its customer-focused sales, service, manufacturing and support teams.



OCP Buys Branson Campground

Ocean Canyon Properties (OCP), a privately owned membership camping resort company, recently acquired Compton Ridge Campground in Branson, Missouri. OCP's first public campground, Compton Ridge has 260 RV sites along with a 30-room motel, two outdoor pools and one indoor pool, a country store and campground-wide Wi-Fi. Branson is known for its live entertainment, Silver Dollar City theme park, unusual museums and lake activities, including world-class fishing. "We are very excited about becoming part of the vibrant hospitality industry in the Branson area through our purchase of Compton Ridge Campground and Lodge," said Peter Graffman, OCP's executive vice president. "Branson is one of the top vacation destinations in the south-central United States. We feel that Compton Ridge will become Ocean Canyon's flagship camping resort for family entertainment, recreation and excitement," Graffman added.



Camping World Salutes Veterans

Camping World and Good Sam Enterprises announced a new project to install massive American flags at Camping World retail locations to honor veterans. The flags measure 30-by-60 feet or 40-by-80 feet, depending on zoning regulations, and the poles are 130 feet tall. In many cases, these will be the largest flying U.S. flags in the surrounding area. "A large percentage of our employees, and also customers, are veterans, and we want to honor them, their dedication to our country and to our local communities," said Marcus Lemonis, chairman and CEO of Camping World and Good Sam. "By making this proud statement, our goal is to bring local communities together in celebration of everything that has been accomplished by veterans for our country." Camping World welcomes veterans and the local community to attend the formal flag-raising ceremonies at supercenters that install the flags.



GCT's opulent CR-1 Carbon travel trailer features a flush-body design. The builder says there will be unprecedented interior standards and options.

Luxury Carbon Travel Trailer

Global Caravan Technologies (GCT), a luxury RV and specialty vehicle innovator based in Speedway, Indiana, released photos of its prototype CR-1 Carbon 35-foot double-slide travel trailer. The CR-1 is GCT's first floorplan, and the company claims the trailer is SUV towable with a weight of 6,500 pounds. The interior features walls made of carbon fiber, a leather-wrapped ceiling, private-jet-type leather soft-touch walls and residential furnishings that are at the top end of luxury in the global RV industry.

The CR-1 has a custom leather 88-inch sofa and an L-shaped 82-by-59-inch sofa. The company reports that the CR-1 comfortably seats eight in the rear lounge that transforms into a theater for entertaining. Modular solid-surface tables with mobile marine pedestals allow for various dining and workstation configurations.

A split kitchen allows for expansive counter space and an optional wine rack. Premium tile and designer sinks and faucets are used throughout. All cabinetry utilizes upscale residential hardware.

A full walk-through master-bath suite divides the kitchen from the master bedroom with a residential-style door. The lavatory has a large linen cabinet, and the 36-inch shower blends solid-surface designer tile and carbon fiber. A stackable washer and dryer are also available or can be substituted for added closet and storage space.

The carpeted master suite includes two dressers, three wardrobes and an optional glass ceiling. The bedroom is surrounded by handcrafted leather upholstery, multiple reading lights and a carbon-fiber bed frame.

www.gctrv.com

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Not-So-Speedy Rebate

When a promised rebate check from a Texas Ford dealership didn't materialize, a frustrated *Trailer Life* reader turned to *RV Resolutions* for help:

► While camping in Texas in March 2013, I purchased four new tires from Bluebonnet Motors in New Braunfels. Included in the purchase price was a \$60 rebate that I never received. I contacted Ford Service Rebates and was told something had been improperly entered at Bluebonnet. Ford advised me to contact the dealer for assistance.

I left messages at Bluebonnet four times, and my calls were never returned. When I was finally able to speak with the service manager, he stated he would get the rebate rectified and call me back. To date, I haven't received a response or my rebate. Can *RV Resolutions* help me collect my check?

James Huss, Pine River, Wisconsin

After contacting Bluebonnet Motors twice on behalf of James Huss, *RV Resolutions* received the following thank you note from Huss:

► We finally received our rebate check from Bluebonnet Ford in the full amount after your second request to them. Thank you for your valuable assistance in clearing up this matter.

J.H.

Two Weeks Too Many

After waiting months to be reimbursed for a toilet replacement that was under warranty, a Texas reader asked *RV Resolutions* to speed things up with the manufacturer:

► The toilet pedal broke, and the whole commode had to be replaced. I contacted the RV's manufacturer, Open Range, and was advised to get the replacement done and send them the bill. This was completed on December 17, 2013, by Statewide Mobile RV Repair. On December 18, 2013, I sent the bill to Open Range for reimbursement of the \$327.50 I paid for the repair.

Two months and several phone calls later, we received an answer that they cut checks every two weeks, but four "two weeks" have gone by with no payment. I would appreciate any assistance *RV Resolutions* can provide.

Peter Koshowski, Victoria, Texas

A representative from Open Range's consumer relations department resolved the matter directly with Peter Koshowski, then responded to *RV Resolutions*:

Thank you for your letter and your interest in helping facilitate resolutions between manufacturers and retail customers. Our goal at Open Range is to provide customers with a top-of-the-line product, and our warranty is part of that product. Open Range does stand behind its product.

I spoke to Mr. Koshowski on the phone this morning, and he

indicated that he had received the check from Open Range in the amount of \$327.50. I asked if he had any other concerns that he would like to speak with me about. He said that he had nothing at this time and appreciated the call from me.

Open Range customer service is committed to helping our customers with warranty issues as our main focus and mission. I regret that the customer felt the need to contact you on this, but I am glad that a resolution has been reached.

**Cary Jones, Open Range RV
Shipshewana, Indiana**

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 *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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Newfoundland's

Walk in the footsteps of Leif Eriksson on an unforgettable trip from Gros Morne

Looking for adventure? Want to explore a less-traveled road? Love combining unique and beautiful landscapes with authentic local cultures?

How about Newfoundland? This rocky squiggle off Canada's eastern coast has it all — natural beauty, unique culture, fish, caribou, moose (lots of moose!), icebergs in the spring and whales in the summer. Who could ask for more?

Newfoundland is so remote that it even has its own time zone: Newfoundland Time is an hour and a half ahead of Eastern Time. And while it has good roads, developed campgrounds and delicious local cuisine, it lacks the overcrowded frenzy of maritime destinations like Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island.

Newfoundland may not have the soaring mountain vistas of Alaska or the sugar-sand beaches of the Caribbean, but its landscapes are unique and utterly pristine. The villages strung along its coasts are sometimes hard-

scrabble and were often established hundreds of years ago by the ancestors of people living there now. There's no window-dressing for the tourists; this is the real McCoy. It's hard work to survive in a tough land.

One unforgettable way to experience Newfoundland is to travel the Viking Trail. This is a 240-mile (400 kilometer) route that begins in Gros Morne National Park on the western coast of the island and ends at the tip of its Great Northern Peninsula. Not only does the Viking Trail treat you to some seriously lovely scenery as it meanders along the coast, with the sea on one side and the Long Range Mountains on the other, but it's bookended by two UNESCO World Heritage Sites: Gros Morne National Park on the southern end and L'Anse aux Meadows — where the Vikings landed 1,000 years ago — in the far north of the peninsula.

Ready to go? Great! But first you have to get there.

BY FERRY AND BEYOND

The fact that Newfoundland is an island 100 miles off the mainland keeps the place quieter than its maritime neighbors, but it also means that you and your rig will have to take a boat to get there.

Marine Atlantic is the ferry service that crosses from North Sydney, Nova Scotia, to Channel-Port aux Basques, Newfoundland, several times daily in summer. These ferries are huge 10-story behemoths that carry all the vehicular traffic to the island. They're efficient, modern and comfortable with helpful, friendly staff.

From the ferry landing, Gros Morne National Park is an easy and scenic 180-mile drive. On the way, you'll begin to catch the flavor of Newfoundland — soft humps of mist-covered mountains, stretches of flat, treeless marsh, glimpses of glittering sea. That is, if it's not raining or foggy or so windy that the infamous Wreckhouse section of the

Viking Trail

National Park to the tip of the Great Northern Peninsula

highway is closed. But you're going to Newfoundland for the adventure, right?

STRANGE BEAUTY AND LIVELY VILLAGES

Gros Morne is the second-largest Canadian National Park and a UNESCO World Heritage Site because of its "exceptional natural beauty" and because it has some of the oldest exposed rock in the world. You won't necessarily find gems but you will find ancient stone formed in the depths of the earth and heaved to its surface eons ago.

To begin our tour of the park, my daughter, Julia, and I camped at several of the smaller campgrounds in Lomond, Trout River, Green Point and

Cow Head. They are wooded, often with scenic views as well as handy access to trails and the lively communities nearby. While the campgrounds have hot showers, dump stations, and even Wi-Fi at some locations, they don't have hookups. Also, some of them (notably Trout River) may be difficult for large rigs to get into. Private campgrounds with more amenities also operate in the park. Your best bets might be the KOA or the Good Sam Park near the visitor center.

Don't miss the short guided hike into the Tablelands, a barren mountainous area that contrasts starkly with the forested hills all around. This is the raised floor of an ancient seabed that

Deep, blue and pristine, Western Brook Pond in Gros Morne National Park is a freshwater fjord that was carved deeply into the Long Range Mountains by ancient glaciers. (Above right) The 6-mile hike to Baker's Brook Falls winds through gently rolling forestland and ends in a stair-step series of waterfalls. (Right) Lomond River Campground overlooking Bonne Bay at the southern end of Gros Morne National Park is one of the national park campgrounds that are uncrowded even in the peak season. And you sure can't beat the view!



Newfoundland's Viking Trail



The 1.8-mile trail to the tour boats at Western Brook Pond passes through classic Newfoundland bogs with the Long Range Mountains in the distance.

was pinched between tectonic plates some 500 million years ago.

Hiking opportunities in the park range from a pleasant stroll along the seashore to the iconic and strenuous Gros Morne Mountain Trail. Visit the Discovery Center near Woody Point and the visitor center in the middle of the park for great interpretive information about what you're looking at.

A spectacular experience is the boat tour through Western Brook Pond. The pond is really a deep freshwater fjord that fills a glacier-carved valley. The views are spectacular — steep walls of forested rock rise from deep blue water, punctuated at times with crystal waterfalls (Pissing Mare Falls being the most colorfully named). I elbowed my way to the bow of the crowded boat and stood slack-jawed as we entered the mouth of the pond and slowly motored to its end,

only grudgingly giving up my place to Julia so she could take photographs.

In addition to its natural wonders, Newfoundland has a rich cultural heritage. The fishing villages that are scattered along the coast are lively, historic and fun to explore. Good no-frills restaurants feature fresh local cuisine, such as lobster, cod, haddock and moose. You might catch a band performing local Newfie tunes or see a theatrical performance at the summer-long Gros Morne Theater Festival in Cow Head, Norris Point or Rocky Harbour.

NORTH ON THE VIKING TRAIL

North of Gros Morne, the Viking Trail continues to the northern tip of the peninsula. It's a pleasant one-day excursion, even for a wimpy driver like me. You'll wind along the coast between the Long Range Mountains to the east and fishing villages tucked away in coves. You'll see lobster traps piled along the highway and fishing shanties by the water's edge. Stacks of firewood collected the previous winter on rough wooden sleighs are stacked and ready for cold weather.

RV Camping

From national and provincial parks to privately owned RV parks, there are plenty of places to camp along Newfoundland's Viking Trail.

NATIONAL PARK

Gros Morne National Park
709-458-2417, www.grosmorne.info@pc.gc.ca

- Berry Hill Campground, Rocky Harbour
- Green Point Campground, Green Point
- Lomond Campground, Lomond
- Shallow Bay Campground, Cow Head
- Trout River Campground, Trout River

PROVINCIAL PARKS

877-214-2267, www.nlcamping.ca
• Pistolet Bay Provincial Park Campground, Raleigh
• J.T. Cheeseman Provincial Park Campground, Cape Ray

RV PARKS

- Gros Morne/Norris Point KOA Kampground, Rocky Harbour
800-562-3441, www.grosmorne.com/koa
- GrosMorne RV Park and Campground, Rocky Harbour
877-488-3133, www.grosmornervcampground.com



Costumed interpreters take you back to the time of the Vikings at L'Anse aux Meadows. This is the only authenticated landing site of Leif Eriksson in North America, and Parks Canada has done an amazing job of re-creating the daily life of Norse seamen.



(Above from left) A lucky caribou sighting on the Lomond River Trail. This big moose was peacefully grazing along the roadside. With about 150,000 moose on the island, this habit can be particularly hazardous for drivers.

"Ditch gardens" — lovingly fenced and tended plots beside the road — are mostly planted in potatoes and hardy root vegetables.

We reached Pistolet Bay Provincial Park, another lovely campground without hookups, at the end of a relaxing and delightful travel day. The park is located near L'Anse aux Meadows, the World Heritage Site on the north end of the Viking Trail.

L'Anse aux Meadows (pronounced Lahns O'Meadows by the locals) is where Leif Eriksson landed in A.D. 1000 — the only such authentic landing site in North America. Today, L'Anse aux Meadows is a tiny village of about 25 residents — a cluster of fragile homes on the shore of a watery moonscape where snow can drift up to 30 feet in winter. What remains of the Viking structures are small, unlikely looking humps in the peaty marsh. Clayton Colbourne, our guide, remembers playing on the mounds as a child. Villagers thought they'd been made by ancient native tribes.

When an international team of archaeologists unearthed tiny artifacts that

were unmistakably Norse — a needle for making hats, a soapstone spindle, a characteristic pin used for cloaks — this forgotten part of the world suddenly made international news.

It is thought that Norsemen roamed throughout the region in search of materials they couldn't get in barren Greenland — furs, wood for making boats, grapes for making wine. L'Anse aux Meadows was a temporary settlement — a place to restock and repair the boats. Sails were mended here, and iron nails were smelted. ("One hundred nails makes the difference between getting home — or not," Colbourne told us.)

In 1978, Parks Canada recreated several structures as they would have looked 1,000 years ago. With thick peat-moss walls, a sod roof and a fire, the dwellings are warm and cozy. Costumed interpreters were so convincing that we felt like time travelers eavesdropping from the future.

In the days following our visit to the Norse Village, we explored the equally timeless villages along the coast. They hunker low along the water, from



If You Go

Norstead Viking Village

Two miles from the UNESCO site at L'Anse aux Meadows, a nonprofit organization has recreated an authentic Norse village. Intended as a complement to the historic site, Norstead offers a lively sense of daily life in Viking times with costumed actors, reenactments of games and battles, fireside tales and the *Snorri*, a 54-foot Norse boat.

877-620-2828, www.norstead.com

Grenfell Historic Properties

This museum near the northern tip of the peninsula presents the heroic life of Sir Wilfred Grenfell and his wife, Anne. Grenfell was a physician trained in England who dedicated his life to serving the desperately poor fishing communities along the coasts of Newfoundland and Labrador. The city of St. Anthony is still a regional center for medical care.

709-454-4010

www.grenfell-properties.com

Dark Tickle Company

Located in St. Lunaire-Griquet on the road to L'Anse aux Meadows, this is the only place on the island where you'll find jams and spreads made from all the local wild berries: bakeapple, squashberry and crowberry, to name a few. The company also features high-quality crafts made in Newfoundland.

709-623-2354, www.darktickle.com



A scenic and easy drive bookended by two remarkable UNESCO World Heritage sites — Gros Morne National Park and L'Anse aux Meadows.

Newfoundland's Viking Trail

which people still derive their livelihood. A slight scent of wood smoke hovers in the air, even on this August day. If you overhear conversation among the locals, you will not be able to understand them, so thick is the dialect. If you ask a question, they speak to you slowly and distinctly as though you were a child.

Several days later, we left that tip of the world, this time heading south to catch the ferry. On our last night in Newfoundland, we camped at J.T. Cheeseman Provincial Park, and I hiked through the marsh to the seashore. Autumn was creeping over the land, and rain and sun were duking it out behind the clouds. I was leaving Newfoundland, and I was going to miss this place of eerie beauty.

"There's a feeling of the spirit world here — very, very strong," said David Blackwood, a renowned artist who was raised in a Newfoundland "outport." We had felt it, too.

The next day, Julia and I boarded the ferry for the long trip home. 🚚

TRAVELING BY FERRY

Given fair winds and a warm day, it's quite possible that the ferry crossing from North Sydney, Nova Scotia, to Port aux Basques, Newfoundland, will be one of the most pleasant memories of your trip. Marine Atlantic runs an efficient, state-of-the-art fleet that offers travelers everything from two- to four-person private cabins to a comfortable lounge, several dining options and onboard entertainment.

Make a reservation well in advance, especially if you want to reserve a cabin. Calling as early as March or April for the busy summer season is

recommended

Know the length of your RV, from the front bumper of your tow vehicle to the rear of the trailer. Charges are based on length, but there are no size or weight limitations.

You must be in line for check-in at least two hours before the scheduled sailing. If you arrive late, your reservation may not be honored.

All passengers will be asked for an official photo ID — a driver's license or passport.

Once the ferry is underway, no one is allowed back on the vehicle deck for any reason, according to



Canadian law. Be sure to bring everything you need when you leave your RV.

Pets are allowed on the ferry, but they must either stay in your vehicle or in a travel crate that you provide. Marine Atlantic has a kennel for crated pets.

While the crossing usually takes six to eight hours, it can take longer in rough weather, or a crossing may be canceled. Call for up-to-the-minute information.

800-341-7981

marine-atlantic.ca



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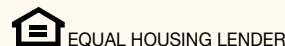
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**APR applied to the loan is the APR in effect on the date the application is received and is valid until 30 days after the loan is approved. APRs may vary with loan term. For a refinance request, RV must be 2004 model year or newer. For a purchase request, RV must be 2006 model year or newer. Maximum loan to value is determined by the following: credit score and model year, with collateral value being established per NADA Used Wholesale Trade-in value. Maximum loan term may vary based on model year, loan amount, loan type and lender guidelines. Information is accurate as of March 25, 2014. This offer is not available to applicants who use their RV as a principal dwelling (Full-Timer); visit website for Full-Timer rates and terms. Financing provided through Good Sam Finance Center.

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HEART OF NORTH IDAHO

Dozens of lakes, miles of forest and numerous trails surround Coeur d'Alene, the Panhandle's outdoor playground

Strolling down Sherman Avenue, in the heart of Coeur d'Alene, Idaho, it's impossible to miss Muddy, the moose statue. Towering conifer forests surrounding Coeur d'Alene and the rest of the Idaho Panhandle contain one of the densest moose populations in the United States, with up to 1.5 moose per square mile. Muddy is not one of them. He's a bronze statue of a children's storybook character created by Susan Hagan Nipp, a longtime resident of Coeur d'Alene who's known nationally for creating the popular Wee Sing CDs, a music staple among the nursery-school crowd.

Muddy's friendly mug welcomes youngsters and those still young at heart who've come to enjoy themselves at this Idaho playground. In addition to Nipp, Academy Award-winning actress Patty Duke and *NYPD Blue* actor Dennis

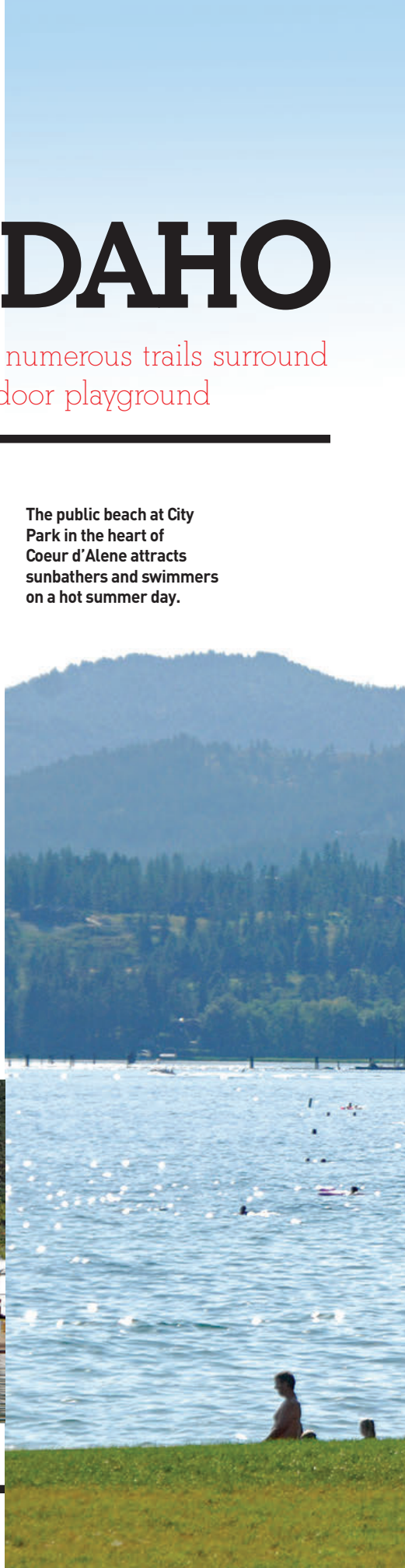
Franz live in Coeur d'Alene, along with some 44,000 other people. Former Denver Broncos quarterback John Elway and NHL hockey legend Wayne Gretzky have summer homes here, too, a testament to the lake city's appeal.

This late-19th-century mining and timbering hub is now one of the more popular vacation destinations in the Pacific Northwest, and for good reason. It offers something for everyone. You can immerse yourself in most water-sports, take a cruise around the lake, hike or bike the many miles of paved and unpaved trails, play golf, explore historic sites, take a scenic drive, dine and shop at any of a number of cute restaurants and boutiques, or simply soak up the sun on the immaculately maintained public beach. Coeur d'Alene is a classy water resort and mountain resort all in one.

The public beach at City Park in the heart of Coeur d'Alene attracts sunbathers and swimmers on a hot summer day.



(Above) Blackwell Island RV Park, at the mouth of the Spokane River, offers lakefront camping by its sandy beach.



THE CITY

Located 30 miles east of Spokane, Washington, Coeur d'Alene is the seat of Kootenai County and second largest metropolitan area in the state, after Boise, though it hardly feels like a city in the urban jungle sense. It exudes all the relaxing, carefree essence of a consummate vacation destination. Perhaps that's why Barbara Walters once called Coeur d'Alene "a little slice of heaven" and included it on her list of most fascinating places to visit.

Coeur d'Alene is named after the Coeur d'Alene tribe of Native Americans who lived in the region prior to the arrival of French-Canadian fur traders in the late-18th century. The Coeur d'Alene people resided in 16 villages

along the Spokane and St. Joe rivers near Lake Coeur d'Alene and Hayden Lake. They traded extensively and had close social ties to other inland tribes throughout the Northwest.

The popular meaning of the name Coeur d'Alene comes from the French language and means "heart of an awl." An awl is a sharp, pointed tool used to make holes in leather, wood and other materials. The term likely refers to the Coeur d'Alene tribe's reputation for sharp-hearted or shrewd fur-trading practices. However, some believe the name of the city and the lake is based on an alternate translation, "eye of the needle," which refers to the place where the lake narrows into the Spokane River.

One of those fur traders was David Thompson of the North West Company, an accomplished cartographer from the late-1700s through the mid-1800s who mapped more than 1.5 million square miles of U.S. and Canadian territory, including the area around Coeur d'Alene, in an attempt to open a trade route and trading posts through the northern interior to the Pacific Ocean. In 1809, he established the Kullyspell House, a trading post at nearby Lake Pend Oreille.

In 1853, Pierre-Jean De Smet, a Belgian Jesuit priest, established Cataldo Mission on the Coeur d'Alene River, the oldest standing building in Idaho today. Shortly after that, the military constructed the 624-mile



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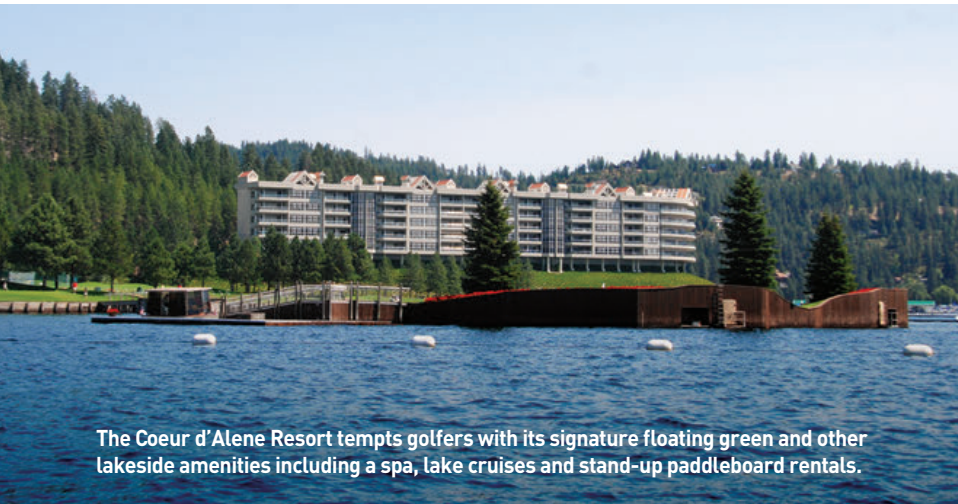


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The Coeur d'Alene Resort tempts golfers with its signature floating green and other lakeside amenities including a spa, lake cruises and stand-up paddleboard rentals.

RV PARKS

Bear Creek Campground

Location: Near Mineral Ridge Scenic Trail in the Idaho Panhandle National Forests

While not lakeside camping, this small USDA Forest Service campground offers creekside campsites with lots of space and trees between them — perfect for those who like privacy and quiet. No fee and no reservations. Bear Creek and many of the Panhandle's other Forest Service campgrounds offer sites that are suitable for RVs, but always check beforehand for size limits. 208-765-7233, www.fs.usda.gov/ipnf

Beauty Creek Campground

Location: 11 miles east of Coeur d'Alene
Another USDA Forest Service campground, this small, remote location has 20 campsites, paved roads and potable water. It's near the Beauty Bay boat launch on Lake Coeur d'Alene. 208-765-7233, www.recreation.gov

Blackwell Island RV Park

Location: Mouth of the Spokane River, end of Lake Coeur d'Alene
Full hookups, free Wi-Fi, private beach, dock, laundry and walking distance to Cedar's Floating Restaurant. This 182-site full-service RV resort is close to all of the action in town. Book early because this is a popular spot. 888-571-2900, www.idahorvpark.com

Wolf Lodge RV Park

Location: 8 miles east of Lake Coeur d'Alene
A pet-friendly RV resort offering full hookups and a camp store, along with nightly group campfires, free Wi-Fi, bike and canoe rentals, laundry facilities, volleyball and other resort amenities. No cable TV, but satellite works well if you have it. It's not on the lake, though you can swim and fish in the creek on the property. 208-664-2812
www.wolflodgescampground.com

Mullen Road, close to where Interstate 90 is today, connecting Fort Benton, Montana, to Fort Walla Walla, Washington. The military also built Fort Sherman at the outlet of Lake Coeur d'Alene to protect the road. Today, North Idaho College is located on the site of the fort, and you can see a replica of the fort's gate there.

It wasn't until the discovery of gold in 1883 that the area saw the first real influx of civilians. A town grew around the fort, with mining as its economic basis. The gold claim proved minor, but subsequent discoveries of silver, lead and zinc created a boom augmented by the arrival of the Northern Pacific Transcontinental Railroad. Beginning in 1886, mine workers could travel by rail to Coeur d'Alene, then by stern-wheeler on the back — up the river to the Cataldo Mission, and then by narrow-gauge rail to the mines. Likewise, the trains and stern-wheelers transported ore to Coeur d'Alene and eventually to smelters in the East. The introduction of these rear-powered steamboats also

gave the area its first tourist activity, cruising the lake.

THE FOREST

By the turn of the 20th century, as mining waned, the timber industry became the town's economic lifeline. For the next 20 years, millions of logs floated down local rivers to Lake Coeur d'Alene and then to the region's sawmills. Eventually, the logging boom ended, though today boaters on the lake have periodic reminders of the era when a sizable log will unexpectedly float to the surface after resting for decades on the bottom of the lake. Coeur d'Alene is now headquarters for the Idaho Panhandle National Forests. The USDA Forest Service's nursery grows 20 million evergreen seedlings annually to replace trees harvested from various national and state forests.

THE LAKE

The city of Coeur d'Alene is located on the north end of its namesake lake. This large body of water runs 25 miles long and 1 to 3 miles wide for much of its

Did You Know?

- Each June, Coeur d'Alene hosts Car d'Alene, a weekend-long pre-1970s car and truck show, June 13 and 14 this year.
- The 14th hole of Coeur d'Alene Resort's golf course is the world's only movable floating green. It measures 15,000 square feet, weighs nearly 5 million pounds and can be moved on the water's surface by cables attached to the lake bottom from 75 to 175 yards from shore.
- Coeur d'Alene is listed in the bestseller *1,000 Places to See Before You Die*, by Patricia Schultz.
- Silverwood, 15 minutes north of Coeur d'Alene, is the largest theme park in the Northwest with more than 70 rides and attractions, including four roller coasters.



HEART OF NORTH IDAHO

length, with an average depth of 120 feet. It's fed primarily by the Coeur d'Alene and St. Joe rivers on the southern end of the lake and flows into the Spokane River near the city. With 50 square miles of water and 100-plus miles of shoreline, the lake has plenty of room for just about any water-based activity, even at the peak of the summer season.

Lake Coeur d'Alene has a split personality as a rockin' beach resort at its northern end and a more peaceful, less developed mountain lake at its southern end. Several trailer-friendly campgrounds are tucked into the area around Wolf Lodge Bay, east of the city, and near Idaho Route 97 where long stretches of the lake are uninhabited. Anglers tuck into quiet bays to cast for pike and muskie, and bird watchers frequently spot bald eagles and osprey lifting small fish with their sharp talons from the water's surface.

The northern part of the lake, around City Beach in Coeur d'Alene, is where the action is. At dawn, it's



(Above) The 3.3-mile Mineral Ridge National Recreation Trail leads to beautiful views of the lake. (Right) Osprey are among the many raptors, songbirds and waterfowl commonly seen along the birding trail by Cougar Bay and elsewhere on Lake Coeur d'Alene.



common to see a posse of paddleboarders testing their skills on the glassy bay. Soon water-skiers and wakeboarders whiz by, zigzagging side to side behind racy motorboats.



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Jet Skis dart here and there, jumping ever-growing waves. By noon, parasailers pulled by similar powerboats climb into the air for a bird's-eye view of the activity. A seaplane revs up and takes off, giving its passengers an even higher, wider view of the lake. And by late afternoon, a crowd of 150 boards the *Spirit of Coeur d'Alene* or one of her sister vessels for a sightseeing cruise.

THE SCENIC BYWAY

There's much to do and see on land as well, beginning with a drive on the Lake Coeur d'Alene Scenic Byway (Idaho Route 97). From its junction with Interstate 90, this winding two-lane road travels 35.8 miles down the eastern shoreline of the lake, over hills, through woodlands and past the historic town of Harrison, then ends at the junction with Idaho Route 3. In addition to the stunning scenery and wildlife viewing, the byway's eight designated interpretive sites ground you in the area's human and natural history.

COEUR D'ALENE

MUST-SEES

Coeur d'Alene Cellars: This winery has a swanky tasting room where visitors can sample a number of local award-winning wines while listening to live music.
www.cdacellars.com

Coeur d'Alene Chocolates: Fresh local chocolates, truffles and other confections handmade in small batches are guaranteed to satisfy even the savviest gourmet sweet tooth.
www.cdachocolates.com

Museum of North Idaho: Located in City Park, this cultural repository includes artifacts, visual displays and information on the local native people, the region's mining and timbering heritage, and recreational, religious and economic pursuits in the area.
www.museumni.org

ROW Adventure Center: A one-stop shop for raft, kayak, bike and paddleboard rentals, as well as fully outfitted tours and lessons for these activities and guided fly-fishing excursions.
www.rowadventurecenter.com

Shenanigan's Toy Emporium: A toy store that thinks it's a museum, this Sherman Avenue shop stocks pedal cars, planes, trains and other nostalgic playthings from a bygone era.
www.shenaniganstoyemporium.info

Tony's Supper Club: A cozy Italian restaurant located at the water's edge next to the Centennial Bike Trail, so you can get there by boat, bike, car or foot.
www.tonysonthelake.com

For more information:
Coeur d'Alene Convention and Visitors Bureau, www.coeurdalene.org

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THE TRAILS

For those more inclined to see the scenery on foot or by bicycle, Coeur d'Alene is bike-path heaven. Six rail trails ribbon through the area, including the Hiawatha Trail, the Atlas Bike Trail, the Cherry Hill BMX Trail and the Spokane Centennial Trail. However, it's a toss-up between the Trail of the Coeur d'Alenes and the North Idaho Centennial Trail as to the best route of the bunch.

In 2012, the Rails to Trails Conservancy named the Trail of the Coeur d'Alenes among the top 25 rail trails in America. This 10-foot-wide, 72-mile-long paved path between Mullen and Plummer, Idaho, follows the Coeur d'Alene River through Harrison, passing through Heyburn and Old Mission state parks. In addition to welcoming hikers, bicyclists and in-line skaters, the trail is wheelchair-accessible and pet-friendly.

The North Idaho Centennial Trail is a 24-mile multiuse corridor from the Idaho-Washington border to Higgins



The annual Coeur d'Alene triathlon, nicknamed "the scenic challenge," starts and ends at the City Park beach each August.

Point, 6 miles east of Coeur d'Alene. It travels down the east side of the lake and along the Spokane River, then connects with the Spokane River Centennial Trail. The trail in the vicinity of the beach is busy with joggers, bicyclists, dog walkers, strollers, skateboarders and in-line skaters, but the farther you travel from the resort, the less populated it becomes.

Interestingly, if someone is traveling point-to-point along one of the rail trails in the Coeur d'Alene area, they typically head toward the city, which makes sense. Why would you want to leave a place that has so many outdoor recreational opportunities? Maybe the historians got it wrong. Perhaps the real translation of Coeur d'Alene is not "heart of the awl" but "heart of it all." 🚗

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Freewheeling on THE CHESAPEAKE

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For years we've been traveling America's canals by boat. What would it be like, we wondered, to travel along the historic Chesapeake and Ohio Canal by truck and trailer and experience this heritage waterway intimately by bicycle?

For those unfamiliar with the C&O Canal, the waterway was a dream of George Washington, who envisioned connecting the eastern states with the western frontier. Upon completion in 1850, the 6-foot-deep, 12-foot-wide canal and adjacent towpath stretched from Georgetown in Washington, D.C., to Cumberland, Maryland. Seven dams on the Potomac River watered the canal through diversion channels.

The ultimate goal was to connect to the Ohio River in Pittsburgh via the Youghiogheny and Monongahela rivers, but that section was never completed because the B&O Railroad began its northwest thrust at the same time. In 1850 the passage of 185 miles through 75 locks pulled by mule teams took five days going day and night to reach Cumberland; by rail it took five hours.

Even before the C&O Canal reached Cumberland, it experienced a slow and inevitable decline and eventually went bankrupt. To prevent competition, the railroad then bought all rights to the waterway. In 1938 when the railroad also fell on hard times, the federal government exchanged the railroad's tax debt for the canal. The government then owned something it didn't really need or want — 5,288 acres of a useless canal along the unnavigable Potomac.

Nicknamed the Grand Old Ditch, the canal sat abandoned for 30 years, gradually

filling in. Various proposals were floated, including a highway, but in 1954 U.S. Supreme Court Justice William O. Douglas envisioned a hiker's parkway using the old towpath. To promote his idea, Douglas walked from Cumberland to Georgetown, accompanied by a cadre of friends and a reporter from the *Washington Post*.

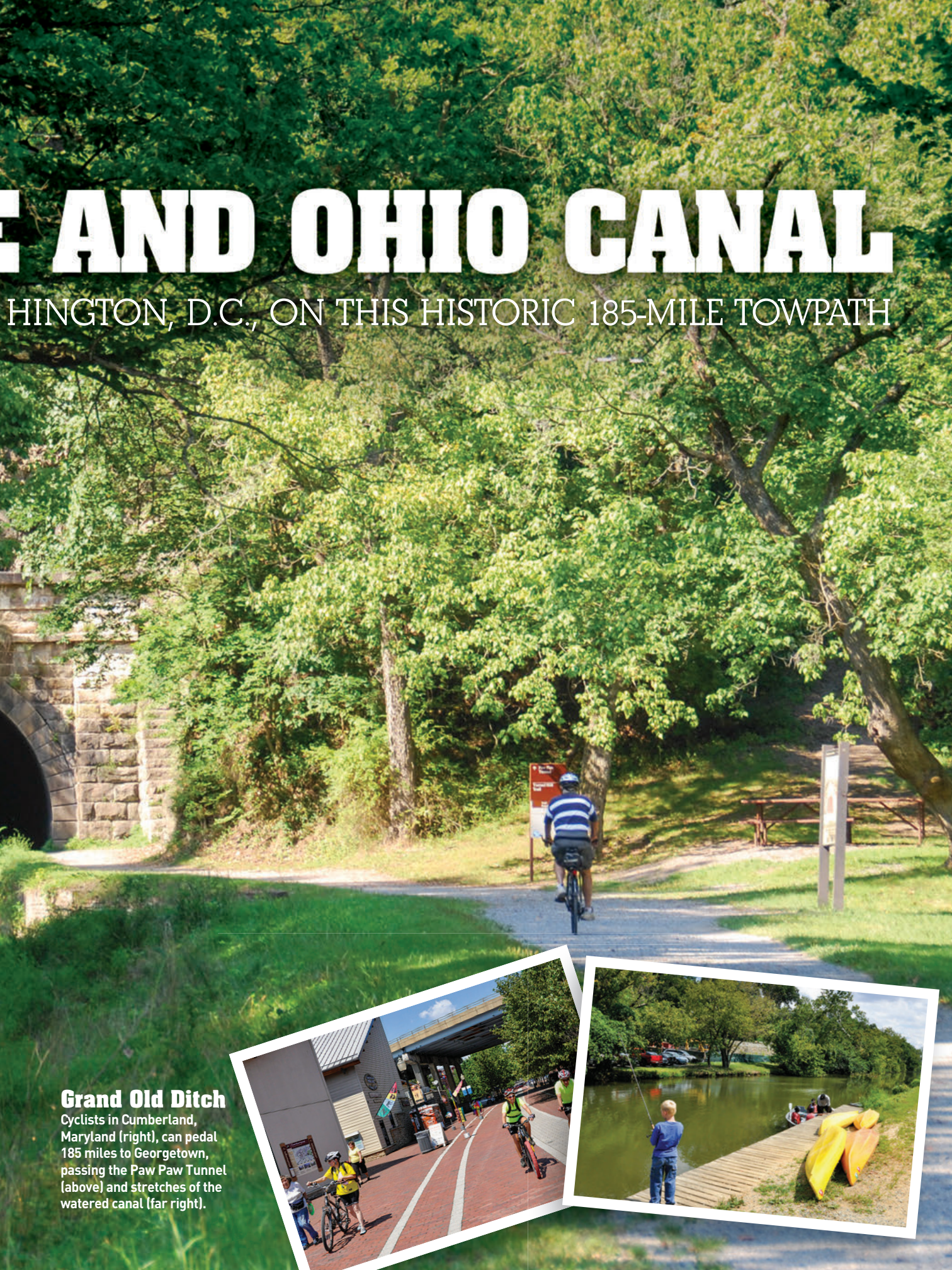
The story raised public interest, and the government made the C&O Canal a national monument in 1961, then a national historical park 10 years later. In 1972 the National Park Service began buying additional acreage to buffer the canal. Instead of a 5,000-acre linear park, the C&O Canal became part of a 20,000-acre greenway, with a few canal sections watered for use by canoes and kayaks. Today it's one of the most popular national historical parks that had nearly 5 million visitors in 2013.

Our goal was to cycle significant portions of the towpath, camping as close to it as we could. Both our fifth-wheel trailer and our truck are equipped with hitch receivers into which we insert our bicycle rack. When we leave the trailer behind at a campground, we remove the bikes, insert the rack into the truck's receiver, place the bikes back on the rack and go.

For the best sightseeing, we selected major cultural attributes to cycle to, including aqueducts that carry the canal over intervening streams and creeks, river dams, tunnels, locks and lockhouses, some of which now serve as overnight lodgings for travelers. Tent campgrounds dapple the 185-mile park, and a few drive-in camping areas can serve as overnight stays for small RVs.

E AND OHIO CANAL

HINGTON, D.C., ON THIS HISTORIC 185-MILE TOWPATH



Grand Old Ditch

Cyclists in Cumberland, Maryland (right), can pedal 185 miles to Georgetown, passing the Paw Paw Tunnel (above) and stretches of the watered canal (far right).





FREEWHEELING ON THE CHESAPEAKE AND OHIO CANAL



(Top left) The shallow, fast-moving Potomac River near Harpers Ferry gives rafters a few thrills. (Top right) Overlooking Green Ridge State Forest, you can see the river snake its way toward Washington, D.C. (Far right) Looking downstream from a Georgetown cross street shows the many locks in the first few miles of the canal.

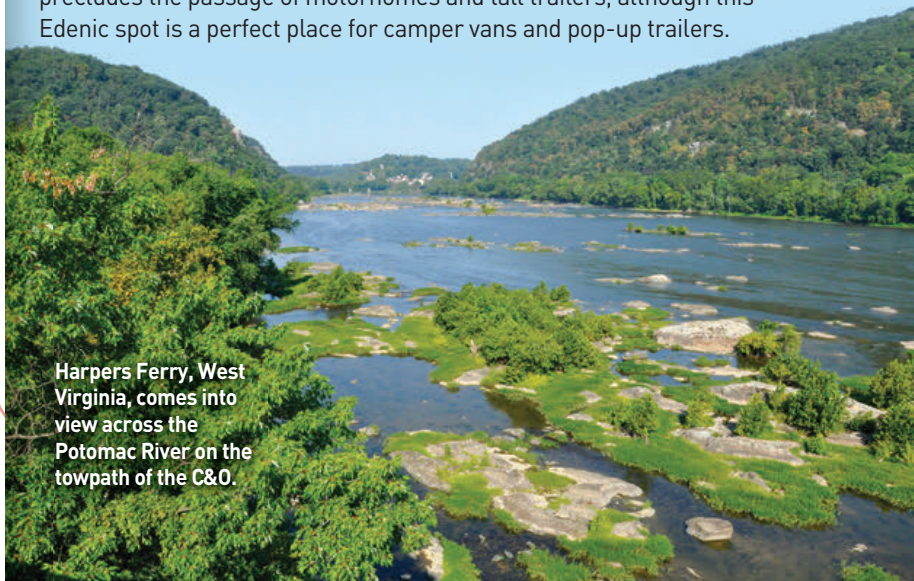
CUMBERLAND TO HANCOCK

From our home in Knoxville, Tennessee, we headed to an RV campground in tiny Little Orleans, Maryland, about 50 miles south of Cumberland, to stay two nights. Following an orientation at the national park's Cumberland Visitor Center, we drove Highway 51 south toward Lock 75 and put the bikes on the trail. The towpath is fine gravel, but at times it's a bit bumpy. Our medium-size bicycle tires were perfect, but mountain bikes, the rental agency's choice, are also suitable.

Our ride took us to the Paw Paw Tunnel near mile 156, lined with 6 million bricks. The builders opted to blast through a mountain rather than construct the canal around it, but it took 14 years (1836–1850) to build this 3,118-foot-long shortcut using picks and shovels and a ton of black powder. Eva tried walking through the tunnel without a flashlight but came back after stumbling in the dark, clinging to the iron rail until she met the light of day again.

Back in the truck, we left paved Highway 51 and picked up a rough gravel road back to Little Orleans, stopping at scenic Point Lookout where we had an eagle's view of the serpentine Potomac gnawing its way through Green Ridge State Forest and the Allegheny Mountains.

Before settling in for the night, we took a peek at Bill's Place, a notable watering hole in Little Orleans. Bill's is a boozy place with dollar bills stuck to the ceiling, a dining area and a modicum of canned goods. Cyclists and hikers can find enough Vienna sausages, Little Debbie snacks, canned beans and peanut butter to sustain them until the next provisioning stop. A low railroad bridge from Bill's to the Fifteen Mile Creek camping area precludes the passage of motorhomes and tall trailers, although this Edenic spot is a perfect place for camper vans and pop-up trailers.



Harpers Ferry, West Virginia, comes into view across the Potomac River on the towpath of the C&O.



The Hancock Visitor Center at mile 125 is in the 1780 Bowles House, adjacent to the towpath. We walked down the towpath to the 1837 Tonoloway Creek Aqueduct, beyond which are Locks 51 and 52 and the skeletal remains of the accompanying lockhouse.

The canal and towpath in these parts are pastoral avenues of green velvet with long alleys of empty waterway and parallel path. The saplings of the 1800s have become hulking trees that provide natural drapery. The Potomac is placid and serene here, with geese waddling in the shallows. Paralleling the towpath is the 21-mile Western Maryland Rail Trail, a paved bicycling and walking path along the former rail route.

FORT FREDERICK TO ANTIETAM

We spent the night at the campground in Fort Frederick State Park. The historic fort, circa 1756, is a peaceful place within earshot of trains and only a stone's throw from the river.

In the morning we cycled from the fort to Locks 47 through 50 near a mule barn where weary animals passed the winter. In the 1870s about 3,000 mules worked the C&O, and the aptly named town of Four Locks supported two general stores, two warehouses, a dry dock, a post office and schools.

The Miles Gibson family was lodging in Lockhouse 49 when we visited. Staying there is a bit like dry camping. There's electricity but no running water and a chemical toilet outside. A washbasin sits in each bedroom, but you have to bring your own water.

Next we made the drive to the Williamsport Visitor Center, situated in the old Cushwa Coal and Brick Company warehouse. A large basin allowed the

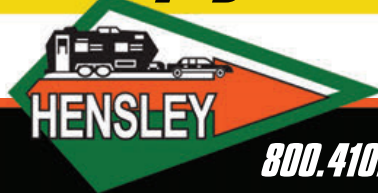
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barges to line up, at times for 6 or 7 miles, waiting to unload coal coming from Cumberland or to take on bricks, grain and vegetables bound for the Georgetown market. Many of the brownstones of Georgetown originated at the Cushwa brickworks.

Before heading to the Antietam Creek Aqueduct section of the C&O, at mile 70, we drove through Antietam National Battlefield, then stopped along a section of roadway designated an official national park camping area. We put the bikes on the path there and rode down to Lock 37, a 2½-mile trip each way.

Drive-in users with bikes cross the towpath on footbridges to tent sites with outdoor privies and water. We decided that the invitation to rest also applied to RV campers, so we paid our \$10 fee, fed the cat and ourselves, pulled in the stairs and slept undisturbed.

HARPERS FERRY TO MONOCACY

The way to Harpers Ferry, West Virginia, from Antietam Creek was a tortuous two-lane road that wound through the hills, past small homes and beneath overhanging trees. We were headed down to the towpath when we spotted a yellow roadside sign warning us of a 12-foot clearance. Our trailer reaches 12 feet, 8 inches.

A National Park Service truck pulled alongside us, and a mustached face leaned out the window and confirmed the clearance. The way around was to backtrack, turn right, then head right again over the hills and through the woods past Grandma's house to Highway 67. Another right turn, then a half hour later we were in Harpers Ferry.

Strategically positioned at the confluence of the Shenandoah and Potomac rivers, the town of Harpers Ferry had a federal arsenal and was the target for abolitionist John Brown and his raiders in 1859. During the Civil War, Harpers Ferry and its weapon-making machinery shifted from Union to Confederate possession and back eight times, with the C&O Canal and the Potomac River becoming the de facto scrimmage line.



CAMPING NEAR THE CANAL

Maryland has a number of RV parks along the C&O Canal, from state and federal campgrounds with limited amenities, to commercial RV parks with full facilities.

PUBLIC CAMPGROUNDS

Chesapeake and Ohio Canal National Historical Park

301-739-4200, www.nps.gov/choh
Three campgrounds allow small trailers and motorhomes up to 20 feet to stay with no hookups for \$10 a night on a first-come, first-served basis:

Fifteen Mile Creek Campground, Mile 140.9
McCoys Ferry Campground, Mile 110.4
Spring Gap Campground, Mile 173.3

Fort Frederick State Park Campground, Big Pool

301-842-2155
www.reservations.dnr.state.md.us

RV PARKS

Brunswick Family Campground Brunswick

301-695-5177
www.potomacrivercampground.com

Hagerstown/Antietam KOA Williamsport

301-223-7571, www.koa.com/campgrounds/hagerstown

Happy Hills Campground, Hancock

301-678-7760
www.happyhillscampground-md.net

Little Orleans Campground Little Orleans

301-478-2325
www.littleorleanscampground.com

McMahon's Mill, Williamsport

301-223-8778, www.mcmahonsmill.com

Yogi Bear's Jellystone Park Camp-Resort at Hagerstown

301-223-7117, www.jellystonemaryland.com

We toured Harpers Ferry, then walked the footbridge alongside the railroad tracks and down a circular staircase to the towpath, crowded with cyclists. One couple was sucking air and looking exhausted. They were part of a British Columbia group that had flown to Pittsburgh, rented bicycles and were close to finishing the C&O Canal Towpath after first completing the 149-mile Great Allegheny Passage to Cumberland. That day and the day before, they'd ridden 64 miles and spent eight hours in the saddle on rented bikes. They said they were having a good time. *Ugh!*

The Monocacy Aqueduct at mile 42.2 has seven arches and stretches 500 feet, the giant among the 11 aqueducts along the C&O. It's strikingly beautiful with its pink quartzite stone. Even so, the Confederate army still tried to blow it up.

GREAT FALLS TO GEORGETOWN

Great Falls Tavern, built in 1828, was a way station for travelers in the early years but is now a museum with displays and memorabilia. Walkways and outlooks show the otherwise placid Potomac as wild and savage, as it cascades through steep rocks and a narrow gorge.

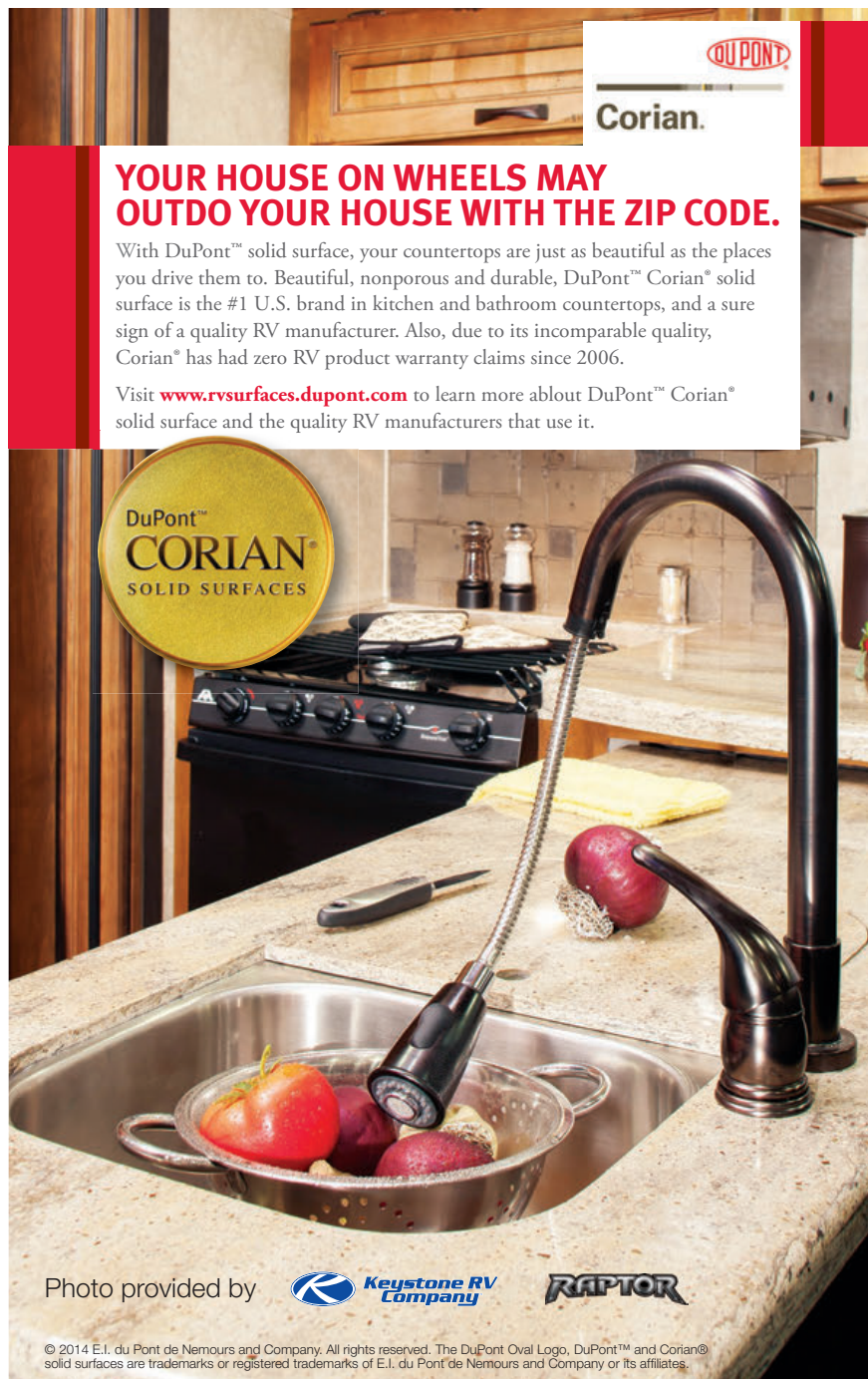
We visited family in Alexandria, Virginia, including 16-month old Elena who had a "summer home" in a screened two-wheeled trailer attached to Daddy Alan's bike, and finished our C&O tour with them. We drove to Fletcher's Boat House on the Potomac and joined the many residents of the D.C. area seeking water sports and cycling activities.

Our group biked upstream to Lock 6, at mile 5.6, where the formal push for the C&O began in 1828. The lockhouse there has been refurbished and is open for overnight guests. A Georgetown family had checked in. This house has all the modern conveniences: running water, indoor toilet, electric stove, dishwasher, refrigerator, two bedrooms and rocking chairs on the side porch.

The visitor center at Georgetown is located along the canal at mile 0.4 on the ground floor of a brownstone. The

canal in this section is dramatic, stepping up and up through a flight of locks. In one pool floated the *Georgetown*, the canal boat formerly used for visitors wishing to experience a canal ride through the locks. The National Park Service can't afford to restore it, and private contributions aren't sufficient to replace it, but mule-drawn boat tours are available from the visitor center at Great Falls Tavern.

To end our journey, we walked along Rock Creek to the Tidewater Lock at Milepost 0 and the Potomac River and imagined canalers from the past unloading their wares. Years ago, journalist Charles Kuralt called the C&O "America's loveliest failure" in one of his *On the Road* news segments on CBS. Failure or not, it is indeed lovely, a fascinating history tour and a great adventure for RVers with bicycles. 🚲





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Upscale Downsizing

The TrailManor 2417KS Sport and 2014 Toyota Highlander make a practical, comfortable combination

In virtually every leisure activity, there are the cultists — those individuals who live on the fringe of everyone else's reality, who base their choices not just on personal preference but on a feature or trait that may, in fact, be the very thing that is off-putting to others. In the world of travel trailers, there are more than a few cults — the teardroppers, the vintage trailer junkies — who would gladly forgo practicality in favor of passion. In the equal yet opposite universe are the folding-trailer fanatics who care not about a unit's history or quirky appearance but delight in the minimalist nature of their rigs. They've been known to boast about such nerdy details as aerodynamics and fuel economy, and may even launch into an unsolicited setup demonstration while challenging you to time them.

In these days of rising gas prices and storage costs, it's

not hard to understand folding-trailer fervor. These units are typically lightweight, can be pulled by the family vehicle and parked in a driveway or garage. But despite the obvious benefits, there are still many who aren't impressed by folding trailers for reasons that would appear insurmountable — namely, setup time and canvas walls. Taking these two negatives out of the equation, wouldn't it seem like you'd have the perfect travel trailer?

TrailManor would like you to think so. Founded in 1983, the company built a reputation on its unique hard-wall collapsible trailers that were designed to set up in two minutes or less. Note that we said "collapsible," not "foldable," as this is probably the most accurate way to describe how the TrailManor works. The longer top half of the trailer actually consists of two pieces that overlap, each of which extends



Highlander Limited features integrated fog lights, LED daytime running lights, 19-inch five-spoke alloy wheels and color-keyed, heated outside mirrors with puddle lamps.

lengthwise as it is lifted up. Once the prescribed setup is completed, the TrailManor is as weatherproof and solid as any travel trailer, yet it tows and stores like a tent trailer. With its unique characteristics, theatrical setup and unusual appearance, the TrailManor has created a cult following all its own.

One of TrailManor's newest models is the 2417 Sport, so named because its equivalent travel trailer size when open is 24 feet, and its length in the travel position is only 17 feet, 9 inches. It is offered in three floorplans — the 2417KB (with a king bed and a double bed), the 2417KS (king bed and a slideout living room with a sofabed) and the 2417KD (king bed and a slideout dinette). For our test, we obtained a 2417KS and matched it with a 2014 Toyota Highlander Limited.

Try as the company might to distance its product from tent trailers, there are similarities — for better or worse. For example, while setup of the TrailManor is faster than a typical tent trailer (especially for one person), it does require multiple steps, in the correct order, to achieve success. Frequency of use and the quality of your memory will determine how quickly you can transform this trailer from Trail to Manor. The abridged version is this: Release the latches on and below the body of the trailer on each side, after which torsion springs take over the heavy lifting. Pull back and up on the front section, and it lifts easily into place; corner latches prevent side-to-side movement of the section. Repeat the process for the rear section, pull the bed out, deploy the entry door, and you're in. But you're not necessarily finished yet.

The slideout on the 2417KS (which actually emerges from the front of the trailer, not the side) is deployed electronically with the push of a button, like most travel trailers — but unlike them, TrailManor cleverly fitted the switch with an interlock so children can't accidentally deploy or retract the slide. That's important, because if you forget to push one button, then the other, the slide won't operate, leaving you to wonder if the battery is nonfunctional. Once out, the slide dramatically increases floor space and provides a very open and airy feeling — an effect that is further enhanced by leaving the weather flaps open. We'll explain.

Because the TrailManor's top halves close over the bottom half, there has to be a way to create a seal from the weather once the trailer is fully open and the halves no longer overlap. TrailManor's solution is to fit the trailer with insulated flaps that fasten with hook-and-loop material. Leave the flaps unfastened, and the breeze is free to circulate throughout the trailer. In this



(Top to bottom) The front of the trailer features a sofabed and end tables with leaves that extend the dining area. The 3-cubic-foot refrigerator, two-burner stove and storage cabinet with a sink provide adequate equipment for meal preparation; the beige cabinet on the right is the bathroom enclosure. The king bed offers plenty of room to spread out and is surrounded by windows.



Lift and Separate

Once the bottom latches are released, torsion springs help lift the front section into position. Repeat the process for the rear section, then pull the king-size bed into place from underneath. After the door and frame are assembled, a conveniently located switch just inside deploys the front slideout. Exterior foot stirrups assist with the closing procedure.

way, TrailManor has effectively provided users with a way to enjoy the most positive aspect of tent-trailer camping — without the cloth walls.

The living space is spartan but homey. The front sofabed is comfortable enough for sitting or sleeping and serves double-duty as the dinette. Folding tables deploy from either wall and feature extensions that join both tables for three-across dining (four, if you're small). There is some cabinet space above the sofa, and the three windows around the front of the trailer lend a cheery feel (the front window is a \$455 option).

Clever as TrailManor's designers may be, they can't make everything collapsible, so the street-side refrigerator is a waist-high 3-cubic-foot model, on top of which is a small counter and two-burner stove with a glass top. The side of this cabinet houses the monitor panel and 120-volt AC/cable outlets, but there is no TV or obvious place to mount one — you'll have to get creative here.

On the opposite side is a roomy storage cabinet with plenty of counter space and a stainless-steel sink with a folding faucet and glass cover. The low counter height takes some getting used to while preparing meals and such, but those who appreciate the versatile nature of a trailer like this one shouldn't be bothered by this.

The 2417KS is also equipped with a wet bath and shower, located on the street-side center of the trailer, which takes just a few minutes to erect during the setup process. The wall panels are lifted up and latched into place, and the rest of the trailer is shielded from water spritzes by the shower curtain. The area works well enough for its intended purpose, but just keep in mind that the gray-water capacity is only 13.5 gallons, and the toilet is a 6-gallon cassette — so use the facilities wisely.

All the way at the back of the unit is a king-size bed surrounded by windows; it's a great place to take an afternoon snooze. The bed was firm but comfortable, and there's more than enough room here for two — in fact, you could probably sleep two adults and a couple of kids here, if you needed the room.

During our stay in the TrailManor,



SPECIFICATIONS

2014 TOYOTA HIGHLANDER LIMITED

Fuel Economy, solo	25.8 mpg
Towing	17.7 mpg
0–60 mph, towing	16.5 sec.
40–60 mph, towing	7 sec.
Engine	3.5-L V-6
Horsepower	270 @ 6,200 rpm
Torque	248 lb.-ft. @ 4,700 rpm
Transmission	6-speed automatic
Axle Ratio	4.15:1
Fuel Cap.	19.2 gal.
Tires	P245/55R19
Suspension, Front	Independent, MacPherson strut
Suspension, Rear	Trailing arm, double wishbone
Brakes	Four-wheel disc with ABS
Tow Rating	5,000 lbs.
GVWR	6,000 lbs.
GCWR	9,780 lbs.
Weight, as tested	4,560 lbs.
Length	15' 11"
Wheelbase	109.8"
MSRP, base	\$40,500
MSRP, as tested	\$42,990
Basic Warranty	3 years/36,000 miles

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www.toyota.com
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TRAILMANOR 2417KS SPORT

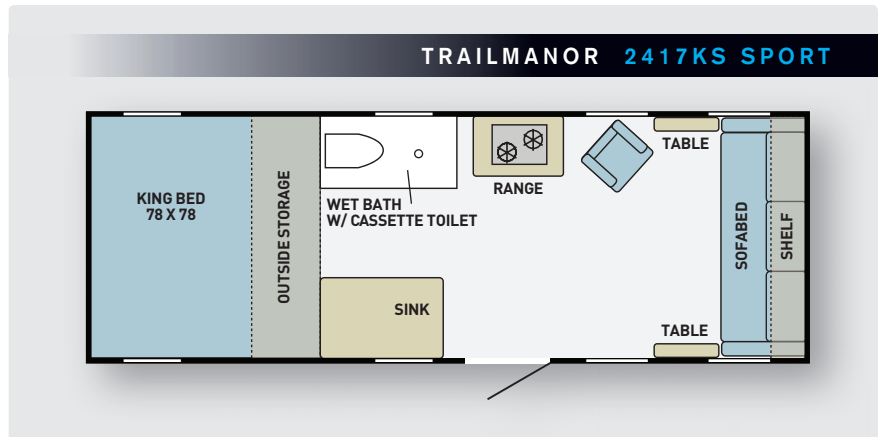
Exterior Length	17' 9" (closed) 21' 6" (open)
Exterior Width	7' 1"
Exterior Height	5' 7.5" (closed) 8' 5.5" (open, without A/C unit)
Interior Width	7' 1"
Interior Height	6' 4"
Construction	2"x5" steel frame, aluminum walls with polystyrene insulation; 3" laminated floor, metal underbelly, vacuum-bonded aluminum roof
Freshwater Cap.	20 gal.
Gray-Water Cap.	13.5 gal.
Black-Water Cap.	6 gal. cassette
LP-Gas Cap.	10 gal.
Water-Heater Cap.	6 gal.
Refrigerator	3 cu.-ft.
Furnace	20,000 Btu
Air Conditioner	13,500 Btu
Converter	55 amp
Battery	Dealer supplied
Tires	ST 215/75R14
Suspension	Independent, rubber torsion axle
Weight (water and propane full, no supplies)	2,968 lbs.
Hitch Weight	450 lbs.
Axle Weight	2,518 lbs.
GVWR	4,041 lbs.
GAWR (1)	3,500 lbs.
Cargo Carrying Cap.	1,073 lbs.
MSRP, base	\$26,831
MSRP, as tested	\$30,730
Basic Warranty	1-year comprehensive/ 2-year structural

TrailManor Manufacturing Company
402-316-7288, www.trailmanor.com
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the climate was very mild, so we felt quite comfortable without using the optional air conditioner (\$1,231) or furnace, day or evening.

Underneath the bed, accessed from the rear of the trailer, is the unit's lone storage compartment. It is adequately sized for weekend getaways but can't be accessed once the trailer is closed for travel, so make sure to pack the items you really need in the tow vehicle. The storage compartment also houses the freshwater tank, which could cause handling issues in some travel trailers. The TrailManor is designed with its axle located under the rear third of the chassis, so handling was a nonissue, whether the tank was full or empty.

On the TrailManor website, it reads, "It only takes about one extra gallon of gas to tow a TrailManor 100 miles." Well, not exactly — but close. By our calculations, it took roughly a gallon and a half extra gas in the test Toyota Highlander to travel 100 miles, which is still very good. And, though we could



feel the added weight behind us, the TrailManor tracked easily and seemed unaffected by side winds or the bow wave of passing trucks — another advantage of the trailer's low profile.

At the scales, the TrailManor 2417KS Sport — with its optional manual awning (\$1,397), TV antenna (\$231) and alloy wheels with spare (\$284) — weighed in at 2,968 pounds, full of water and propane, and had a GVWR of

4,041 pounds, which made it a perfect companion to the Highlander with a tow rating of 5,000 pounds.

Completely redesigned for this year, this third-generation Highlander is 3 inches longer and ½ inch wider than its predecessor and offers three-row seating. Inside, the changes are abundant and sweeping. The flowing dash layout features easily discernable instruments, between which is Toyota's



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(From left) The 2014 Highlander Limited's 60/40 third row folds to provide 42 cubic feet of space; the second row folds as well. The Highlander's dash layout is clean and legible, with well-placed, intuitive controls.

Multi-Information Display.

The second row can be had with bench seating for three passengers or captain's chairs with a collapsible cup-holder tray. Access to the rear row has been made easier with the addition of a one-step second-row sliding seat function on both driver and passenger sides that provides nearly 3 more inches of space. This row is also 3.7 inches wider than in the previous generation Highlander, but we still found the space to be very tight. Toyota claims the Highlander has seating for up to eight, but we'd say that three of them should be preteens if you want everyone on board. That, or make it a short trip to avoid grumbling third-row passengers.

The Highlander is offered in LE, LE Plus, XLE and Limited grades, all of which come well-equipped with few options in an effort to make ordering easier. In fact, both the LE and LE Plus grades are "mono-spec," meaning no options are available.

For the test, Toyota provided us with a Highlander Limited 2WD, which includes niceties such as perforated leather-trimmed seats (heated and ventilated up front), memory settings for the driver's seat and side mirrors, a four-way power passenger seat and Entune Premium JBL Audio with Navigation and App Suite. At this trim level, you can choose from either the Driver Technology Package (Safety Connect, Pre-Collision System with Dynamic Radar Cruise Control, Lane Departure Alert and automatic high-beam headlights) or the Platinum Package, which includes the former plus the Panoramic Moonroof, a heated steering wheel and heated second-row captain's chairs, all of which our test unit was equipped with. The only available standalone option is a rear-seat Blu-ray DVD entertainment system.

Non-hybrid Highlander models continue on with the same engine choices as last year, namely a 185-horsepower

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2.7-liter four-cylinder or a 270-horsepower 3.5-liter V-6. Both engines are paired with a new six-speed electronically controlled transmission with a manual sequential shifting feature, which can come in handy when towing. The Limited tester came with the V-6, and frankly, we can't see why anyone would choose the four-cylinder, its 1,500-pound tow rating notwithstanding. It comes with an almost 100-horsepower deficit and gets only 1-MPG better fuel economy in EPA city and combined ratings.

If you don't consider yourself an SUV person, you might be surprised, even delighted, by the Highlander. The cabin environment, particularly when equipped with the Panoramic Moonroof, is roomy, light and airy; the seats are comfortable, and the visibility is excellent. There's no shortage of power from the engine, whether towing or solo, yet it runs like a Swiss watch at idle. Credit the additional sound insulation, acoustic-type windshield glass and hydraulic engine mounts for the significant improvement in noise, vibration and harshness (NVH).

Large SUVs aren't usually known for exceptional ride or handling, but the Highlander surprises here, too. The ride quality is compliant without being overly squishy, and during hard cornering, the chassis remains composed and predictable, without excessive body lean or tire howl.

Towing the TrailManor was no problem for the Highlander Limited, which comes standard with a heavy-duty radiator with engine oil cooler, 200-watt fan coupling, supplemental transmission oil cooler and 150-amp alternator. It also comes with a hitch receiver and the appropriate electrical connections but, oddly, no towing mirrors. So, while towing, we used hideous aftermarket strap-on mirrors that were removed for photography. Hopefully, you can find better towing mirrors.

If you have a small family and are looking for an RVing alternative that is practical yet doesn't sacrifice creature comforts, the TrailManor 2417 Sport and Toyota Highlander Limited are a good combination that fits in your garage. 🚐



Hopkins inSight Flex-Mount Brake Control

Pickups with a factory-installed brake controller are a growing — and welcome — trend, but we're not aware of any SUVs that come with one, so it was necessary to install an aftermarket brake controller in the Highlander prior to towing the TrailManor.

One of the newest brake controllers on the market is the inSight Flex-Mount Brake Control from Hopkins Towing Solutions. This product is different from other brake controllers you've likely seen in the past, as the major components — the readout (Flex-Display), manual actuator (Flex-Control) and main unit (Smart Box) are separate for optimal mounting, hence "Flex-Mount."

Since trailer brake controllers normally incorporate all components in one unit, some might view the inSight as a complex solution to a nonexistent problem, but there are some tangible benefits to its design. It allows you to put the readout where it's easiest to see and the manual brake actuator where it's easiest to reach.

In the Highlander, we decided to mount the readout on the top of the steering column so it could be viewed easily through the steering wheel, and the Flex-Control on the left side of the steering column so it was within arm's reach.

The instructions clearly state that the Smart Box must be mounted in a specific position on either a kick panel or the center console. This was our least favorite part of the inSight's design, as it put the Smart Box uncomfortably close to the emergency brake pedal's travel. And frankly, having a black box and wiring stuck to the kick panel is ugly — we would prefer it if Hopkins' engineers could devise a way to mount the unit elsewhere (such as under or in the dash), if desired.

That said, mounting was easy. All three components are secured with two-sided tape, and the wires from the Flex-Display and Flex-Control are routed down to the Smart Box. To connect the Smart Box to the vehicle's electronics, Hopkins offers its Plug-In Simple connectors for Dodge, Ford, GM, Ram, Toyota and Nissan trucks. However, they don't make one for the Highlander, so the Smart Box had to be hardwired in place, which took extra time. In total, we invested about two hours between finding a suitable location for all components, and routing and connecting the wiring cleanly.

The inSight system offers seven sensitivity settings and control for up to eight trailer brakes. To adjust braking power, press the plus/minus buttons on the Flex-Control; the level of power is digitally displayed as a percentage from 5 to 99 in 5 percent increments (except for the final 4 percent). Sensitivity is adjusted by pressing the button labeled "S" on the Flex-Control.

Hopkins claims that the inSight system uses advanced proportional technology that mirrors the braking action of the vehicle for safe, smooth stops. Out on the road, we found this to be true. Once the unit was properly adjusted, the Highlander and the TrailManor braked confidently as one unit.

While most of us take a set-it-and-forget-it approach to brake controllers, the inSight will likely offer some RVers increased towing confidence and could really come in handy if you tow more than one trailer. The inSight Flex-Mount Brake Control is available for less than \$100 at Camping World and other RV-accessory outlets.



Hopkins Towing Solutions, 800-835-0129, www.hopkinstowingsolutions.com

WALK-THROUGH: KEYSTONE AVALANCHE 360RB

Room to Spread Out

The Avalanche 360RB is loaded with family-friendly features, and Keystone has made simplified towing a big consideration



The Avalanche 360RB bunkhouse is not only loaded with family-friendly features, Keystone has made simplified towing a big consideration. For easier hitching and smoother towing, the fifth-wheel is outfitted with a TrailAir pin box. For improved driver visibility when hitching, the fiberglass front cap is equipped with a Hitch Assist backup mirror. With its tight turning radius and aerodynamic lines, the Avalanche is compatible with short-bed trucks.

Construction starts with 10-inch powder-coated steel I-beams, providing a solid platform and great firm feel, sitting on 16-inch E-rated radial tires mounted on aluminum rims and EZ Flex suspension. The body is formed with a floor wrap, wood backing, aluminum structure, high-density block foam, and thermal and

Astro-Foil insulation. According to Keystone, all this adds up to a healthy R-32 rating. The ability to ward off cold is supported by a wall insulation factor of R-10, topped by a roof factor of R-28 — claimed to be livable down to 0 degrees Fahrenheit — making this fifth-wheel suitable for four-season travel.

The 360RB has a 2,775-pound carrying capacity and is equipped with a 66-gallon freshwater tank and 85-gallon black and gray tanks. Keystone really took storage into consideration with a huge 145-cubic-foot exterior compartment, which the company claims is among the largest in the industry. Gas struts backed by slam-latch doors make it easier to add and retrieve belongings from the outside storage.

Open space and a roomy layout

take center stage when entering the rig for the first time. The decor contrasts nicely, with dark woods and light fabrics, including faux leather couches. The sofa can seat three and sleep two comfortably, but it won't keep adult guests staying over for too long. A freestanding dinette complements the overall decor, adding a touch of light earth tones.

Standing in the fifth-wheel's café-like kitchen, partially within the scaled down but functional slideout, is a three-burner stove, a microwave, a small window and an LP-gas/120-volt AC refrigerator with matching wood cabinet inserts. Adjacent to the refrigerator is the ideally placed stove, and behind it stands an island counter that's fitted with a double stainless-steel sink and a tall, curved designer faucet. A convenient and



The Keystone Avalanche features handsome exterior graphics, abundant basement storage and a fiberglass front cap with a Hitch Assist backup mirror.

subtle backsplash is just behind the range.

An attractive entertainment center adds the finishing touches. Here, users can view a 32-inch flat-screen TV with mobile syncing abilities and listen to a rocking stereo combined with indoor/outdoor speakers. There's also a centrally located ceiling fan.

Conceivably, one could think the galley and living area ends the floorplan. But a door next to the dining table leads to a bunkhouse with sleeping arrangements that handle four people, presumably youngsters. Opposing bunk beds — with platforms that fold down to make two of the beds — add sleeping capacity for big families. The area also isolates the kids from the rest of the fifth-wheel. On the streetside is a couch arrangement by day, and across the way the second bunk area can be converted into a booth dinette. Another entertainment center fills the rear wall.

A huge element of convenience is the half bath with a commode and sink that's accessible from the rear bunkhouse. Access to this bath is also via an exterior door to the patio — great for wet bathing suits and late nights by the campfire.

On the way to the front bedroom is a flush-wall cabi-



(Top right) The 360RB's island kitchen has plenty of prep space. The main entertainment center can be viewed from the freestanding dinette, the sofa sleeper and the kitchen. (Right) The rear bunkhouse sleeps four and has its own private dinette, entertainment center and access to a convenient half bath with an exterior door.



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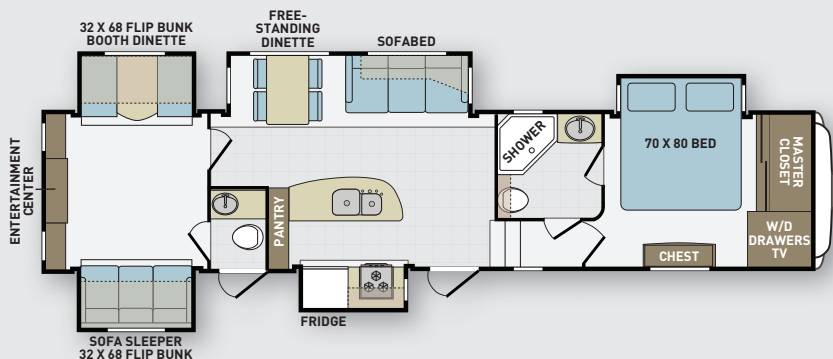
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net that is home to controls for the awning, lights and slideouts. Up the stairs is the master bedroom with a king bed that fills the slideout. A large cedar-lined closet provides ample and convenient storage space, with mirrors inlaid on the sliding doors. Attached to the closet is additional real estate for a washer and dryer, drawers and a spot for the TV connections. There's another smaller, stylish entertainment chest in the master bedroom that's capable of holding a 32-inch TV.

The full bathroom is accessible from the master bedroom or the hallway. Featured in this room is a porcelain toilet and an extra-large neo-angle shower — not one of those elbow-bumping tiny compartments.

To some, this fifth-wheel may seem like a beast. But if kids are in your traveling life and the adults want some isolation and quiet time, the bunkhouse in the Avalanche 360RB handles the requirements nicely. 🚐



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Sweet Dream

There's no reason to deal with a cheap or worn-out mattress. With the variety of shapes, sizes and designs, you can

Travel trailers and fifth-wheels come in a variety of sizes and offer a vast array of options, depending on size and cost, but one thing they all have in common is a mattress. In our homes, the right mattress is considered extremely important for a good night's sleep, but for some reason many of us deal with cheap mattresses in our RVs for as long as we own them. Perhaps it's because we don't sleep on these beds as often as the ones in our homes, or it might be that we've never even considered that other options are available.

If you've been looking disdainfully at the mattress in your RV for too long now, we've got good news for you: There are countless mattress sizes, designs and configurations available for RV use — in fact, it's safe to say that if you have it in your house, you can probably get something similar in your house on wheels.



The TheraGel memory-foam mattress features a 3-inch top layer infused with TheraGel micro beads on a 7-inch base layer of high-density foam. Temperature-sensitive TheraGel is designed to adjust to body temperature, improve circulation and reduce pressure points. The polyester microfiber cover wicks moisture away for a cooler night's sleep.

Mattress Sizes

As you've probably already discovered, the mattress in your trailer or fifth-wheel isn't necessarily the same as the one in your home, even if they are in the same size category. That's because there are more size and configuration restrictions in an RV bedroom, so various RV mattress sizes have been created to make the best use of the space available. For example, the most common queen-size bed is an RV short queen, which typically measures 60 x 75 inches, versus a residential queen, which is 60 x 80 inches.

According to mattressinsider.com, a Denver, Colorado, company that specializes in RV mattress replacements, the most typical RV mattress sizes are short queen (usually 60 x 75 but sometimes 60 x 74 inches), RV queen (60 x 80 inches), three-quarter (48 x 75 inches), RV full (53 x 75 inches), RV short king (72 x 75 inches) and RV king (72 x 80 inches). Several varieties of twin and bunk sizes are also commonly used.

Obviously, the first step to purchasing a replacement mattress is to figure out what size your RV already has, but this isn't as elementary as it seems. "Most people will measure the mattress," says Jonathan Prichard, founder and CEO of mattressinsider.com. "However, the most accurate method is to measure the dimensions of the surface the mattress rests on (usually plywood)."

ams

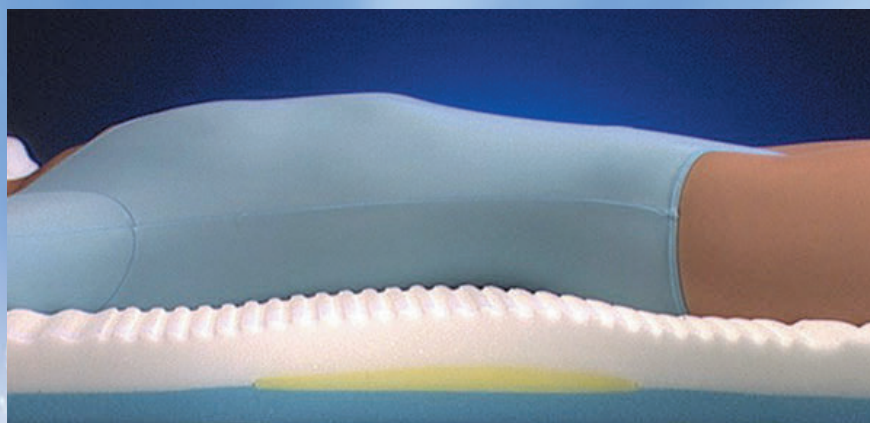
RV mattress. pick up more zzzs

This is more accurate for two reasons, according to Prichard. "The first is that your RV mattress may not be the same size as it was when the RV was built. This can be due to temperature variations during off-season storage or long-term exposure to UV light. The other reason is that tolerances vary on RV mattresses. "If you take 10 of them out of stock, you'll find a slight variation in size," says Prichard, "so if you measure the mattress instead of the surface it's on, you may be led to believe that you need a custom size, even if you don't."

Mattress Types

Where it used to be common to choose between a foam or an innerspring mattress, there are now several varieties to choose from, and that doesn't include the number of hybrid mattresses in the residential market that may incorporate two or more mattress technologies (i.e., air and memory foam). With that said, the most common mattress types are polyurethane foam, memory foam, latex, inner-spring and air.

A polyurethane foam mattress is a good choice if you're on a budget or you don't use your RV more than the typical two to three weeks a year. Standard foam RV mattresses are usually constructed of one type of foam, are approximately 5 to 6 inches thick, and generally cost between \$150 and



An alternative to buying a new mattress is purchasing one of the many mattress toppers on the market like this Contour Cloud Pad available through Camping World and other outlets. This pad features a top layer of plush memory foam that is designed to mold and fit your body, helping to relieve stress and pressure. The yellow insert adds lumbar support for your waist, lower back and hips to support your spine in its natural position.

\$350 depending on the size. "When shopping for a one-layer foam mattress, the most important thing to consider is the density of the foam," says Prichard. "The 1.8- to 2-pound densities tend to be more durable and can withstand more body weight."

Going to a lighter density (1.2 to 1.5 pounds) might save you some money, but it will be at the cost of quicker breakdown, which can result in sagging and depressions in the mattress. "Another thing to consider is if the foam is 100 percent petroleum-based or not," says Prichard. "Some suppliers offer mattresses that use soybean plant-based foams, which are more eco-friendly and temperature-neutral."

Memory-foam mattresses are a good choice if you're a full-timer or just want a comfortable, supportive mattress with a medium to plush feel.

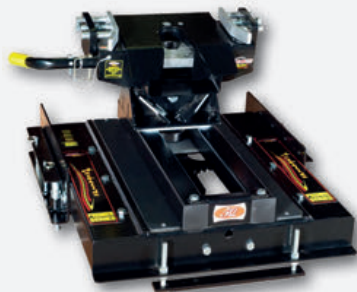
These are typically around 5 to 8 inches thick and, as with standard foam, density is an important consideration. According to Prichard, memory-foam densities for RV mattresses typically range between 2.5 and 5.3 pounds, but unlike standard polyurethane foam mattresses, more isn't necessarily a good thing.

"We've found that memory foam in the 3- to 4-pound range provides excellent pressure-point relief, conformability and breathability," he says. "Higher-density forms also provide excellent pressure-point relief. However, they tend to trap heat, which causes you to sweat. On the other hand, foam less than 3 pounds is usually not as durable, so it quickly loses its elasticity."

The so-called gel beds are another type of memory foam that is infused with a gel formula or gel beads. "Gel



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Gel memory foam mattresses may incorporate a gel formula, or gel beads like this one offered by mattressinsider.com.

sleeps about 1 to 2 degrees cooler than traditional memory foam, but it's really only a benefit if it's used in the top layer of the bed or directly underneath the quilting, next to your body," says Prichard. If you want a memory-foam or gel bed that sleeps cooler, he recommends selecting a mattress with open-cell foam as opposed to closed-cell, and that you consider the fabric on the outside of the bed as well.

Mattressinsider.com prefers a fabric called Coolmax, which is designed to help wick away moisture and regulate temperature.

When choosing a bed containing foam, Prichard recommends that the foam is made in the United States, where it is regulated, and that it has been independently tested and certified by CertiPUR-US (www.certiPUR.us), which assures that the foam contains

no harmful chemicals.

Yet another type of foam mattress is latex. "Latex is a good choice if you want something more natural," says Prichard. "Latex comes from rubber trees, and it has a very buoyant, springy feel to it. It tends to be more durable, but it is also very expensive." The latex beds offered by mattressinsider.com feature a layer of Talalay latex foam on top and a 1.8-pound high-density base foam underneath.

Innerspring mattresses are likely what you grew up sleeping on and therefore are probably the most familiar to you. Like the other bed types featured here, there are many to choose from, but the basic design breaks down to just two: the simpler Bonnell innerspring mattress, which uses a structure of interconnected coils, and the more expensive pocketed

(Below left) The fabric on the outside of a memory-foam bed can make a difference in how hot or cool it sleeps. Coolmax fabric helps wick away perspiration and regulates temperature; it is offered by a number of mattress companies. (Below right) The 6.5-inch Odyssey cushion from Mobile Sleep Components features a plush quilted top that also breathes.



coil bed, which uses individual coils.

"Pocketed coils move independently from each other, so they don't transfer movement as much," says Prichard. "A lot of companies quote a high coil count with these beds, but what you get are a lot of small coils that break down more quickly. So to me, the gauge of the coil is more important than the count."

Prichard typically recommends innerspring mattresses over foam when a customer or their sleeping partner weighs more than 250 pounds, as the springs offer more support and better durability. However, he warns that innerspring beds can be very heavy, so if your RV has weight limitations or under-platform storage that requires frequent lifting of the bed, an innerspring mattress may not be the best choice.

If you and your partner prefer different levels of firmness, then an adjustable air bed may be your best option. These beds are lightweight, can be adjusted on the fly and are available in RV mattress sizes. However, the available sizes of RV mattresses are somewhat limited, they tend to be more expensive than standard mattresses and Prichard says some caution should be exercised when using them in a mobile environment. "Most don't have a pressure-relief valve, so if you travel to and from high altitudes, be sure that the mattress isn't fully inflated, or

the pressure differential could cause damage to the air chambers and pump."

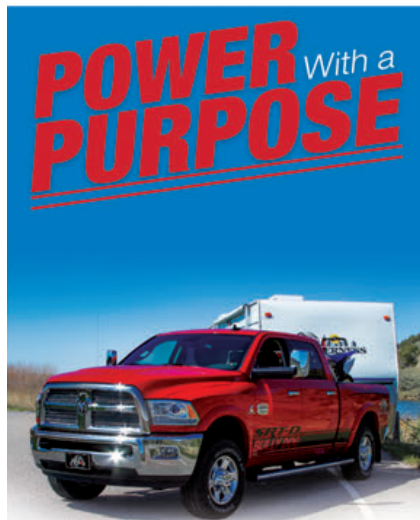
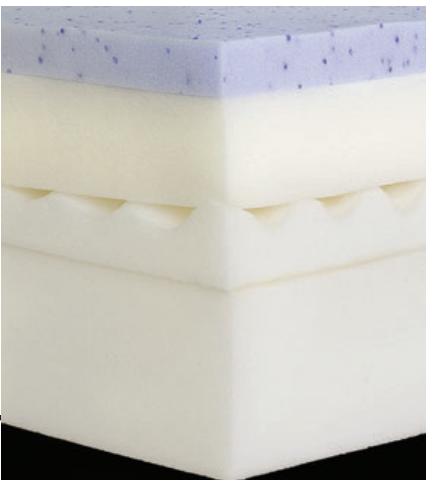
How to Choose the Right Mattress

By Prichard's own estimation, 75 percent of the RV market uses a short-queen bed, which presents problems when shopping. "I would say 95 percent of the replacement RV mattresses on the market are not in brick-and-mortar stores, so the consumer has to find a mattress on the Internet. They're essentially buying blind," he says, "so it's important to choose a company that has a return policy or guarantee of some kind, so they don't get stuck with a mattress they don't like."

The simple solution would seem to be a visit to a residential mattress retailer, find what suits you, then order it in an RV mattress size online — but it's not that easy. In a fiercely competitive market, mattress manufacturers are often unwilling to share product specifications for fear that their designs will be copied. "Only if you can find a mattress company that will give you all of its specs can you compare apples to apples," says Prichard. In other words, just because you liked a memory-foam mattress in the store doesn't mean you'll like an RV-equivalent you bought online.

The best solution here is to think about the attributes you want in an RV

Foam mattresses can vary greatly in their comfort and breathability levels depending on how they are constructed. These 5.5-inch Coolmax Elation and 8-inch Coolmax Gel Foam RV mattresses from mattressinsider.com are double-sided (the base side is firm; the gel side is softer). The 8-inch features 1 inch of Cool Gel 4-pound memory foam, 2 inches of 3-pound open-cell temperature-neutral viscoelastic memory foam, 1.5 inches of 1.8-pound density airflow foam (for breathability) and 3.5 inches of heavy-duty, 1.8-pound open-cell, high-density foam. Both mattresses feature a smooth top, Coolmax zippered cover that is removable.



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Sweet Dreams



A replacement mattress may be heavier than the model supplied by the RV manufacturer, which can make accessing under-bed storage a challenge. The Bedlift kit from Hatchlift makes access to under-bed storage easy with strong hydraulic struts that support the mattress platform safely. Each kit includes all hardware and gas springs for installation on both sides of the bed platform.

bed, which will help you nail down what you're looking for. Some key things to consider, says Prichard, are whether you tend to sleep on your back, side or stomach; how much weight the mattress must support (above or below average); whether you tend to sleep hot or cold and how long you need the mattress to last. Then you can get some recommendations from online retailers before making your purchase.

If your RV has a full-size queen or other residential-size mattress, you have the freedom to shop at any mattress retailer. "Focus on comfort, support and durability," advises Prichard. "You can find the best bed there is, but if it's not comfortable to you, it doesn't matter."

Custom Mattresses

As you've likely noticed, not all RV beds are rectangular; some have rounded or cut corners to allow for walk-around space, for example. If you're looking for a replacement mattress for one of these applications or need something custom, mattressinsider.com can build a custom foam or innerspring mattress in almost any size or shape. "We can do cut or radius corners, bevel edges and handle odd rectangular dimensions," says Prichard. "We can also customize the arrangement of layers and densities to fit the customer's exact needs."

Your RV is your home on wheels, so you owe it to yourself to have a mattress that makes life on the road as comfortable as possible. 🚐

For More Information

Amazon, www.amazon.com

Camping World, (Avena Foam, Comfortaire, Comfort Choice, Select Comfort, TheraGel) 888-626-7576, www.campingworld.com

Denver Mattress Company, 866-372-4642, www.denvermattress.furnitureerow.com

Dometic USA, 800-544-4881, www.dometicus.com

Dynasty Mattress, 800-208-2713, www.dynastymattress.ecrater.com

Mattressinsider.com, 888-425-5058, www.mattressinsider.com

Rocky Mountain Mattress, 866-733-3132, www.rockymountainmattress.com

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GALLEY GEAR

Twenty-five kitchen gadgets that make cooking away from home easy and fun

The organizational tendencies of RVers are pretty high. They have to be. While it might seem like there's plenty of storage space when you start to fill up a new rig, it doesn't take long for the tough decisions to surface. Do you really need a full-size outdoor grill? What about the Crock-Pot — how many times will you use that on a given trip? After filling the galley drawers with knives, spatulas, corkscrews and more, it becomes clear that a better plan must be initiated to save space.

Some RVers simply grab what they think they need from the home kitchen and spill it into the available drawers, while others outfit the galley with new tools dedicated to mobile life. Regardless of which category you fall into, it makes sense to put some thought into what utensils you

bring, to save time and have a better experience.

Planning what to pack and making everything fit is part of the fun of RVing, but it seems like no matter how much storage space your rig has, there's never enough. When it comes to galley tools, the savvy RVer has to be careful and creative. If you can find tools that can do double duty, are easy to store through their intelligent design or make it easier to work in an RV's limited kitchen space, then you've accomplished something important.

With an eye toward the special needs of RV living, we've surveyed some practical, innovative and fun kitchen utensils from top companies and lesser-known specialty toolmakers. On the next few pages, we present the best of the best for your consideration.



1. No-Mess Whisk

This universal mixer from Mastrad is excellent for making sauces, whipped cream and beaten egg whites. Just remove the lid and pour in the ingredients. The handles create a pulling-and-pushing motion that allows the core to spin for perfect mixing. \$19.99.

Mastrad, 800-358-0608
www.shopmastrad.com



2. Collapsible Grater

The Fold-Flat Grater from Joseph Joseph provides four practical blade styles — coarse, fine, ribbon and slice — in one compact product. Easily stored in a drawer, the folding grater has a protective sheath and lockable catch for safety. \$35.

Joseph Joseph, 917-338-0905
www.josephjoseph.com



3. Chop and Serve

The Herb and Veggie Chopper from Progressive makes homemade salsa a cinch. Pile in onions, tomatoes, cilantro and spices (avocado when in season) and give it a few quick pulls. Remove the center blade, and the bowl turns into a serving dish. \$17.99.

Progressive International, 253-850-6111, www.progressiveintl.com



4. Lid Props

Tovolo's handy Lid Lifters keep lids open slightly for air circulation and to prevent pots from boiling over. Designed to fit on the rim of most pots and pans, the whimsical silicone gadgets are shaped like farm animals and smiley faces to add some fun to your RV galley. \$7.50 for set of three.

Tovolo, 206-633-6066, www.tovolo.com



5. Wine Chiller

You don't have to store wine bottles in the limited space of your RV's fridge anymore. Now you can have chilled wine whenever you want it. Just cool the Chill spout from Host in the freezer, then place it in an uncorked bottle and pour — when you're safely at camp, of course! \$18.99.

Host Studios, 877-541-4678, www.hoststudios.com



6. Microwave Omelets

Five minutes is all it takes to prepare a perfect, hassle-free omelet in your RV with the Omelet Cooker from Lékué. Made of BPA-free nonstick platinum silicone, the folding microwave omelet maker is easy to clean, easy to store and comes with a 10-year warranty. \$20.

Lékué USA, 302-326-4805, www.lekueusa.com



7. Stacking Veggie Tubs

Keep leftover garlic, lemons, onions, tomatoes and other vegetables fresh longer with Mastrad's colorful Veggie Savers. The stackable set of four bowls comes with an equal number of smartly designed lids to fit the shapes of fruits and vegetables and to help keep your fridge odor-free. \$15.99.

Mastrad, 800-358-0608, www.shopmastrad.com



8. Three-in-One Tool

The Bartender's Garnishing Tool from Microplane makes fast work of grating and zesting lemons, limes, oranges and other citrus fruit for happy-hour cocktails under your RV's awning. Measuring a compact 5½ inches, the versatile tool comes with a handy bottle opener on one end and a hole on the other for making garnish curls. \$19.95.

Microplane, 800-555-2767, www.microplane.com



9. Folding Trivet

This space-saving, heat-resistant trivet from Mastrad protects your RV's table and counter-tops, and collapses into a small and easy-to-store hexagon. Unfolded, the silicone trivet can handle the hottest pans. \$5.

Mastrad, 800-358-0608, www.shopmastrad.com

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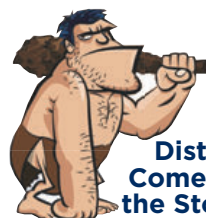
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10. Quick Can Opener

Tired of opening cans by hand? The EasiCan electric can opener from Zyliss does the job in seconds with one touch. Just place the battery-operated EasiCan on top of the can and push the start button. Because it opens from the side and not the top, there are no razor-sharp edges. \$19.99.

Zyliss, 888-794-7623, www.zyliss.com



11. Grate and Slice Kit

Oxo's compact Good Grips set of grating and slicing tools features coarse and medium grating surfaces as well as straight and julienne slicing surfaces. Each surface can be positioned over bowls or plates for quick jobs or placed on top of the lid, which doubles as a container for collecting and measuring food. \$29.99.

Oxo, 800-545-4411, www.oxo.com



12. Two-Way Sharpener

The handy Dual knife sharpener — for both serrated and straight blades — is smaller than most sharpeners used at home and stores neatly inside the handle. The handle itself is ergonomically designed for a firm grip. When closed, the sharpener measures 4½ x 2 x 2 inches. \$20.

Kuhn Rikon, 415-883-1101, www.kuhnrikon.com



13. Magnetic Spice Rack

Compact but highly practical, these magnetized spice jars from Mastrad stay put on the accompanying rack. Clear acrylic tops allow you to see what's inside, and the six stainless-steel jars stick to the rack no matter how rough the road. Side openings allow for either pouring or sprinkling. \$30.

Mastrad, 800-358-0608, www.shopmastrad.com



14. Personal Cake Cups

Lékué's silicone dessert cups let you use your microwave to bake individual cakes and serve them in the same containers. Minimal cleanup is an added benefit. The four 8-ounce nonstick cups come in pink, orange, green and clear for a festive dessert tray. \$15 for set of four.

Lékué USA, 302-326-4805, www.lekueusa.com



15. Singular Measuring Spoon

The elegant Solo measuring spoon from Epicurean is a new take on traditional spoon sets. Made of solid wood fiber, the sleek all-in-one tool has grooves on all sides that hold commonly used cooking measurements — tablespoon, teaspoon, ½ teaspoon, ¼ teaspoon. \$29.99.

Epicurean, 866-678-3500, www.epicureancs.com



16. Digital Thermometer

Good cooks know that temperature is the key to excellent food, particularly when it comes to meat and poultry. The CDN ProAccurate waterproof thermometer reads in just six seconds and has a wide range from -40 to 450 degrees Fahrenheit. \$15.

Component Design Northwest, 800-338-5594
www.cdn-timeandtemp.com



17. Eggs in a Pouch

Got a hankering for poached eggs? The Perfect Poach kit from Tovolo helps you poach impeccable eggs in five easy steps, using no butter or oil. Just simmer some water and immerse an egg in one of the 20 nonstick pouches. Afterward, toss the biodegradable pouch in the trash. \$5 for pack of 20.

Tovolo, 206-633-6066, www.tovolo.com



18. Spoon Rest

No place to put that spoon while cooking a sauce? The Pot Clip from Trudeau attaches directly to the edge of a saucepan or stockpot to hold utensils so they drip into the pot. No more stovetop messes. The silicone and stainless-steel Pot Clip is heat-resistant and dishwasher safe. \$9.49.

Trudeau, 800-878-3328, www.shoptrudeau.com



19. Twofold Tongs

Trying to save space? Tong Tools from Kuhn Rikon combine a fork and a braising spoon (shown), or a fork and a turner to make preparing and serving food easy. Each item can be used individually, or they can be hooked together in pairs to serve as efficient tongs. You can even use the fork as a whisk. \$14.

Kuhn Rikon, 415-883-1101, www.kuhnrikon.com



20. Sack Time

The Orka vegetable sack keeps just about any kind of veggie handy and protected from sunlight for a longer shelf life. Simply hang the sack on the back of a door, on a wall or in the pantry. Double drawstrings make it easy to add vegetables at the top of the sack and remove from the bottom. \$8.95 to \$11.95.

Mastrad, 855-880-5707, www.shopmastrad.com



21. Spill Stopper

Ever boil pasta and have the water bubble over? Of course you have, and it's aggravating. The Kochblume spill stopper has a central vent and six petals that release steam and prevent starchy liquids from boiling over. It also works as a microwave steamer and a splatter guard. \$25 to \$30.

Kuhn Rikon, 415-883-1101, www.kuhnrikon.com

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22. Paper Bakeware

Whether metal or glass, baking pans take up a lot of space. The solution? Disposable paper bakeware from Welcome Home Brands. They're oven- and freezer-safe, making it easy to bake, serve and store with no messy cleanup. No need to grease the pan either. Available in multiple styles, shapes and sizes. \$24.99 for 40-piece set. **Welcome Home Brands** 914-696-0010, www.welcomehomebrands.com



23. Measuring Beakers

Measuring liquid ingredients doesn't need to be a big mess with the Good Grips mini measuring set from Oxo. Four small beakers measure and pour amounts from 1 teaspoon to 2 ounces, and they stack inside one another for compact storage. Each beaker stands on its own, making it easy to set out ingredients before you start cooking or baking. \$9.99. **Oxo**, 800-545-4411 www.oxo.com



24. Bowls and Colanders

Rinsing berries for a snack? Making pasta for dinner? The nine-piece bowl and colander set from Oxo has just about everything you need. The set nests together, of course, but the convenience goes beyond that. Elevated rings help position the colanders over the sink drain, and nonskid bowl bottoms add stability while mixing. Three lids included. \$18 to \$24. **Oxo**, 800-545-4411 www.oxo.com



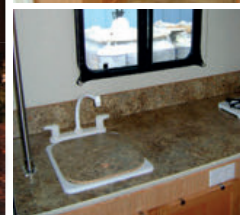
25. Easy-Bake Mat

Turn any table or counter into a nonstick baking workstation with the silicone-coated Roul'Pat mat from Sasa Demarle. It's handy for rolling and kneading any kind of dough without sticking or using extra flour. And it stays put with an innovative backside that prevents slipping. Easy to clean and store, the 24½ x 16½-inch mat simply rolls up when you're done. \$39.99. **Sasa Demarle**, 609-395-0219, www.silpat.com

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Vise Squad

Whether you're a hobbyist or just like making your own repairs, the Wilton ATV (All Terrain Vise) could be a handy addition to your tow rig. The ATV is a combination vise and sleeve that slides into a standard 2-inch receiver and is secured by the hitch pin. Two patented setscrews on the top and side tighten the ATV's fit inside the receiver to eliminate play and reduce vibration when driving. The 33-pound multiuse vise is constructed of powder-coated ductile iron rated to 60,000 PSI. The ATV's overall dimensions are 19¼ x 6 x 7¼ inches. The Wilton ATV (model 10010) includes the vise, hitch pin and cotter pin, as well as a bench-mount bracket, instructions and a parts manual.

MSRP: \$199.99

800-274-6848, www.wiltontools.com

Circle 162 on Reader Service Card



Silver Bullet

Want extra power and torque from the 5.3-liter V-8-equipped 2014 GM truck? The Silver Bullet throttle body spacer from aFe Power is designed to increase turbulence in the airflow just before it enters the engine, optimizing the combustion cycle. The concept of a spacer underneath the throttle body is certainly not new, but according to aFe, the turbulence created by the Silver Bullet's serrated helix design helps the air/fuel charge burn completely, resulting in a gain of 8 horsepower and up to 12 lb-ft of torque along with improved throttle response. Made from precision-machined 6061-T6 billet aluminum, the aFe Silver Bullet is 50-state legal.

MSRP: About \$118

888-901-7693, www.afepower.com

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TurboKooling

If you have a small trailer that doesn't justify the cost or added weight of a roof air-conditioning unit, TurboKool offers an evaporative cooling system (commonly called a swamp cooler) that runs on 12-volt DC power. According to the company, the TurboKool draws as little as 4.6 amps on the high setting, so it can be used when dry camping with adequate battery power. Along with cooling incoming air by 15 to 29 degrees, the company claims the product's "spin-spray" action washes out dust, pollen and impurities. Designed to fit all standard 14 x 14-inch RV roof vents, TurboKool can deliver up to 750 CFM of air.

MSRP: \$668

800-326-4410; www.turbokool.com

Circle 164 on Reader Service Card



A Bright Idea

Cabin Bright has introduced a line of LED lighting products designed to replace existing 12-volt DC fluorescent tubes without harming the fixture wiring. In addition to brighter light, LEDs have a lower current draw, and the company says the installation takes roughly five to 10 minutes using just a screwdriver and a pair of wire cutters. Cabin Bright offers products to fit 12- or 18-inch fixtures with double or single tubes, switched or not. The 12-inch fixtures come in four- and six-module versions, the latter of which can produce up to 50 percent more light than the existing fluorescent tubes, according to the company. The 18-inch products for single- and double-tube fixtures come in five-, eight- and 10-module versions and can provide up to 20 percent more light than existing tubes.

MSRP: \$32 to \$65 513-899-9152, www.cabinbright.com

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Aftermarket Air Intakes and Low-Restriction Filters

More power out of thin air. It's something we'd all like to have — right after a personal money tree. But it is possible to increase horsepower with aftermarket air intakes and filters.

To fully understand how this all works, first we need to look at some background information. Atmospheric air contains about 20 percent oxygen, which is the only part of what actually combines with fuel in an engine to allow combustion and produce power. Almost all of the rest of air is nitrogen, which basically just goes along for the ride through the engine and is essentially inert. Therefore, a lot of air must be pumped through an engine, especially at higher rpm, and any restriction can reduce this flow.

It's helpful to think of internal-combustion engines, like the ones in tow vehicles, as essentially air pumps that happen to burn fuel and air. Anything we can do to reduce restrictions to the flow can potentially allow the engine to produce more power — as long as the correct amount of fuel can also be delivered to the combustion chambers.

Internal combustion engines used in highway vehicles rely on atmospheric pressure to fill the cylinders with air. The exhaust strokes push the spent gases out through the exhaust, providing a low pressure (partial vacuum). This allows the incoming air to flow in, pushed by the relatively higher atmospheric pressure, when the intake valves open. Engines that don't have any type of additional pump pushing air in (either a turbocharger or supercharger) are called naturally aspirated. However,

even turbocharged and supercharged engines rely on atmospheric pressure to get air through the air filters and intake plumbing, so owners still need to pay attention to intake restrictions.

Air has the highest density at sea level (and a speck higher in those few places below sea level), and density decreases steadily in a linear fashion as we climb in elevation. Under standard conditions, sea level atmospheric pressure is generally agreed to be 29.92 inches of mercury (inHg) or 14.504 PSI. For you folks in Canada and other metric nations, it's 0.987 ATM. The rule of thumb is that about 3 percent of air density, and therefore power, is lost in a naturally aspirated engine (not turbocharged or supercharged), for every 1,000 feet higher we go. That means that at the top of Colorado's Eisenhower Tunnel on Interstate 70, a naturally aspirated engine would be down about 33 percent from its sea level power, and at the top of Pikes Peak it would be down about 45 percent. Turbocharged engines are usually able to maintain near sea level

power outputs up to about 10,000 feet.

Gasoline fuel injection adjusts the air-fuel mixture to correct for altitude changes, but carbureted engines don't. So these engines also lose some additional power due to non-optimum fuel mixtures (usually overly rich) when operated in higher elevations than where they were jetted for (usually sea level).

Another factor that affects engine power and performance is air temperature, which varies the number of air molecules in a given volume of air (air density). As temperature rises, the molecules get farther apart, or less dense, which reduces power output. Hot intake air also makes a gasoline engine more likely to ping (detonate), which can lead to damage if it's allowed to continue. In diesel engines, hot intake air reduces power and can increase combustion and turbine temperatures to dangerous levels.

To reduce these problems, it's best to pick up air in the coolest spots at the front of the vehicle with the most direct airflow. However, it's important not to draw in rainwater while driving in a storm, as this can soak and clog filters and cut off power completely. Avoiding water from deep puddles or stream crossings from entering the engine is even more important. Although rare, ingested water can hydraulic-lock an engine, causing severe internal damage that's not covered by warranty and is very expensive to repair.

Aftermarket air-filter housings can increase power, but ones with an open design may also increase intake-air noise levels compared to closed original-equipment designs.



Air flows and behaves in a very similar fashion to water (which is easier to visualize because you can actually see water's ripples and eddies), even though air is much less dense. To get water to flow faster and with greater volume, the diameters of the pipes are opened, bends are reduced and made smoother using a wider radius for less resistance. The same goes for air. We want to streamline the intake flow and remove resistance.

Since atmospheric pressure cannot be increased mechanically, it's even more critical that airflow is improved to gain every extra molecule possible. Engines also have pumping losses, which is power that is expended moving air through the engine and out the exhaust. By reducing intake and exhaust restrictions, pumping losses in an engine are reduced and cylinder filling increased, which are keys to power improvement. Aftermarket air intakes generally have a reduced number of bends and/or increased

radii, increased tube diameters, provisions for higher-capacity air filters and in many cases direct air from a cooler pickup point. However, sometimes they may not include provisions for required emission-control hardware or meet applicable smog regulations. Look for California Air Resources Board (CARB) executive order (EO) numbers on the products to ensure compliance in all 50 states.

Air-filter designs determine — to a great extent — the restriction of airflow into the engine. This can be measured on a flow bench, and some manufacturers provide specifications, but make sure you compare apples to apples with the same starting pressures, etc. Aftermarket air filters run the gamut from stock replacements to high-volume, low-restriction units that can flow considerably more air. Pleating allows more surface area for a given size filter. A larger filter (if it fits) is available with some aftermarket units, and this can further reduce restriction due to

pressure drop across the filter medium for a given size engine.

Besides airflow in CFM, look at micron specifications. The smaller the micron (particle size) rating, the less thorough the filtration. You don't want to sacrifice filtration quality for high flow, as this allows more grit into the engine. Engine wear and damage can be caused by dirt and grit intake, and if it was caused by an aftermarket filter, warranty coverage could be denied.

Another choice is a cleanable oil-type or dry-type filter. Some owners prefer being able to clean and reuse air filters, particularly with larger, more expensive models. If you choose such a filter, make sure you follow the instructions to the letter. Clean the used filter thoroughly and apply exactly the recommended amount of oil. Over-oiled filters have been implicated in problems with contaminated mass airflow sensors, and this can be an expensive problem that, again, would not be covered by warranty.

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Air Lift Expands Suspension Lineup for Half-Ton Pickups

As U.S. light-truck segment sales continue to climb toward a six-year high in market share, increasing 18.8 percent from a year ago, Air Lift Company is keeping pace, adding six new applications for half-ton pickups to its growing line of suspension solutions.

As smaller tow vehicles gain in popularity, in part because of rising gas prices, half-ton trucks are also in greater demand because RV makers

have created more half-ton towable fifth-wheels.


Air Lift's newest kits for half-ton trucks are part of its LoadLifter 5000 series kit line, which works with the vehicle's existing suspension to deliver up to 5,000 pounds of load-leveling capacity. This reportedly eliminates sway and squat, and increases safety and comfort when towing or hauling heavy loads. Half-ton pickup owners can add an Air Lift WirelessAIR compressor system to gain independent

Air Lift's LoadLifter 5000-series air springs incorporate a jounce bumper (shown in right cutaway view) to prevent bottoming out.

control of air springs with convenient one-touch inflation and deflation from inside or outside the vehicle.

Air Lift's new adjustable suspension solutions for half-ton applications are available for the following vehicles:

- 2007–2014 Chevy/GMC Silverado/Sierra 1500 GMT 900, 2WD and 4WD
- 2002–2008 Dodge Ram 1500 pickup, 2WD and 4WD
- 2004–2014 Ford F-150 pickup (new body), 2WD and 4WD

Air Lift offers AirCell, a maintenance-free microcellular urethane spring for vehicles with constant loads; Ride Control kits for half-ton, SUV, CUV and mini pickups with leaf springs; LoadLifter 5000 heavy-duty air-spring kits; and LoadLifter 5000 air-spring kits with internal jounce bumpers. For more information, contact Air Lift Company at 800-248-0892 or www.airliftcompany.com. 



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Torklift's Lock and Load carrier makes it easy to store and use portable power, while providing the security needed to protect valuable equipment

DIFFICULTY

1 2 3 4 5

TIME TO COMPLETE

30 MINUTES

TOOLS NEEDED

NONE, IF BOLTS ARE NOT USED

An RV's appetite for electrical power grows in proportion to the number of appliances and accessories that are packed into individual trailers. This is not a problem when hooked up in a campground, but wander into primitive areas and portable generators typically become a sought-after accessory. Unfortunately, many trailers don't have a large enough storage compartment to handle a portable generator capable of running an air conditioner and a microwave. Trying to carve out a space usually relegates the generator to the tow vehicle, but that can be inconvenient when it comes time to fire it up.

One problem with portable generators is the large selection of available models in various sizes and configurations. Because of the different mounting dimensions, portability via external carrying devices has always been somewhat difficult. In many cases custom fabrication has been required to suit individual needs.

The idea of a universal mount and the ability to run the generator without moving it came to light when Torklift International introduced its uniquely designed Lock and Load carrier. Lock and Load is a specially formed and slotted platform designed specifically for portable generators but can actually be called into service for other items like welders. Torklift's Lock and

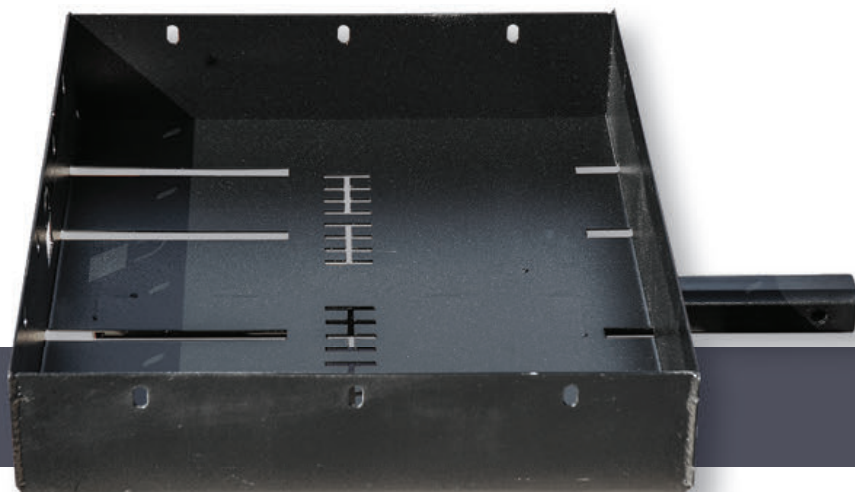


Torklift's Lock and Load carrier is designed to fit into a standard (2-inch) hitch receiver. Uniquely designed straps can be positioned to secure just about any size portable generator likely to be used in an RV environment. A special lock deters thieves. The carrier can also be used for tools or equipment like a welder when not in RV service.

Load is made of a small collection of rugged steel specialty brackets and straps, all coated in a protective thermoplastic layer to prevent scratches and rust. The base is constructed of the same strong materials; users get the immediate feeling that this carrier

is here for the long run. Aside from the brackets and base, Lock and Load comes with a hitch pin, plastic-covered T-handles for adjusting and locking the vertical straps and a unique padlock just for this setup.

Assembly of the Lock and Load



UNIVERSAL MOUNTING » The carrier's slotted base uses fitted straps to hold down and lock the generator in place.

begins by attaching the Fixed Vertical Strap to the base by way of one of the 3/8-inch T-handles, after locating the best short slot nearest the center of your specific generator. A network of slots is the key to fit and adjustability. Next, the Movable Vertical Strap, directly across from the fixed strap, is placed in its corresponding long slot and loosely secured with the other T-handle, leaving just enough flexibility for movement and adjustment.

From here, the particular generator is measured to establish length, width and height. It's important to measure far enough to the top of the gas cap so the strap will clear. Grab the Adjustable Divider and install it into the correct center slot, double checking the measurements previously taken to ensure that everything is still within spec.

The last step involves positioning the two horizontal straps within one another and into the two vertical straps at approximately 2.5 inches above the

desired height. Once lined up properly, according to the instructions and your dimensions, the horizontal straps should rest on top of the gas cap, securing both the fuel and generator. At this point, final adjustment of the Movable Vertical Strap is made and tightened, leaving a small tab sticking through the Fixed Vertical Strap. This is where the supplied lock goes.

The carrier is designed to be mounted in a standard hitch receiver. Owners will likely have to install a hitch receiver in the rear of their trailers because the factory rarely provides one. Receivers for trailers are not application specific, so custom fabrication will probably be required.

You'll need to be well aware of your trailer's weight and loading situation to avoid exceeding its gross vehicle weight rating or gross axle weight rating. The additional weight of the generator will affect hitch weight, which could lead to handling issues.

An option for trailerists is to put the

carrier in the front of the tow vehicle. Receivers are usually available for this purpose, since this application is common for boat owners. We installed it on the back of the tow vehicle for testing purposes,

Overall, I found the Lock and Load to be fairly simple to put together, good looking and very strong in design and function. Although everything lined up in their necessary slots, we were not able to use the two optional reinforcing bolts to add additional security for the horizontal straps because of an alignment issue. Other than that, the generator fit nicely and remained stable while on the road.

If a portable generator mount is in your future, Torklift's Lock and Load makes it easy to store and operate without lifting or repositioning, and thieves will have to look elsewhere. The Lock and Load retails for \$420. 🚚

Torklift International
800-246-8132, www.torklift.com

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SLIDEOUT AWNING MOUNT

Q I read the article about the Dometic Slide Topper in the November 2013 issue. I am trying to install one on my 2013 Flagstaff V-Lite and am having a problem. The instructions that came with the topper say you have to have structural support behind the brackets. I drilled two pilot holes on my slideout, and there is no structural support to be found behind the fiberglass. I called Camping World,



and they told me that most slideouts don't have any support and to just use a sealer on the screws and the bracket. Is this enough to support the slide topper and keep the screws from stripping out?

Rickey Hays, Lawrenceburg, Kentucky

A If the trailer was in the shop, the technicians could probably figure out the solution, but over the phone is not always the best way to handle this type of question. To learn about structural components on your trailer, you'll need to speak to the Flagstaff dealer or someone in the design department at the factory. You may also need to haul the trailer to your dealership so a technician can see it in person to make mounting recommendations. That may be the best option at this point.

A slideout room has to have structural framing to do what it has to do, just as an RV has framing. It's a matter of being sure you place the bracket-mounting screws in the right locations. That's where the hands-on time with the dealer's service department or advice from the factory can come into play. And no, just using sealer on the screws is not enough; you need that backing. — **Jeff Johnston**

TOW-RATING QUESTION

Q We have a 2001 Ford F-150 XLT pickup with a 4.2-liter V-6 engine. I have installed air springs and plan on installing an additional oil cooler. The truck is a two-wheel-drive automatic. I have a 15-foot 2013 Coleman single-axle travel trailer with an empty weight of 3,100 pounds. Will my truck safely handle this?

Stephen Brackenrich, via email

A You didn't mention what axle ratio your truck has, but regardless, the factory tow ratings of all versions for that year are 4,800 pounds or higher for this model. Therefore, although you didn't provide an actual loaded scale-measured weight, you should be well within the maximum Ford rating, even loaded

with fuel, passengers and a reasonable amount of cargo. — **Ken Freund**

DUAL VERSUS SINGLE BATTERIES

Q I'm writing to ask for your recommendations concerning the battery replacement in my 2012 Keystone Cougar fifth-wheel. Right now it has a single 12-volt deep-cycle battery. I've heard that I should go to a dual-battery setup, since the single battery doesn't last very long when we are dry camping. I'd like to know the pros and cons concerning using dual 6-volt batteries wired in series as opposed to using dual 12-volt batteries wired in parallel. Are golf cart batteries any better or worse than normal deep-cycle batteries? Are

AGM batteries worth the extra cost for my application? Is there anything that I need to be aware of when installing dual batteries in my fifth-wheel? Also, if you could recommend any reliable brand of battery, I would be grateful.

Scott Dear, Thornton, Colorado

A If you dry camp, a single stock 12-volt battery will not suffice, especially if you run the furnace or run 120-volt AC appliances off an inverter. Deeply discharging batteries (more than 50 percent) shortens their life.

It's recommended that batteries be replaced in matched pairs. With a pair of 12-volt batteries in parallel, there's always a slightly stronger one, even with matched pairs. And as they get older, the difference becomes greater. So, for example, if you add a second battery to pair with the existing battery that's a couple years old, it will be less than ideal. Dual 6-volt batteries wired in series can't draw current from each other (it's called cannibalization in the battery trade).

Six-volt battery plates are larger, thicker and more rugged; therefore,

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 18 years and has been an RV enthusiast, mechanic and writer since he could hold a wrench.

they tend to last longer. Golf cart batteries are designed for rugged use, deep discharges and heavy loads. They generally offer the most bang for your buck of all the choices. AGM batteries are convenient because they don't require refilling, and they don't discharge as quickly when in storage. They can also be placed almost anywhere, because they do not require venting.

There are a number of good brands on the market. Trojan makes good golf cart batteries. Lifeline makes good AGM batteries. Interstate and Sears are also popular because they have many sales and warranty locations. Be sure to install them in plastic trays and make sure they are securely mounted and held in place. — K.F.

LANDING GEAR PROBLEMS

Q We have a 2011 Keystone Cougar 276RLS. Shortly after purchase, it was parked at an RV campsite at a marina with all hookups for three months. The fifth-wheel was brought home and put into storage for the winter at a dealership. Now that it's out of storage, the landing gear will work for only about a second before blowing fuses.

The complete system has been removed, serviced, inspected and re-mounted. All parts work freely with no obstructions. The dealer says it's a bad battery. I am now on the third new battery (duals, actually) without a solution. I have found two wires in the system that were never connected, only taped end to end. My next step is to check the switch for shorting or broken terminals.

The landing gear has been operated up and down 4 inches a total of six times. The RV has a remote-control system that never worked. After removing the remote system from the landing gear and the awning circuits, still no improvement. One repair center said they'd replaced the 30-amp fuse with a 40-amp to make the system work. This system will blow the 40-amp fuse in a couple of seconds. The switch from a 30- to a 40-amp fuse was a bad move.

What's my next step, since I cannot afford \$120/hour for guesswork at the dealership?

Jerry Philhower, Laurel, Montana

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A You should never replace a circuit-protection device with one that has a higher rating than the circuit was designed for, as the wiring is not heavy enough to handle the higher amperage and could start a fire.

As a starting point, I would first verify that the batteries are in fact healthy and fully charged. Most auto-parts stores will load test them for free, if you bring them in. Even if the batteries are new, they may have become discharged or, worse, sulfated. Then, with the terminals cleaned and batteries installed and connected, put a voltmeter on them and check voltage at rest with no load. It should be about 12.6 volts when fully charged.

Try hand-cranking the landing gear jacks; if you don't know how, go to www.keystonerv.com/customer-service and watch the video called "Override Your Slide Out Mechanism," which first shows how to hand-crank your landing gear. Check for binding or uneven operation that would indicate a mechanical problem.

Jack the front of the trailer up at the frame, just enough to lift the jacks off the ground a few inches. Briefly activate the landing gear; note if it works and watch the voltage, which shouldn't drop much. If the motors sound like they are straining, even without weight on them, the landing gear is damaged or otherwise faulty and must be inspected.

If the fuse still pops, but the motors don't sound like they are straining, then there is probably at least a partial short circuit in the wiring or switch. Inspect the wiring, looking for chafed or rodent-chewed insulation. If the wiring is good, check the switch. A reputable RV shop should be able to do this in a fairly short period of time. — **K.F.**

VAN TOW RATING

Q I have a question concerning the tow rating of my 2012 Ford E-350 Super Duty passenger van with a 5.4-liter V-8 and a four-speed automatic. The owner's manual says the van has a tow rating of 6,700 pounds. This tow rating seems low to me, unless it is based on a van with all 12 positions occupied.

We tow a 2012 KZ 25-foot travel trailer and are thinking of moving up to a larger model. The new trailer has a dry weight of 6,200 pounds. I am wondering if it would be safe to tow beyond the owner's manual guidelines?

My wife and I travel alone or with our two granddaughters using a crazy overestimate weight of 200 pounds per passenger, so our maximum passenger load would be 800 pounds. The back four passenger seats are stored in the garage.

Andrew Oleck, Aurora, Illinois

A Your van has a gross combination weight rating (GCWR) of 13,000 pounds, which means that's the maximum the van and trailer can weigh without exceeding Ford's specifications. That figure is partly based on the weight of the van plus the weight of its maximum rated towed load. The specific calculations — how many passengers in the van, optional equipment and so forth — mean the van's curb weight will fluctuate from model to model, and it's beyond the scope of this column to explain all the details.

You can find any number of sites online, including Ford's extensive trailer towing guide, that explain this in detail, if you want to look into it further. The www.trailerlife.com website also has an excellent series of towing information resources available; use the drop-down menu and click the Towing Guides link.

No matter what you do with passengers and cargo in the van, it's still rated to tow a maximum of 6,700 pounds. You can find the vehicle's gross vehicle weight rating (GVWR) on the data plate on the driver's side doorjamb, and that's also information that's good to know.

For example, if you deduct the trailer rating, 6,700 pounds, from the GCWR, you have approximately 6,300 pounds available for the van. If you load the van with passengers and cargo that exceed the 6,300-pound figure, you need to deduct that weight from its tow rating. Six-hundred pounds of extra van weight means 600 pounds less tow rating.

Your first step would be to take the van, loaded and ready for the road and preferably with passengers aboard, to

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2WD OR 4WD?

Q In your answer to that question in the March 2014 issue, you didn't mention one of the biggest issues between 2WD and 4WD for fifth-wheel owners: height of the truck.

The higher bed height on 4WD trucks often creates problems such as insufficient clearance above the bed rails and/or out-of-level travel for the trailer. The solutions to these issues, such as "flipping the axles," are often expensive.

Height and cost are the only two issues that argue against a 4WD tow vehicle, but those can be strong arguments.

Loren D. Bengtson, Rising Sun, Indiana

2WD OR 4WD, PART II

Q I just read the letter from a reader with a question about 2WD versus 4WD. I wanted to touch on a couple of items concerning this comparison.

Some models of 4WD trucks have a slightly heavier towing capacity that may be overlooked by some buyers, but the deck height of the truck box is higher from the ground. Because most fifth-wheel trailers are not adjustable for king-pin height, modifications to the trailer suspension may be needed to compensate for this.

Trailer manufacturers design and build their units to pull level at a specified height. Changing the angle at which a trailer is pulled affects more than just aerodynamics. If a trailer is too low for the hitch in a 4WD truck, some shops will raise the trailer on the suspension, creating a higher center of gravity and inducing more roll characteristics. These changes may not be compatible with the original design, which could negate some warranties. Also, there is

the distance between the truck bed and trailer to consider.

On 2WD trucks there is less height difference to compensate for, but fifth-wheel apron height should be kept as low as possible to reduce the roll effects on the truck and trailer, especially on higher speed corners like freeway on- and off-ramps.

Mark Goodman, Yreka, California

A The recent letter about use of a 4WD versus a 2WD truck for towing generated a fair amount of reader feedback. Back in the days of leaf springs and solid axles, there were significant differences in the overall height of a 2WD and 4WD truck of the same model. Today's trucks with independent front suspension (IFS) and more sensible design are generally closer in height, but there can still be some difference at the bed. So yes, a 4WD may be somewhat taller, and determining those numbers is part of the shopping research and homework a buyer does when looking for a tow vehicle.

Most fifth-wheel trailers are fitted with adjustable pin boxes or the box is bolted in place and can be replaced with a unit of a different size. Trailer manufacturers do that to accommodate the varying needs of tow-vehicle heights. Also, most fifth-wheel hitches can be adjusted for height.

Some 4WD trucks are rated higher than their 2WD equivalents due to required equipment – such as axle ratios – but often a 2WD is rated higher because the extra weight of the 4WD hardware means there's less payload capacity left for towing. These towing figures are likewise just part of the usual shopping research a buyer does.

Most trailers can safely handle several inches of lift at the axles, if that's what it takes to arrive at a better truck-to-trailer towing setup. Many of today's trailers are being built with a higher overall stance because trailer manufacturers have started paying closer attention to the dimensions of the trucks being used to tow their products. A few inches of lift won't have a significant effect on a trailer's roll stability, and if someone takes a corner fast enough to

get into a potential roll situation, with or without a lift, they're driving too fast.

The bottom line is, don't automatically write off a 4WD as a tow vehicle if you think you'll need the extra traction now and then. Do the homework, get the measurements and make your decision based on that research. — J.J.

TRAILER TIRE ROTATION

Q Do I need to rotate the tires on my triple-axle fifth-wheel?

Bob Oder, Tucson, Arizona

A You don't need to rotate them, Bob, but "need" isn't always the only inspiration for doing the right thing mechanically. The first- and third-axle tires on a trailer like yours undergo stress that's worse than what the middle-axle tires go through. To maximize your tire wear and lifespan, you could rotate the tires to help equalize the wear and tear all around. A simple front-to-back progression would probably do the trick. Having your trailer tires balanced is also a good idea, for the same reason it's good to balance the tires on a tow vehicle — so that's another tip for improving tire life. — J.J.

TRAILER GENERATOR MOUNT

Q I am considering mounting a Champion 3500/4000 generator on the A-frame of my 2010 Trail-Sport TS25. The added weight is slightly more than 100 pounds. I just finished reading *RV Clinic* in the March 2014 issue. One of the questions regards generator use on Mr. Soderland's trailer. Will I risk damage to my electronics by using this Champion generator set? My desire is to be able to run the air conditioning while boondocking on my summer trip this year.

Stephen Collins, Kennewick, Washington

A While to the best of my knowledge we've never received any definitive word from a reader about a generator damaging an electronic device, it's always possible. If you can live with the higher cost of an inverter-style generator, that's one way to avoid the problem completely. That Champion 3500/4000

uses a conventional alternator-style generator, so it produces electricity that's less "clean" than the power from an inverter.

The Champion would likely power the air conditioner and most other trailer components, but if it were me, I'd buy a power conditioner to use with any of my sensitive devices such as a TV, computer or the like. A power conditioner is far less costly than a new TV, computer or other electronic device.

— J.J.

MICROWAVE OVEN BLUES

Q We own a 2005 HitchHiker 29RL. Recently, I have noticed the microwave turntable making a noise and having a problem turning. We have checked everywhere, and no one sells a microwave small enough to fit the opening. Also, there appears to be no replacement parts available for our trailer's microwave. One suggestion I've heard was to redo the cabinets to fit in a larger microwave. It's a small kitchen, and I would hate to lose any cabinet space. Any suggestions would be appreciated.

Carol Hatch, Corona, California

A It seems that using a different microwave oven model could be a major hassle, so you should try taking the oven in to a small-appliance repair center. You didn't say the brand, model or size of the current microwave, so we can't make any specific suggestions about replacements, but a Web search for "small microwave oven" will reveal quite a crop of units that could be replacements with minimal modifications. If the existing model can't be repaired by a professional shop, you may need to bite the bullet and surrender a bit of cabinet space, as you suggested. — J.J.

HITCH TAG VERSUS OWNER'S MANUAL

Q When we were shopping for a truck to tow our trailer, we found that the dealer was not very knowledgeable about towing, so we had to figure it out ourselves. We purchased the truck based on the information in the owner's



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RV CLINIC

manual. After a summer of camping, I noticed a plate on the rear of the truck right next to the hitch port that the dealer didn't point out and I didn't see when we bought the truck.

The specifications in the owner's manual and the plate on the truck are significantly different:

	Max. RV Weight (lbs.)	Max. Hitch Weight (lbs.)
Owner's manual	7,500	1,500
Plate	10,000	1,000
RV (loaded)	7,000	1,250

Weights assume the use of a weight-distributing hitch, which we use. If we go by the owner's manual, we can tow our trailer safely; if we go by the plate on the truck, we cannot — the hitch weight is too high. Which is correct, the owner's manual or the plate on the vehicle? Can I upgrade the bolts on the truck to allow it to carry more tongue weight?

Don Havery, Columbia, Maryland

An owner's manual is pretty generic in that it's made to cover a lot of models and it's not customized for any one vehicle, Don. You're always better off to go with the recommendations on any data plates on the vehicle, such as the tire pressure and GVWR plate on the driver's side door frame. In this case, the 10,000-pound/1,000-pound data on the hitch receiver is accurate. You can replace the receiver with a model that's rated to handle more hitch weight, up to 1,400 pounds, and the same goes for the ball mount. At that point you can be assured you aren't overloading any hitch hardware or your truck. — J.J.

SWAY BARS ON HITCH

Q I am new to trailering. I have a 2013 Ford F-150 with the trailering package, including enhanced transmission and cooling, and I tow a Coleman CTS 16FB that weighs 3,200 pounds. The truck also has the Ford electric brake control and built-in sway control that's part of its vehicle management system. Do I also need sway-control bars on the hitch? I am getting conflicting advice!

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I normally don't exceed 65 mph with the truck alone and 55 mph with the trailer on board.

Jay Bull, Springdale, Arkansas

A That truck you have is more than big enough for towing your light-weight trailer, Jay. Your truck is big and sturdy, and it's towing a compact, lightweight trailer that the truck should have no problem keeping under control. As long as you properly load the trailer, maintaining at least 10 or 11 percent of its overall weight on the hitch, and the weight-distributing hitch is properly adjusted, trailer sway should not be a problem.

If you still experience some sway with all other factors properly set up, try using a friction-type antisway device. But you don't "need" a sway-control device unless your vehicle is experiencing a sway problem. — **J.J.**

ONE OR TWO GENERATORS?

Q In your opinion, which option is better for a fifth-wheel with normal appliances and one 13,500-Btu air conditioner: a pair of 2,000-watt Hondas hooked together using Honda's RV parallel cables or a single 3,000-watt Honda?

Gene Ponder, via email

A If you haven't purchased a generator yet, Gene, go with the single 3kW model. While using the dual 2kW models would give you an extra 1kW of power, it also means you'd need to maintain, store and fuel two generators instead of one. Unless you load it down with some serious power-draining accessories and use them all at once, the 3kW Honda should do you just fine. If you already own one of the 2kW generators, connecting a second Honda 2K makes the most sense. — **J.J.** 🚚

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

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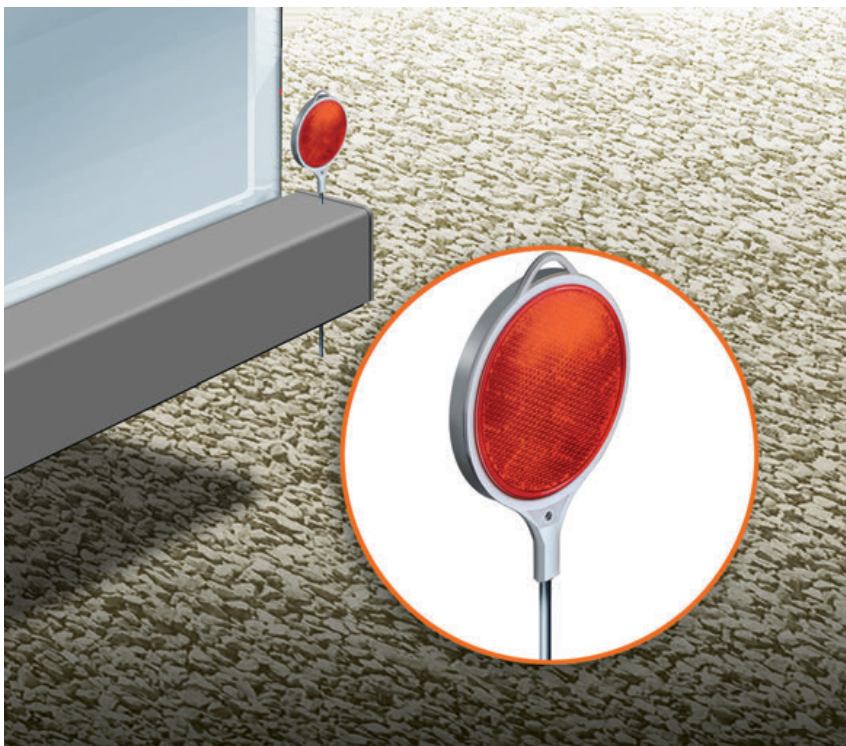
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Easy-Access Storage

Here is a tip for combating compartment storage problems. Using garage-door tracks and hardware, you can make a guide and use rollers attached to the sides of the compartment. The drawer slides in and out of the compartment so you can get a clear view of everything. I made one end shorter so that I would have room to store the ball mount and bars when not in use. Also, installing a latch on the guide keeps the drawer from sliding on its own.

Ed Luis, Santa Paula, California



High-Viz End Cap

I've lost count of how many times I've heard about RVs losing bumper end caps. I've come up with a solution that also makes it easier to see the rear bumper. I took two red driveway reflectors, cut them short and installed them close to the bumper so they spear through the end cap. They keep the end caps in place, and others can see you better!

William Richardson, Scottsboro, Alabama

QUICK FIX

Shiny Vinyl Decals

I have an older RV that has vinyl decals. I have been able to keep them shiny by using a plastic lens cleaner designed to remove oxidation from the plastic lens of a vehicle headlight. I use Meguiar's PlastX Clear Plastic Cleaner & Polish. It is easy to apply and it does a great job of removing the oxidation.

John Ricciardi, Crossville, Tennessee 🚐

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 you \$35 for original *10-Minute Tech* ideas.

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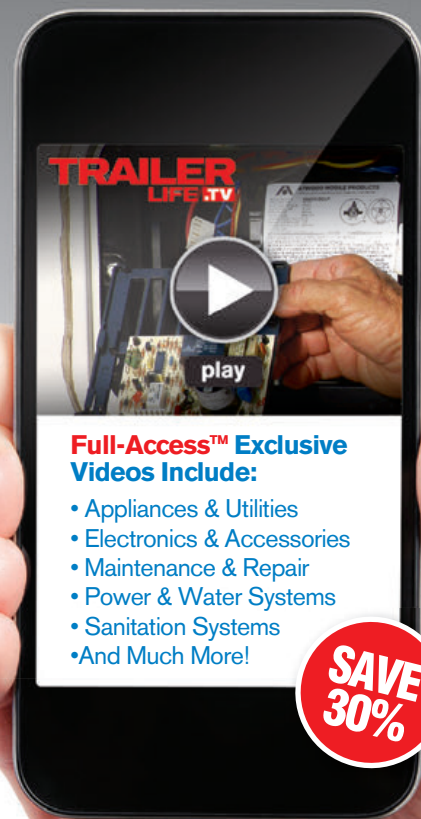
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Bathhouse Row

People come from miles away to soak in the thermal waters of Hot Springs, Arkansas



It's early; the sun isn't even up yet. Central Avenue, known as Bathhouse Row here in Hot Springs, Arkansas, is empty. It would be as quiet as dawn usually is, were it not for the rumbling whine of a street-sweeping machine. Lit like a carnival sign, with flashing yellow lights, it creeps along next to the curb. A whirling brush sweeps up what's in the gutter. A few leaves appear to be all there is to pick up — the sweeper was here just yesterday.

The daily visits of the sweeper strike me as emblematic of a town where hot baths — presumably bathers come out clean — are the reason for its existence. Bathing has always been the major industry in Hot Springs. In its heyday, the middle part of the last century, the 20 bathhouses here churned out a million baths a year.

To get clean, however, was not the main reason people were in the hot water — call it a collateral benefit. They came simply to soak in it and to drink it, and they still do.

Western Arkansas has 47 natural hot springs, concentrated in a valley of the Zigzag Mountains. Bubbling out of the ground at 147 degrees, then piped into the bathhouses and spas, it's this water that gives Hot Springs its name. The water was once thought to cure about everything, even mental illness. In fact, Hot Springs was often called "the resort of last resort."

The federal government took an interest in preserving the springs and set the area aside as a U.S. reservation in 1832. Had America had a national park system then, it would have been our first national park. (Yellowstone Park, established in 1872, was the first.) In 1921 Hot Springs became our 18th national park — not the oldest, but it is the smallest.

Bathhouse Row is the only part of town that's in the park. Only two bathhouses are operating today. One, the Buckstaff, has been in continuous operation since 1912.

The water from the springs is more than 4,000 years old. It percolates down through the earth that long before it boils back up. About 700,000 gallons a day are collected for use in the bathhouses and the spa at the Arlington



(Top) The 147-degree spring water has cooled by the time it reaches this stream on Bathhouse Row. (Above) The Buckstaff, with the blue awnings, is one of two bathhouses still operating in Hot Springs.

Hotel. The park operates a cooling station that takes the water from scalding down to just hot before pumping it into the bathhouses.

The water is odorless, flavorless and colorless. Although it has traces of minerals, the heat gives the water whatever therapeutic properties it may have. A water-jug fountain stands at the end of Bathhouse Row, and it supplies spring water, but not hot. The people I met there had come from as far as 50 miles away to fill their jugs with the free water.

Native Americans were probably the first "vacationers" who came here to soak in the springs. Because this is a one-of-a-kind place, the springs were neutral territory. Indian tribes that were at war with each other used it, though maybe not at the same time.

That same unwritten law existed in the 1920s when Hot Springs was a favorite resort of America's underworld. Although the mob hung out here for more than a decade, no mob killings occurred in Hot Springs. Al Capone kept a year-round suite in the famous Arlington Hotel — suite 443, which today has his name on the door. From his window — if he was up early enough — he could look down Central Avenue and watch the street-sweeping machine on its morning run.

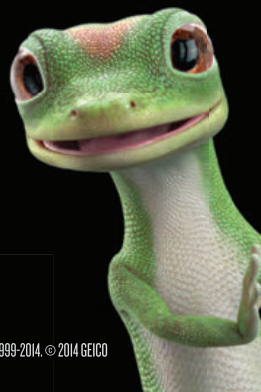
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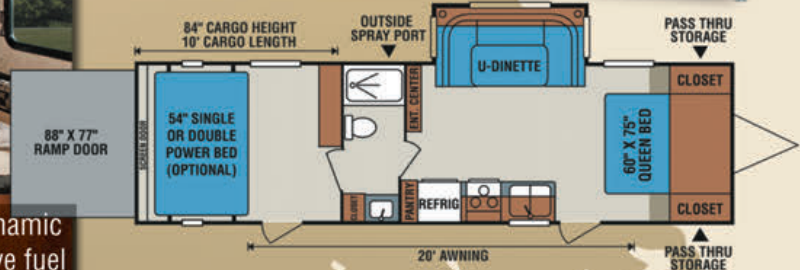


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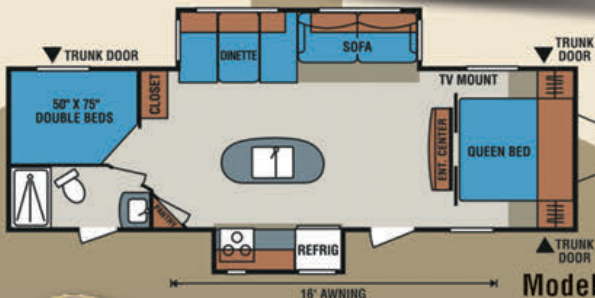
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