

FIRST PEEK

ALL-NEW FORD ESCAPE
TOWS UP TO 3,500 POUNDS

LOOK BACK

TRAILER CAMERA SYSTEM
FOR CLEAR REAR VISION

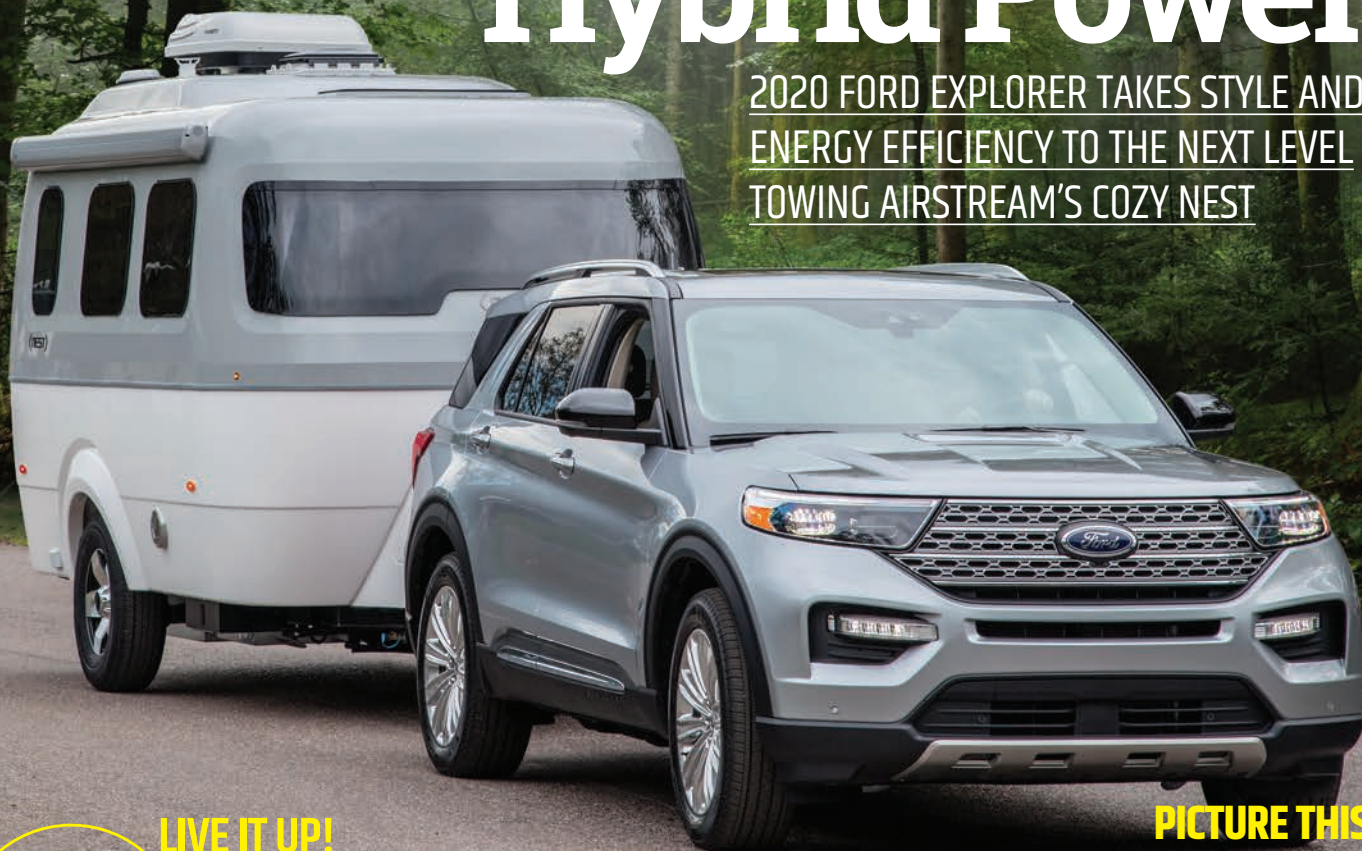
TRAILER LIFE

FOLLOW THE ROAD TO ADVENTURE

EXCLUSIVE TEST

Hybrid Power

2020 FORD EXPLORER TAKES STYLE AND
ENERGY EFFICIENCY TO THE NEXT LEVEL
TOWING AIRSTREAM'S COZY NEST



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LIVE IT UP!

**TRAVEL TRAILERS
WITH ALL THE
COMFORTS OF HOME**

Page 38

PICTURE THIS

**EXPERT TIPS FOR TAKING
GREAT TRAVEL PHOTOS**

FLAGSHIP TRUCK CAMPER
LANCE'S DUAL-SLIDE 1172

DAVE & KRISTY CHOSE LANCE QUALITY. MEANING, THEY ALWAYS TAKE ANTHONY WITH THEM.

Anthony Parker is a welder at Lance Camper.

His obsession for precision and strength has helped make Lance Camper number one in travel trailer sales* and the recipient of the *Trailer Life Reader's Choice Gold Award*. Anthony's never met Dave and Kristy, but over the next couple decades of vacations, weekend getaways, and exploring too many hiking trails to count, he'll be with them. Visit your nearest Lance Camper dealer and experience Anthony's passion for yourself.



lancecamper.com



*In the 14'-23' segment.

Lance Campers, Circle 113 on Reader Service Card

Features

13 LANCE TRUCK CAMPER

Dual slideouts, including one at the rear that houses a sofa with footrests, allows for increased floor space in the flagship 1172 side-entry camper.

16 SHOOT TO THRILL

Traveling in an RV presents constant photo ops. Here are some tried-and-true approaches to getting just the right images to capture your adventures.



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24 AIRSTREAM NEST AND FORD EXPLORER

The small 16FB travel trailer is big on luxuries and easy towability, and pairs well with Ford's hybrid SUV that can tow 5,000 pounds.

32 WANDERING THE WARRIOR TRAIL

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38 MID-LEVEL PRICE, TOP-TIER STYLE

The current crop of travel trailers priced under 60 grand offers plenty of amenities. Here's a look at 13 of the latest models that caught our eye.

47 2020 FORD ESCAPE

Capable of towing up to 3,500 pounds, the fourth-generation SUV is geared toward those who appreciate flexibility, utility and performance, with no off-road pretenses.



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74 ROADS TO ADVENTURE Million Dollar Beach, New York

CAMERA READY

A slow shutter speed captures the movement of rushing water at Natural Bridge in British Columbia's Yoho National Park (page 16).



Crystal Ball

From state-of-the-art campgrounds to advanced RV connectivity and multifunction control systems, the future of RVing is now

This past March we experienced a whole new style of marketing outreach from the RV Industry Association: the RV Experience, or RVX, in Salt Lake City. This was a complete 180 from the RVIA trade shows in Louisville, which go back 50 years. Instead of being promoted as a selling show for manufacturers, RVX was billed as a kickoff to the 2019 camping season, with a huge media push aimed at attracting new blood to the ranks of RVers. The primary audience: Millennials.

Focusing on the outdoor-adventure side of RVing, with the snowcapped Wasatch Mountains in the background, RVX was quite the spectacle. From our standpoint, represent-

Exhibits of everything from all-electric RVs to campgrounds of the future made attendees wonder what this lifestyle has in store for us.

ing the two leading RV-enthusiast publications, the show didn't give us a lot to report on that we hadn't seen already. Our in-depth coverage of the 2019 models in the February *Trailer Life* and *MotorHome* was compiled last fall at the country's largest consumer RV show, in Hershey, Pennsylvania, and the world's largest

RV-dealer event, in Elkhart, Indiana, along with materials provided from the manufacturers directly. There were a few new models and updates at RVX, but that wasn't the point.

We did glean some exciting things from the show. Our own RVs and experiences are benefiting from new and improved cellular and Wi-Fi connectivity devices and the services that make them work. The ability to control the functions of an RV via smart devices from anywhere in the world is astounding. Even the tow-vehicle builders are getting in the game, connecting proprietary technology with that provided by RV manufacturers. As Spock would say, "Fascinating."

Madame Leota's crystal ball was also busy, as the industry asked companies to display a World's Fair-style view of the future of RVing. Exhibits of everything from all-electric RVs to campgrounds of the future made attendees wonder what this lifestyle has in store for us. Underwater camping was indeed fanciful, but other predictions are already being implemented in RV parks.

One bit of future tech that will be here this summer is the 2020 Ford Explorer Limited Hybrid that can tow up to 4,000 pounds. We paired this all-new SUV with the Airstream Nest (page 24). Ford likewise introduced the redesigned Escape SUV, which can tow up to 3,500 pounds (page 47).

Also in this issue, Bruce W. Smith lines up 13 feature-packed travel trailers priced under \$60,000 (page 38), Chris Hemer checks out Lance's flagship truck camper (page 13), and Bob Dawson installs a Voyager wireless backup camera on his travel trailer (page 52). If you don't have a backup camera yet, you need to get one.

Happy trails, and see you down the highway! 🚐

— **Chris Dougherty, Technical Editor**



THE NEW BLACK

One of the concept RVs generating media buzz at the RVX show, the matte-black Venture RV Sonic-X prototype travel trailer rolled down the runway with lightweight carbon-fiber body panels, a solar-backed lithium battery bank and an innovative freshwater-harvesting system. An RVX Reveal runner-up in the City Escape category, the one-of-a-kind Sonic-X was built on the bones of a Sonic 220VRB and beefed up with torsion axles, off-road tires and 22 inches of ground clearance.



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FOLLOW THE ROAD TO ADVENTURE

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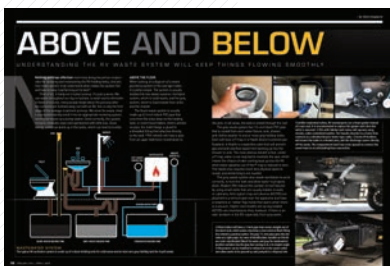
GREAT
IDEA!

THANKS FOR THE TIP

We had to comment on Chuck Derry's "Hitch-Bar Storage Mount" in April's 10-Minute Tech. We took his suggestion and have to say, what a great idea! Our trailer's Equal-i-zer hitch bars won't be taking up precious storage space anymore when we're camping.

Mat and Joan Weber, Hobe Sound, Florida

Have you come up with a clever way to make your RV adventures easier? If so, email your idea and a photo or two to 10minutetech@trailerlife.com. If we publish your DIY tip, you'll get a check for \$35 and the gratitude of fellow readers. — Editors



Science of Sanitation

Regarding April's "Above and Below": We bought our first trailer last year. Some reading, a couple conver-

sations with other owners and a few trips under our belts, and we have the sanitation system down.

Amanda Castle

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Chris Dougherty's very good article "Above and Below" explains the various tank valves but does not include what is referred to as a "good-neighbor valve." This valve is attached in place of the valve cap. The valve cap is then attached to the new valve. There is always leakage past the regular valves, and this



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new valve prevents the nasty stuff from pouring out when the valve cap is removed. A more important fact refers to RVs that are set up for more than a few days and are connected to a park's sewer system. In this case the gray-water valve can be left open to continually drain.

John Hibbard, Andover, Minnesota

Chris Dougherty replies: *While the gray valve can be left open, I prefer to keep mine closed, unless I'm using a lot of water at one time, which flushes the tank better when I dump it. There are still some solids that can accumulate in the gray tank, including food particles and hair. Additionally, the gray water will flush the hose after dumping the black water. If you have a clothes washer, then I'd open it before you wash clothes so as not to have an overflow into the shower or worse if the tank is near full.*

The "good-neighbor valve," as you put it, is a fine addition, but it's not for everyone. RVs

with a termination close to the ground might have a clearance issue, not only from the ground but also on the side. If the main valves are maintained properly, there shouldn't be any leaking, but a long run of 3-inch pipe from the valves could hold some leftovers if it isn't pitched adequately. If repairing the valves is too difficult or can't be done in a timely fashion, these valves are a good option.

"Above and Below" left out one of many RVers' main complaints: the lack of accuracy or sometimes lack of any signal from the tank-level sensors. I have owned fifth-wheels for the past 18 years and have never felt that the readings were truly trustworthy, and adding more water seldom works.

James Martin, Cambria, California

Chris Dougherty offered some suggestions in a previous article: www.trailerlife.com/tech/diy/dirty-little-secrets. — Editors

HAVE A COMMENT?

Write to us at **info@trailerlife.com** or *Trailer Life*, 2750 Park View Court, Suite 240, Oxnard, California 93036. Please include your full name, city and state or province.



LATCHED AND LOCKED

April's "Good Puck" is an excellent summary of the B&W Companion OEM fifth-wheel hitch. I would recommend some notes about a possible uneven installation of the pucks, the need for spacers and an alert to never use force to close the handles into the locked position.

I had this hitch installed after buying my 2017 Ford F-350 dually. I removed and reinstalled the hitch several times and did not notice the excess force required to turn the right-rear latch arm into an assumed locked position until my last install. I contacted B&W, and after an extensive review with Beto Melendez, B&W shipped a kit of new arms, latches, washers and other hardware. The new latches are single pieces that are cambered where they engage the truck's pucks and make rotating the arms into the locked position easy. I can't thank Beto enough.

Clete Singler, Benbrook, Texas





Still More Bikes on Board

I read Ken Duncan's "More Bikes on Board" comment in April's Letters. I also worried about transporting bikes behind my trailer and had a local welding shop put a hitch receiver on the front of my fifth-wheel to hold the bicycle carrier. It is simple and bolts onto the pin box directly using grade-8 bolts. Now the bikes are visible while I am driving and pretty secure from theft when the trailer is unhooked, as they are high off the ground. To unload the bikes, I just back up the truck and use it as the platform to easily take them off.

Jim Thompson, Surprise, Arizona

Paddle Power

Nice job by Jack Ballard on March's "Different Strokes for All Folks." For the past four years, my wife and I and our cairn terrier have been traveling in our van and 19-foot fiberglass Escape trailer, teaching and promoting paddle sports. We are ambassadors for several manufacturers and instructor trainers for the American Canoe Association. I liked the article's emphasis on safety and PFD use, as well as the foundation on boat and board design and construction.

One easy thing to remember when looking at boats and boards: Light, Strong, Inexpensive: Pick Two.

Steve Scherrer, Portland, Oregon

I enjoyed reading the article on RVing and paddling, but the author missed a couple of the absolutely best kayaks for RVing: the Oru folding kayak (think origami) and the Pakayak modular nesting kayak. After a lot of research, I purchased an Oru Beach kayak for its ease of assembly and ability to fit in the basement of my RV. It weighs 26 pounds, opens to 12 feet in length and is 28 inches wide for stability. When folded,

it is the size of a large suitcase and can be carried with the optional backpack setup. Unlike an inflatable boat, the Oru gives me a hard-shelled and stable kayak for greater speed and tracking on the water. I highly recommend it.

Ed Hibbs, Clovis, California

Don't Miss the Boat

Regarding February's "Ferry to the Last Frontier," Alaska's new governor has

proposed budget cuts to programs that include the Alaska Marine Highway System (AMHS). This may be the last summer to travel and enjoy the AMHS the way it has been for the past 50 years. I am thankful that I have made the Bellingham-to-Seattle trip with my kids twice. If this trip is a bucket-list item or a dream of "someday," your someday better be soon.

Carl Westphal, Fairbanks, Alaska 



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YOSEMITE NATIONAL PARK

California Adventure

For an unforgettable way to experience the Golden State's iconic national park, try rafting the Merced River and setting up camp nearby

— by Kerri Cox

As your raft lazily floats down the Merced River through the heart of Yosemite National Park, you'll be treated to exquisite views around every bend, as if you were flipping through the images on a retro View-Master. In one spot, the smooth granite top of Half Dome fills the blue skies, towering above a ridge of green pines. In another spot, the surging waters of Yosemite Falls plummet over a precipice. Paddling the Merced is an amazing way to enjoy the majesty of Yosemite, with the park's classic sights filling the horizon.

Rafting is offered on the Merced during a specified period each year — May 17 through September 15 in 2019, conditions permitting. As the winter snowpack melts in the spring, the

river becomes deep enough to host watercraft. Once the summer weather warms the air and water, this melted snow becomes a safe temperature for those who choose to — or accidentally — take a dip. Rafters should note that conditions vary, meaning the river may be more challenging at times.

Rental rafts are offered through the Aramark concessionaire. For a fee of \$28.50 per person, you'll receive a raft, life jacket, paddles and a shuttle ride back to Half Dome Village. Each raft can hold up to four people and must have two capable paddlers, including at least one adult. As a safety measure, children under 50 pounds are not allowed. Once you take the orientation and gear up, it's time

to embark on the 3-mile journey.

While there are many spots where visitors can see Yosemite's venerable landmarks, rafting the Merced allows you to experience the beauty of the park up close while getting a rush on the river.

www.travelyosemite.com/things-to-do/rafting

STAY AND PLAY

Yosemite National Park offers 10 campgrounds that accommodate RVs. While they are known for spectacular scenery and convenience, they are in high demand and do not have water, electric or sewer hookups. For RVers seeking more amenities, Good Sam Parks can be found in the neighboring towns of Angels Camp, Bass Lake, Coarsegold, Columbia, Groveland and Tuolumne. www.goodsam.com/campgrounds-rv-parks

📍 Whether you dip a paddle in the Merced River or just your toes, the views of Yosemite's must-see landmarks are equally memorable.



The Big Reveal

The RV Experience, or RVX, an industry and media show that took place in Salt Lake City in mid-March, promised to energize the RV community by showcasing emerging trends and cutting-edge models. A special event, the Reveal, highlighted 47 innovative new RVs competing head to head. In five of the nine categories, the consumer-focused panel of judges awarded towable models the top spot. Here's a snapshot.

On the Horizon

Making it easy to stay in touch, **Airstream Classic** travel trailers have dedicated 4G LTE connectivity, a high-gain Wi-Fi booster and a hotspot that can connect up to 10 devices. With the addition of Smart Control Technology, Airstream ups the ante, bringing smart-home convenience to the campground. Phones or tablets running the mobile app can operate the trailer's lights, vent fans, air conditioning and electric awnings, and keep tabs on battery voltage, LP-gas, freshwater and holding-tank levels. The 31-foot, 3-inch 30RB and 33-foot 33FB come with a queen bed or two twins, along with all the amenities and elegance expected in an Airstream. GVWR: 10,000 pounds. MSRP: \$152,400/30RB, \$166,900/33FB. www.airstream.com

Team Tailgate

A rolling playhouse for grown-ups, the 44-foot **Heartland Cyclone 4270** is ready to party with a 13-foot garage and 30-gallon fuel station, a bar-style kitchen counter and a 50-inch 4K TV. Beyond the ramp-door patio, the massive fifth-wheel has a second deck on the side that sets up with the touch of a button. Gross vehicle weight rating (GVWR): 20,000 pounds. MSRP: \$111,373. Heartland called its tricked-out RVX Reveal entry the Cyclone Ultimate Tailgate. The one-of-a-kind toy hauler is aimed to impress with a built-in beer fridge, an inflatable hot tub, a wall of four TVs across from the overstuffed sofa, more flat-screens in the garage and outside, and an over-the-top sound system with eight subwoofers and 18 speakers. www.heartlandrvs.com



Destination Camping

The 43-foot **Forest River RiverStone 39RBFL** goes big with five slideouts, a king-size bed and a claimed 3,121-pound cargo-carrying capacity. Designed for extended living, the luxury fifth-wheel has all the comforts of home, starting with his-and-her sinks in the master bathroom and a midship half bath with a stacked washer and dryer. Convertible sofas in opposing slides and a couch with theater seating afford views of the 60-inch LED TV. The screen drops down behind a large electric fireplace for enjoying the scenery through the big windshield in the redesigned front cap. High-end standards extend to a second fireplace and LED TV in the bedroom, an 18-cubic-foot refrigerator with an icemaker, a dishwasher, induction cooktop and Truma AquaGo hot-water system. GVWR: 19,065 pounds. MSRP: \$107,004. www.forestriverinc.com



Family-Friendly

A big bunkhouse with a homey feel, the **Jayco Eagle HT 264BHOK** packs in many features a modern family might want. With sleeping space for up to eight, the new travel trailer offers a master bedroom with a residential queen bed in front and a separate entrance, and double-over-double bunks in the rear. The lower bunk flips up to create a storage bay for gear like bikes and kayaks, accessible from a rear door, and a pass-through storage compartment holds more goodies. Measuring just under 33 feet, the 264BHOK feels like a high-end fifth-wheel but at a fraction of the size and cost. GVWR: 9,995 pounds. MSRP: \$47,896. www.jayco.com



Outdoor Adventurer

Tailored for outdoor enthusiasts and all their toys, the 21½-foot **SylvanSport Vast** puts a number of RV innovations to good use. Up front, the indoor/outdoor kitchen slides outside under the awning to reveal a good-size shower inside. Modular seating in the rear transforms to a queen-size bed, and a second queen bed on a power lift lowers from the ceiling. With the beds and seating in travel mode, bikes and other toys stow in the rear through a large hatch. Side-mounted exterior rails transport kayaks, canoes and SUPs. GVWR: 3,000 pounds. MSRP: \$49,995. www.sylvansport.com

Black Hills Base Camp

Built to promote tourism in the Black Hills of South Dakota, Mount Rushmore has succeeded in this mission, attracting more than 3 million visitors each year. While some travel to the Black Hills to see this national monument, others come to enjoy the natural beauty of the surrounding landscape, the historic Old West towns and the family attractions that have grown up around Mount Rushmore. Rafter J Bar Ranch in Hill City provides a scenic base camp at the heart of this epic destination.

A Good Sam Park, Rafter J Bar Ranch spreads out across 160 acres of rolling

green hills, bordered by Black Hills National Forest. Nearly 200 campsites are divided into distinct camping areas, most offering large, scenic sites with full hookups. Lofty ponderosa pines dominate some areas, while others are more open, with panoramic views of the craggy peaks.

Long before the ranch welcomed RVers, travelers in stagecoaches stopped here on trips between Deadwood and Cheyenne. A few buildings remain from those days. The Mickelson Trail runs along the boundaries of the park, making it easy for bicyclists to explore on wheels. Guests seeking on-site recreation will find a massive pool, a hot tub and a playground. — *Kerri Cox*

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ULTIMATE CHECKLIST

Get your trailer and tow vehicle in gear for summer travels with our comprehensive pre-trip primer ("Ultimate Guide to Getting RV-Ready").

BUNKHOUSE BONUS

Read more about the Jayco Eagle HT 264BHOK, Family-Friendly category winner in the RVX Reveal (Family-Friendly RV).

LIFT-PUMP QUERY

Is installing an upgraded fuel lift pump a good investment? Bruce W. Smith has the answer ("Diesel Tech Q&A: Lift Pumps"). [TV](#)

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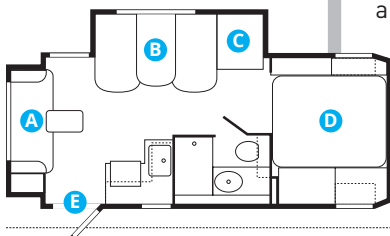
LANCE
1172

LANCE A LOT

The largest truck camper in Lance's lineup offers dual slideouts and real livability

QUICK INFO

Exterior Length.....	20' 4"
Exterior Width.....	8'
Interior Height.....	6' 8"
Cabover Height.....	3' 8"
Exterior Height (with A/C).....	9'
Freshwater Cap.....	42 gal.
Black-Water Cap.....	35 gal.
Gray-Water Cap.....	35 gal.
LP-Gas Cap.....	14 gal.
UVW.....	4,174 pounds
MSRP, Base.....	\$50,286



All RVs come with some degree of compromise. That is a given. After all, there's only so much space in which to pack furniture, appliances, sleeping accommodations, holding tanks and climate-control systems — but the slide-in truck camper takes this challenge to a whole new level. Unlike trailers or motorhomes, which simply grow in length when more space is required, campers have an 8-foot truck bed to work with. Period. So, when camper manufacturers want to offer their customers more room, compromise takes a back seat to creativity.

Lance Camper of Lancaster, California, has been in the truck-camper business since 1965 and in that time has earned a rightful

reputation for quality and innovation. Its flagship dual-slideout 1172 model is perhaps the best example of what the company can do within the confines of a cargo bed, making use of every square inch to provide maximum livability.

One of the first things you'll notice as you walk up to the 1172 is its side-entry door, necessitated by an interesting feature that increases floor length and seating accommodations: a rear slideout. It may come as somewhat of a surprise to find out that you can't even enter the camper until it is deployed, but Lance makes the process easy through the use of a remote control stored just inside the doorway. Power it up, and the slideout clears in a matter of seconds. Next, change modes on the remote to deploy the large streetside slideout, which houses a fixed dinette and a 6-cubic-foot refrigerator. The same remote can also be used to operate the four Lippert power jacks.

Step inside, and it's hard not to be

A) couch w/footrests B) convertible dinette C) 6-cubic-foot refrigerator D) queen bed E) side entry



The 1172's interior is available in three decors: Mystic Shores (shown), Passage and Roadster. A powered roof vent and skylight admit plenty of light during the day, and abundant LED lighting keeps things bright in the evening. Note the countertop extension next to the sink. Adjacent to the corner kitchen are a shelf and cubbies for books and magazines; a 12-volt DC television is optional.

impressed by how much room there is. The rear slideout houses a couch with footrests, and a small single-post table can be pushed into place for snacks and drinks. The convertible fixed dinette is large enough to seat four adults comfortably, and underneath each bench is a huge storage drawer that can easily swallow a comforter or extra pillows. Hiding just above the dinette in the test camper was another surprise:

an optional bunk bed that quickly folds down from the ceiling. A mesh screen with zippered panels provides the child restraint, and combined with a partial view from the dinette window, prevents the area from feeling confined.

Directly across from the dinette is a small corner kitchen featuring a large composite single-bowl sink with covers, a faucet with a pullout sprayer, and a countertop extension. Overhead



Top: The vanity in the dry bath offers generous countertop space, a drawer and storage underneath. **Above:** The cabover bedroom area features a large skylight, storage on either side of the queen bed and a mirrored wardrobe. Climbing up and down is made easy with steps and a sturdy grab handle.

cabinets supply adequate space for plates and bowls, and the test camper featured the optional stainless-steel three-burner cooktop with a matching microwave located just beneath. A range with an oven is standard. Drawer space is limited to two small guys located near floor level, which may take some getting used to, but in fairness, there really isn't another place to put them. There is, however, a large pullout spice rack located to the left of the entryway and a cabinet just underneath.

Ahead of the kitchen on the curb side is a dry bath that rivals most travel trailers. To the left of the entrance is the toilet and linen cabinet with

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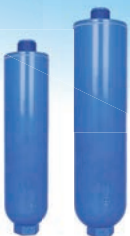
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The rear slideout by the entry door houses a sofa with footrests and can be quickly fitted with a table for snacks and drinks. Dimmer switches above both slideouts are a nice touch.

a towel bar underneath, and the vanity provides generous counter space, a large mirror, a drawer and storage below. A fiberglass shower enclosure with a pan deep enough for bathing kids features a skylight for extra headroom.

Up front, carpeted steps make it easy to climb onto the queen-size bed, which offers overhead storage, a small cabinet on either side, and a mirrored wardrobe for hanging clothes. A huge overhead skylight makes the area feel open and airy.

The exterior has numerous convenience features, including rear basement storage, a fully equipped utility center with an outdoor shower, and a generator-ready compartment for the available 2.5-kilowatt Cummins Onan LP-gas generator. On the curb side, the test camper was equipped with the available 14-foot power awning, outdoor speakers and an optional LP-gas connection. Compartments for the LP-gas cylinders and water pump make servicing easy.

Indeed, you can't have it all, but if a truck camper is your RV of choice, the Lance 1172 requires little in the way of sacrifice. **TV**

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www.lancecamper.com

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PHOTO OP
Slowing the shutter speed and using a tripod captured the water rushing over the rocks at Natural Bridge in British Columbia's Yoho National Park.



TO THRILL

YOUR TRAVEL PHOTOS MATCH UP TO YOUR GRAND ADVENTURES

— by Emily Fagan

One of the most fulfilling aspects of traveling full time with our fifth-wheel trailer is taking photos of what we see, sharing them with friends and family, and reliving our wonderful memories. Almost everyone has a cell-phone camera in their pocket these days, but capturing truly beautiful and engaging photos is a skill that takes time to master. Luckily, it is not hard to learn, and practicing is really fun.

Each photo tells a story, and before grabbing your camera it helps to pause and think about why you suddenly feel the urge to take a photo and what it is you want to show in the image. Is it the beauty or drama of a landscape or a funny thing you'd never see at home, or is it a classic scene that makes you say, "This is the Wild West!" or "This is New England!" — or is it just to have a happy reminder that you were there, right in the middle of it all?



COMPOSE THE SHOT

The essence of photography is to re-create the three-dimensional world in two dimensions, and that means viewing a scene, from near to far, as objects that relate to each other in terms of their relative size and position. This layout is called the composition of the image, and it is arguably the most important aspect of photography, whether you use a

phone camera or top-of-the-line gear.

The more room a particular object takes up in a photo, the more dominant it will be as the image's subject. If you are taking a photo of a stunning Arizona sunset, for instance, the image should be mostly colorful sky, with perhaps a small saguaro cactus to anchor the shot as being in Arizona. However, if you are

taking photos of turquoise waves pounding Florida's Emerald Coast, the image should be mostly jade-colored water and crashing surf with just a little sky and sand.

America's most celebrated canyons are jaw-dropping in size and scale. It is a breathtaking experience to look out across the undulating sandstone and limestone ramparts of the Grand Canyon, stare down into the fairy-tale red-rock turrets of Bryce Canyon or gaze up at the sheer rock walls of Zion Canyon, but capturing the majesty and immensity of these landscapes can be a challenge. However, the size and scale are instantly comprehensible if there is a measurable object in the scene — a person, animal or tree, for instance — as it gives the viewer a way to quantify the size of the surrounding landscape. A lone person walking down a trail between massive rock formations or standing atop a towering precipice emphasizes how enormous the rocks are compared to the individual.

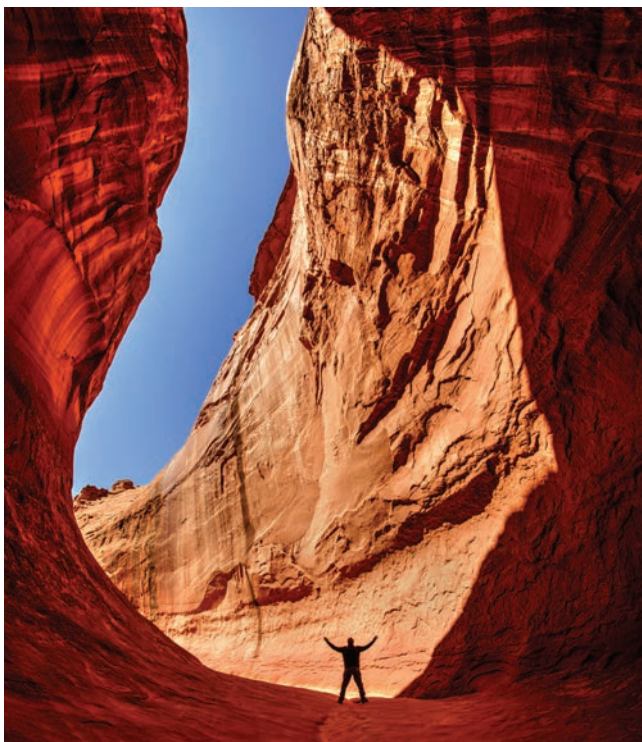
You can accentuate the people in a scene or the landscape around them by having them face toward or away from the camera. We are instinctively drawn to the eyes and facial expressions of people looking at us. So, if you want the people to be the main subject, have them face the camera and put on the facial expression you want, whether it's a "Cheese!" smile or a serious or goofy face. If you want to draw the viewer into the landscape, have the person or people look away from the camera and out at the vista.

There is a popular Rule of Thirds in photography that recommends placing the major components of the image at positions either one-third or two-thirds of the way across the photo, vertically and/or horizontally. This is not a hard-and-fast principle, however, and I find that just shifting the subject slightly off center can make a huge difference.



Composition Tips

⬆ To practice the Rule of Thirds, imagine a tic-tac-toe grid on your image and place the subject(s) on one of the lines. To focus attention on the landscape, have people face away from the camera and toward the scenery.



Easily recognizable subjects like a person (left) or a road (top left) emphasize the relative scale of the landscape surrounding them.

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FRAME THE SUBJECT

In addition to balancing the relative sizes of different objects in a photo, you can pull the viewer into a scene by taking advantage of diagonal lines and off-center positioning in the image. I love curvy roads, and there is nothing like a winding road or trail leading to or from somewhere alluring to fire up the wanderlust of a person looking at the photo. We read from left to right, so lines like roads and streams coming in from the lower-left corner catch our eyes, and we follow them into the center of the image.

Similarly, a subject can be framed in an image by shooting through a window or doorway, or shooting under the arch of a tree limb or between two trees or pillars. Framing one object between two others means there are three primary things in the image, and often the best balance, or “tension,” in an image is achieved by having three objects laid out in any kind of a triangular relationship at varying distances — for instance, a person in the foreground, a mountain peak in the background and trees in the midground.

One of the best ways to practice composing photos is to take them from the passenger’s seat of your tow vehicle as another person drives. We travel primarily on secondary roads, and



as the scenery passes by, I watch the ever-changing relationships between the nearest and furthest things in view, snapping photos when they align best. If you are using a DSLR camera, a polarizing filter cuts the glare created by the dashboard reflecting on the windshield.

Photo-editing software or a cell-phone camera app that allows you to crop your images is an outstanding tool for learning composition. Cropping helps you learn to see where the most interesting part of an image really lies. Digital photo-editing software has replaced the

old-fashioned darkroom work of the film days, and it is easy to enhance the colors, lighten the shadows and decrease the glaringly bright highlights of each photo.

Above: A fun way to draw the viewer into the photo is to frame the subject with another element in the scene, as shown in this window-in-a-window image of Turret Arch framed by North Window at Utah’s Arches National Park.

Changing the colors creates fun effects, too. An image of a cowboy boot next to a saddle or of the front door of an Old West saloon can evoke another era by casting it in sepia tones rather than the full color spectrum. Similarly, some not-quite-perfect images can conjure up Ansel Adams once transformed to black and white.

THERE IS NOTHING LIKE A WINDING ROAD OR TRAIL TO FIRE UP THE WANDERLUST OF A PERSON LOOKING AT THE PHOTO.



Framing Tips

← A curvy road or other diagonal lines draw the viewer into the image, especially going from left to right. Arches, tree branches, doors and windows can create a frame that draws the eye to the main subject.

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PHOTO OP

The moments before and during sunrise can result in spectacular images, but shooting them requires leaving a warm bed.

**CAPTURE THE LIGHT**

Sunrises and sunsets offer the most dramatic natural colors, and the hour after sunrise and the hour before sunset can bathe the landscape in a wonderful rich pink and orange glow accompanied by deep shadows. It's hard to be out and about at dawn and miss the campfire happy hour in the evening, but these are great times for photography. An image taken at noon will be far more appealing when it's shot during either of these "golden hours."

Early morning is also a time when the air tends to be still, which allows for beautiful reflection photos at lakes

and ponds where the water acts like a mirror for the surrounding trees, sky and mountains. Also, delicate wildflowers stop wiggling and can be captured in sharp images only when there's no breeze blowing them around. Another huge reward for climbing out of bed before you really

want to is that dawn is when the animals come out. Whether it's bighorn sheep, elk, herons or bluebirds, the best time to see them is when they are foraging for breakfast.

Above: At Tuttle Creek State Park in Kansas, clouds cast vivid reflections in the still water at dawn. Below: Wyoming's Bighorn Mountains just before sunset.

**Natural-Light Tips**

☞ The rich colors and dark shadows of dawn and dusk are the golden hours for photography. Bad weather with stormy skies also makes for great photos.

TIME THE EXPOSURE

When shooting wildlife with a DSLR camera, set the shutter speed quite high (around $\frac{1}{2000}$ of a second) to catch the animals' movements without blurring. Approach wildlife very slowly and avoid eye contact as you walk toward them to prevent scaring them away. Once set up, focus on the animal's eye, if possible, as that is what people admiring your photo will be drawn to. For safety, use a long lens and shoot from a distance when taking photos of bears and bison.

At campsites, hang a suction-cup-mounted hummingbird feeder on your RV's window and shoot

through the window from inside to capture the antics of these captivating birds. Place a shallow dish of water on the ground under a nearby bush to attract other birds and small critters. Many campground chipmunks and squirrels are experienced beggars, and there are great photo ops when they stop by to see what you're serving for lunch.

Out on the hiking trails, waterfalls and babbling brooks are great opportunities for DSLR shooters to use a very slow shutter speed ($\frac{1}{2}$ second or even slower — easiest with a tripod) to capture the flowing water as a silky stream.

A slow shutter speed can also emphasize movement in a photo. Show the speed of a cyclist or animal zipping past by setting a modest shutter speed ($\frac{1}{60}$) and panning the camera (moving it in sync with the moving object) to follow them as they pass. Most of the cyclist or animal (except their fast-moving limbs) will be in focus, but the landscape behind them will be blurred. Likewise, with the same shutter speed, you can keep the camera still and capture them as they fly by. The landscape will be in focus, but the fast movement of the cyclist or animal will be blurred.

Above all, have fun with your camera. Photography is a rewarding lifelong endeavor, and it's an ideal hobby to take along on your RV travels. **TL**

Exposure Tips

⬇️ **Emphasize movement with a slower shutter speed that deliberately blurs either the subject or the background. This technique works whether you're shooting racing cyclists or a raging waterfall.**



GET IN THE PICTURE

Selfies are all the rage these days, and selfie sticks help gain a bit of distance between the camera and the people in the photo. Just make sure your enthusiasm for that awesome shot doesn't send you over the edge as you back up into the scenery behind you.

Beyond taking selfies, there's a longstanding tradition at scenic overlooks of sharing cameras so everybody can go home with a photo of themselves against the stunning backdrop, as evidenced by this shot of Mark, our dog, Buddy, and me at the Grand Canyon.





Trailer for Two

Exclusive look at Ford's new Explorer Hybrid paired with Airstream's cozy Nest

— by Chris Dougherty

As a rule, up until now, if you wanted to tow a travel trailer, you needed at least an SUV with a gasoline or diesel engine. Hybrid vehicles were off the table. But times are a-changing, and with Ford's introduction of the 2020 Explorer Limited Hybrid 4x4, a projected tow rating of up to 5,000 pounds and remarkable fuel efficiency will become a reality. *Trailer Life* was granted an exclusive look at the new Explorer Hybrid, and, after pairing it to a 2019 Airstream Nest 16FB, it was clear that the next generation of efficient tow vehicles and high-end diminutive trailers is ready to rock and roll.

This Ford Explorer Limited Hybrid prototype was delivered to Encore RV Resorts' Tropical Palms in Kissimmee, Florida, where we were able to take the first look, with the understanding that the SUV was still under development. Ford will begin production in June.

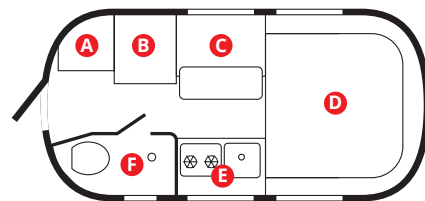
The Airstream Nest is the company's foray into molded-fiberglass trailers, akin to other high-end clamshell-style "egg" trailers like those from Bigfoot, Casita, Escape and Oliver. The Nest is strictly



🔗 The all-new 2020 Explorer Limited Hybrid, with its 3.3-liter engine, is projected by Ford to tow up to 5,000 pounds.

combines a gasoline engine with an electric-motor drive and battery system to power the vehicle. At lower speeds like city driving, the electric motor is the motive force. At highway speeds, the engine takes over, charging the batteries as it goes. When extra power is needed (towing or during a fast acceleration), both systems can work together to increase performance. All of this is controlled by the vehicle's computer system.

The Explorer Hybrid, which will be available only in the Limited trim package, uses a 3.3-liter hybrid engine that produces 318 horsepower. According to Ford, an EPA-estimated range of up to 500 miles between fuel stops is possible; though actual mileage may vary with production models and usage. Towing a travel trailer will likely reduce fuel economy, as will driving the vehicle full of cargo and passengers. However, when not towing the trailer, the Explorer Hybrid is poised to turn



- A) closet**
- B) refrigerator and microwave**
- C) single-bench dinette w/ swivel table**
- D) queen bed w/ cabinets above, storage below**
- E) sink and two-burner cooktop**
- F) wet bath**

in high-mileage figures.

While details are still being ironed out by Ford, the Hybrid Limited is nicely equipped with everything you'd expect from an upgraded trim package. The entire Explorer line has been redesigned for 2020, inside and out. The exterior sports an updated grille and body lines that make for an aggressive, can-do stance. On the inside, features like a two-thirds (roof length) sunroof, added smart technology, improved cargo capacity (87 cubic feet), and leather seating that includes middle-row "easy

The Nest's functional and aesthetic design is modern and tasteful, and adheres to Airstream's legacy of high-end design.

a couple's trailer, and about a third of the 16FB model is occupied by the front queen bed. The high-end aura is supported by the \$47,000 price tag for a 16-foot trailer.

FORD EXPLORER HYBRID

Hybrid SUVs are not new. But a midsize hybrid SUV that can tow 5,000 pounds raises the bar dramatically and brings real-world towing to a reality among those looking for small but livable trailers for camping versatility. Obviously, the automotive industry is on a full-steam-ahead course to replace as many vehicles as possible with hybrids and electrics, as well as making those vehicles self-driving. While most RVers are less enamored by self-driving vehicles, they are excited about more fuel-efficient and environmentally friendly models that can actually tow trailers.

For long-distance driving, hybrid technology



Inside, the Nest is bright and efficient with lots of windows. The front queen bed, outfitted with a light and neutral deluxe duvet and throw pillows, has a high-quality memory-foam mattress.

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✎ The galley's clean and efficient design offers a surprising amount of storage. The removable swing-away table works for dining, food prep or a laptop.

access" captain's chairs are all part of the refit. These middle seats fold forward to allow better access to the rear electric folding bench, and the chairs are pretty comfortable for backseat drivers.

AIRSTREAM NEST 16FB

Airstream is arguably the most iconic name in travel trailers on the planet. People around the world are familiar with the silver-bullet aluminum design. While the classic design is definitely recognizable, the company has ventured into other profiles over the years that appeal to a different clientele, and so it is with the 2019 Nest.

The Nest has a two-piece fiberglass clamshell design, available in two floorplans, with a Bowlus Road Chief-esque rear-entry door. Airstream's Nest literature states, "The design is simple, modern, useful, well made and incredibly comfortable" while appealing to "modern-living outdoor enthusiasts." For the most part, the Nest succeeds at achieving the company's stated goals.

The original Nest Caravan trailer was designed and built by Robert Johans at his Bend, Oregon, factory. Airstream purchased the design rights and added its own special touches and modifications.

HIGH STYLE

The 3.2-cubic-foot Norcold refrigerator, located just inside the rear entry next to the closet, operates via a 12-volt DC compressor. The microwave, housed below the fridge, is easy to use.



Two floorplans are available: the 16U, which features a U-shaped dinette at the front that converts to a bed, with additional counter and storage space just aft on the driver's side. The test 16FB has a queen-size bed in the front and a small single-bench dinette just aft on the driver's side. Otherwise, the trailers are identical.

The egg-shaped semimonocoque design has been embraced by a number of trailer manufacturers and



+ WHAT WE LIKED

Overall design, build quality, interior storage, bathroom shelves and cabinetry, china-bowl toilet, ease of towing, high-quality mattress, and clean, modern appearance.

- WHAT WE'D LIKE TO SEE

Exterior storage access, separate black- and gray-water tanks, awning-box rain diverter, bed lift, solar prep, inverter option, Wi-Fi repeater, stereo, and TV or tablet brackets.

features notable benefits, including increased structural strength and, because of fewer seams, a lower risk of leaking. Also, because the body is all fiberglass, similar to a boat hull, the effects of water intrusion are greatly reduced. These types of trailers tend to be smaller in size than

their framed counterparts, with the largest in the market currently built at about 25 feet long.

FORM AND FUNCTION

In typical tiny-trailer fashion, size and design supplant some features many RVers are accustomed to, which is to be expected. Storage, for instance, is often lacking, but in the Nest, Airstream has done a decent job of utilizing all the space under the front queen bed for stowing items. The downside is that these storage areas require lifting and/or removal of the heavy memory-foam mattress to access the compartment; some type of assist device or prop rod to hold the mattress up would be a welcome addition.

Unlike some other manufacturers of fiberglass-shell trailers, Airstream opted not to mold in exterior access doors for the storage spaces, which is a bit of a limiting factor. The other limiting factor is the holding-tank configuration. The Nest has one 30-gallon black-and-gray combination holding tank, so disposing of gray water requires a dump station, which can be counter to the needs of adventure travelers parking off the grid.

Otherwise, the functional and aesthetic design is modern and tasteful, and adheres to Airstream's high-end design legacy. The smooth, aerodynamic exterior is ultramodern, clad in a two-tone gray-over-white color scheme that is complemented by a dark-tinted wraparound automotive-style windshield and frameless side windows. The roof and ceiling are raised in the standing area of the trailer, improving overhead clearance in the aisle and wet bath.

The A-frame of the trailer is enclosed by a molded-fiberglass cover with hinged butterfly-style doors. The single 5-gallon LP-gas cylinder and dual 12-volt DC deep-cycle batteries are located beneath the cover, making access easy while concealing them for aesthetics. In front of the cover is a manual-crank A-frame jack, rather than an electric version or the new Lippert Quick Drop, which is an enigma

SPECIFICATIONS

2019 AIRSTREAM NEST 16FB

Exterior Length	16' 7"
Exterior Width	7' 1"
Exterior Height	9' 6"
Interior Width	6' 10"
Interior Height	6' 6"
Construction	Fiberglass shell
Freshwater Cap.	24 gal.
Black/Gray-Water Cap.	30 gal. combined
LP-Gas Cap.	5 gal.
Water-Heater Cap.	Instant
Refrigerator	3.2 cu. ft.
Furnace	16,000 Btu
Air Conditioner	13,500 Btu
Converter	55 amp
Battery (2)	12-volt
Tires	ST235/80R16
Suspension	Torsion axle
Weight (freshwater, water heater, LP-gas full; no cargo)	3,590 lbs.
Hitch Weight	480 lbs.
Axle Weight	3,110 lbs.
GVWR	4,000 lbs.
GAWR	4,000 lbs.
Cargo Carrying Cap.	410 lbs.
MSRP, Base	\$45,900
MSRP, As Tested	\$45,900
Basic Warranty	36 months

Airstream, www.airstream.com/nest
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PROTOTYPE

2020 FORD EXPLORER HYBRID LIMITED 4X4

Fuel Economy, Solo	NA
Fuel Economy, Towing	NA
Engine	3.3L V-6
Horsepower	318 combined
Torque	NA
Transmission	10-speed modular hybrid automatic
Axle Ratio	NA
Fuel Cap.	19 gal.
Tires	255/55R20
Suspension, Front	Independent strut
Suspension, Rear	Independent multilink
Brakes	Disc w/antilock
Tow Rating	5,000 lbs. projected
GVWR	NA
GCWR	NA
Weight, As Tested	4,969 lbs.
Length	16' 6"
Wheelbase	119"
MSRP, Base	NA
MSRP, As Tested	NA
Basic Warranty	NA

Ford Motor Company, www.ford.com



Top: A cedar-lined closet with a clothing rod has plenty of space and shelves for smaller items. The jack crank, table and mount are all stored in here. **Above:** The Nest's wet bath is reminiscent of a marine lavatory with its sealable cabinet for sundries.

for a trailer at this price point. Given the trailer's light weight, the manual jack, though, should not be a major hassle for most owners and is easily upgraded.

The rear-entry door is reminiscent of older trailer designs and truck campers, and makes for an efficient use of center-aisle space. A custom, locking aluminum step aids in entering and exiting the trailer. The door is also molded fiberglass, with a tall, tinted, frameless window in the center, and is

🔑 The Airstream Nest and Ford Explorer Hybrid are a nimble, efficient pair, ideal for weekend jaunts or weeklong vacations.



strong and sturdy. The Nest is very well equipped, and there are no options available.

A nice feature is shade offered by the 9-foot Carefree Freedom electric lateral-arm awning, but it's unavoidably mounted on brackets on the radius of the passenger-side wall. Because of the space between the brackets and the roughly 1/2-inch gap between the awning box and the wall, water runs down the side of the trailer in the rain, even when it's extended. We recommend adding a rubber-wiper seal or some kind of flashing to avoid this issue.

INSIDE INFORMATION

The interior decor is a case study in modern design and aesthetics. White laminate, gray carpet and classic Airstream aluminum, inserted where appropriate, adorn the surroundings. Countertops have the appearance of gray driftwood, as does the flooring. The deluxe bed covering adds to the comfort of the mattress and is reversible, in Wingspan White

Smart dash controls on Ford's Explorer Hybrid Limited 4x4 are available through the touch-screen (right), along with the dial gear shift switch. Seating (far right), clad in leather, is comfortable with six-way power and console.

or Clutch Blue. Seating surfaces are also available in either color.

Interior storage is well thought out and plentiful. Overhead is a combination of open cabinets with bungee cords to hold items in place and two cabinets with opaque sliding plastic doors; screw-down locks are available for galley items. The galley structure has two large drawers, including one with a hardwood silverware organizer, and



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—Mike C., Chicago



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two large-opening cabinets below.

The mattress is "hinged" in the middle to allow for "easier" lifting to access the storage and utilities underneath; however, the forward-most compartments require moving the mattress to the center aisle. The storage is lined, illuminated and large enough to carry quite a bit of gear, even though it may be a bit hard to access, as previously mentioned. But, as with a boat, if you're looking to keep the size of the unit small, having efficient storage is essential, and the Nest does it well.

On the curbside is the compact galley, which includes a two-burner cooktop and a single-bowl stainless-steel sink with a cover. A removable table swivels from the bench seat to the galley and is easy to position

for additional meal-prep space. The table and stand stow out of the way in the closet, and beneath the bench cushions are additional storage cubbies.

Wet baths are customary in RVs of this size, and while it's somewhat compact, there is just enough room for a 6-footer. The standard Thetford



Top: There is plenty of storage under the queen bed, divided into small sections and all lined and lit. The mattress has to be moved to access these. **Above:** An exterior under-mount utility box is compact and just big enough for the shorepower cord and adapters.



FINE LINES

The Nest's clamshell design reduces the need for seams that can leak. Batteries and an LP-gas cylinder are hidden under the hood on the A-frame and are easy to access.

china-bowl foot-flush toilet is high quality. Water-resistant enclosures protect the toilet paper and other items, and small shelves hold necessities in the shower. Care must be taken to make certain the holding-tank level is low enough to avoid an overflow during a shower. The shower drain has a 1½-inch sanitary check valve to help prevent sewage backup into the shower pan.

Across the hall is the closet, which doubles as a storage area for the stabilizer jack crank and the aforementioned table and stand. Next to that is a 3.2-cubic-foot Norcold N1090 12-volt DC compressor refrigerator, which is unusual in a travel trailer. This refrigerator doesn't require external ventilation, which is a design benefit. It operates in two modes, and is rated to draw 4.5 amps in standard mode and 2.4 in night mode.

TECHNOLOGY LOWDOWN

With the dual group-24 battery setup, boondocking time can be extended, but certainly not indefinitely. For extensive off-the-grid camping, additional batteries and a charging source will be required, although space might preclude this modification. Because of the diminutive size of the Nest and the roof space required for the air conditioner and skylight, there's not much space for a solar array.

Also absent are electronics components like a stereo, TV, TV antenna and Wi-Fi booster system. We have seen similar approaches in millennial-centric RVs, but while some have no conventional TV equipment, they are IoT (Internet of Things) power-houses, with items like tablet mounts, Wi-Fi repeaters, solar systems and other similar items. This approach gives buyers the option of selecting their own systems. It will just be more of a challenge installing the equipment.

For couples looking to get away, the Airstream Nest is a stylish and comfortable little travel trailer that is ready for weekend adventures and even weeklong vacations, and is ripe for owners who relish the idea of customizing their RVs. **TV**

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AMERICAN
HISTORY
ROAD TRIP

WANDERING THE WARRIOR TRAIL

On the Great Plains of southeast Montana, you can almost hear the echoes of long-ago battles over the endless horizon

— by Jack Ballard



HOLE IN ONE

Wind and water have sculpted fascinating rock formations at Medicine Rocks State Park, a top-tier destination for hikers, sightseers and wildlife watchers.

It's a consummate shortcut.

Seasoned travelers heading to Montana from the upper Midwest often find themselves steaming westward across South Dakota on Interstate 90. The thoroughfare winds through Wyoming before bending sharply northward near Sheridan, not far from the Montana border. But like all angles, the west and north legs of I-90 are intersected by a diagonal running northwest. As it happens, Highway 212 follows the diagonal route, saving travelers 57 miles in the process on a perfectly serviceable highway. What savvy driver wouldn't opt for the shortcut?

While the highway makes travel more efficient in relation to time and distance, it's a shame to zip through without stopping. The longest segment



Above: There are plenty of places to camp along the Warrior Trail, like this full-service campground at Tongue River Reservoir State Park that has a marina and boat dock.

of the highway runs through Montana. In 2007, the state legislature designated the portion of Highway 212 running east of I-90 to the Wyoming border as the Warrior Trail. The name alludes to the region's long history as a homeland for American Indians and also references the numerous battles fought in the area between native warriors and the U.S. Army, most notably the infamous Battle of the Little Bighorn where General George Armstrong Custer and his soldiers were overwhelmed by indigenous forces on June 25, 1876.

But the southeastern region of Montana bisected by the Warrior Trail has even more to offer than history. It's a land of geological wonders, paleontological discoveries and a bold, singular landscape in ranch country where scenery and solitude blend on an endless horizon.

MEDICINE ROCKS STATE PARK

One of the area's most fascinating sites, Medicine Rocks State Park requires a diversion from Highway 212 just inside the Montana border. At the "town" of Alzada (population 29), a ribbon of asphalt veers away to the north, taking the traveler on a rambling journey through sparsely populated ranch country where wildflowers cloak the green hills in early summer and the golden leaves of green ash trees glow along the creek bottoms with the onset of autumn.

Highway 323 reaches the quiet ranching community of Ekalaka after a bit more than an hour's drive (72 miles). It's another 12 miles to the state park, but first don't miss the Carter County Museum in Ekalaka.

Tucked away in this rural hamlet is Montana's first county museum, founded in 1936. Like many other small-town museums, it's replete with displays regarding the Native American and ranching heritage of the local area. However, the tidy little museum also lays claim to world-class artifacts. Ekalaka is at the heart of some of the

Right: A student from one of the St. Labre Indian Schools decorates headstones just before Memorial Day at the nationally known Little Bighorn Battlefield. Far right: Located in one of the least populated counties in Montana, the Carter County Museum has a world-class collection of dinosaur fossils.



richest dinosaur “digs” on the planet. The museum houses a complete skeleton of a duckbill dinosaur (one of very few ever discovered) and a complete skull of a Triceratops.

The area badlands have produced numerous fossils from an array of dinosaurs along with extinct sea creatures and other animals. Each summer the museum hosts the Dino Shindig, a weekend program featuring

lectures by leading paleontologists, kids activities and entertainment. The event takes place July 27 and 28 this year.

Just up the road from Ekalaka, Medicine Rocks State Park takes its name from a collection of sandstone formations that jut from the prairie like ancient battlements or abstract sculptures in stone. These geologic wonders are the creations of two natural artisans, wind and water, that over the

course of innumerable human generations eroded the soft stone into its current form. The term “medicine rocks” hearkens to the belief of native peoples that the area was a place of spiritual significance. Later on, European settlers used the site as a gathering place for picnics and social events.

Drawn on the soft, sandstone formations are hundreds of petroglyphs and inscriptions from ancient to modern times. One of these is a detailed carving of a young woman’s head; she is being offered a flower by a bird in flight. The artwork is believed to represent the jilted love interest of an Irish sheepherder named Herbert Dalton who poured his anguish into the stone in 1904.

Beyond the rock formations, Medicine Rocks State Park and the surrounding area are great places to spot wildlife. Mule deer, sharp-tailed grouse, pronghorn, wild turkeys, meadowlarks and scores of other bird and mammal species may be spotted in and around the park. Visitors may hike several short trails winding through the 330-acre park. Like numerous other tracts of public land in the area, the park was once a homestead. When the homesteaders were unable to make a living from the property, its ownership reverted to the state.

RANCHING AND NATIVE AMERICAN ARTIFACTS

Back on Highway 212, the westbound traveler hits the halfway point between the interstate highways at the town of Broadus. It’s a bona-fide ranching community with two gas stations, a well-stocked grocery, a tack shop, feed store and the Powder River Historical Museum and Mac’s Museum.

Despite its modest appearance from the outside, the museum is a hit with travelers. Ratings on travel websites are almost invariably stellar. Common among the comments are those who rue not having more time to spend viewing the artifacts. Among the museum’s most highly rated displays are the pioneer schoolhouse, vintage clothing, old-time transportation (buggies and early automobiles) and the county’s jail, which was constructed

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"Sometimes you just don't have time to fumble around your camera bag looking for the right lens. That's why whenever I am driving I keep a camera and lens at the ready, allowing me to pull over, grab and go. This bison photo is a perfect example of that exact situation. The bison was walking in the field next to the road and birds were flying around his head and landing on his back. I pulled over, grabbed my camera with the Tamron 18-400mm all-in-one zoom and ran to the other side of the road for a better angle. I captured two birds flying right at his head with another four perched on his back—a moment that

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Wildlife abounds on the public and private lands along the Warrior Trail. A blue heron (right) takes off from the shoreline of the 12-mile-long Tongue River Reservoir, while two antelope bucks (far right) spar on the unspoiled Montana prairie.

in 1919. The museum also houses the largest collection of seashells west of the Mississippi River.

History lovers will find another outstanding museum just up the road in Ashland. In 1884, a former soldier concerned with the welfare of the Northern Cheyenne people in eastern Montana entreated Bishop John Brondel on their behalf. The result was the establishment of the St. Labre Indian School and parish at Ashland. The school now educates around 750 Native American and local pupils at its main campus in Ashland and two smaller schools on the Crow Reservation.

The long and successful history of St. Labre (an exceptionally high percentage of graduates attend college) has enriched its community in other ways. Throughout the years tribal members and donors have entrusted the school with priceless Native American artifacts. Many of these are on display in a small museum attached to the school's administration building that is open to the public. The collection includes numerous examples of clothing decorated with intricate beadwork, quills and shells. Arrow points, war clubs, shields and other implements are also displayed. Admission to the museum is free; donations are accepted.

TONGUE RIVER STATE PARK

A short detour from the Warrior Trail southward on Highway 314 (37 miles)

+ PLANNING YOUR TRIP

The Montana Office of Tourism's website is a good place to start planning for a history-filled road trip through the Great Plains. Use the search tool and type in "Warrior Trail Highway" to find a map and places to stop along the route. A downloadable guide, *Montana: Explore Indian Country*, provides more information on following the Warrior Trail and visiting the state's Native American homelands. www.visitmontana.com



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TRAVEL WANDERING THE WARRIOR TRAIL

leads to Montana's Tongue River State Park. Tongue River Reservoir is a sprawling impoundment near the Wyoming border. Its lengthy, irregular shoreline spans more than 12 miles on the main stem of the Tongue River, its waters lapping at multihued sandstone bluffs and spilling into plenteous prairie coves. The park boasts a large campground, a seasonal marina, two boat launches, picnic areas and access to a host of activities for water lovers.

Fishing is a recreational favorite among visitors. Smallmouth bass, northern pike, walleye and plenteous crappie make the reservoir a hot spot for local anglers. Motorized boats are used by many anglers, but the reservoir's protected coves and back bays are ideal for those casting from a canoe or kayak. The prime fishing season typically begins around Mother's Day. Action is excellent through June and usually remains consistent throughout the summer.

Along with fishing, the reservoir is also noted for recreational boating. Birders and wildlife watchers who rise early are frequently rewarded with sightings of pronghorn, mule deer, coyotes, blue herons, ospreys, meadowlarks and many lesser-known species. One of my fondest memories from the area was drifting within a stone's throw of a blue heron while fishing from a canoe. The stately bird's gaze on the shallow water in which it was hunting was so intent that it resulted in the closest encounter I've ever experienced with a heron.

The Warrior Trail's westward termination occurs at Little Bighorn Battlefield



STAY AND PLAY

Known as the Warrior Trail, Highway 212 in Montana between Interstate 90 and the Wyoming state line covers miles of history and much to see. Battlefields, memorial sites and top-rated museums along the way tell the stories of Lieutenant Colonel George A. Custer and Native Americans in such detail that travelers are transported to the past. Campgrounds are limited along the way, but they're well spaced in relation to attractions. The following five campgrounds are listed from east to west.

North of Ekalaka, **Medicine Rocks State Park** has seven primitive campsites available on a first-come, first-served basis, as well as clean vault toilets and hand-operated water pumps. Park entrance fee is \$6 for nonresidents, and camping is \$28 per night for nonresidents. The campground fills quickly during Dino Shindig at the end of July. www.stateparks.mt.gov/medicine-rocks

Three miles southeast of Ekalaka, **Ekalaka Park Campground** is a primitive Forest Service campground with seven sites, picnic tables and water. It isn't suitable for long RVs, and there are no fees or reservations. www.fs.usda.gov/custergallatin

On the west side of Broadus, **Wayside RV Park** is a rustic commercial campground. Accommodations range from tent sites to electric hookups (30 and 50 amp), full hookups and camping cabins, and there's a small laundry and dump station. www.broadusrvpark.com

East of Ashland, **Red Shale Campground** is a Forest Service campground adjacent to Highway 212 with 14 sites and vault toilets. The longest sites accommodate RVs up to 30 feet. No fees, no reservations, and no water available. www.fs.usda.gov/custergallatin

In Decker, **Tongue River Reservoir State Park** has 81 reservable sites with electric hookups and 80 first-come, first-served sites with no electric, available from May through September. Sites have picnic tables and fire rings. Water spigots and vault toilets are near most campsites, and there's a dump station. Park entrance fee is \$6 for nonresidents. Camping is \$28 per night for nonresidents, and \$34 per night with electricity. www.stateparks.mt.gov/tongue-river-reservoir

National Monument and Highway 212's wedding with I-90. The national monument commemorates the Battle of the Little Bighorn, or Custer's Last Stand, the military encounter in which Custer's troops were annihilated by a confederation of native warriors. The monument includes a visitor center with many intriguing displays including artifacts from the battle. Interpretive talks further inform visitors of the site's history, while an auto-tour route with informative stops shows gravestones erected where soldiers fell and gives a visual sense of how the battle unfolded.

Although not usually billed as a wildlife park, Little Bighorn Battlefield is home to many types of wildlife including 14 species of reptiles, six amphibians, 25 mammals and at least 60 species of birds. Sharp-tailed grouse, a native bird whose mating antics were the inspiration for some historic Native American dances, are sometimes seen among the headstones in the national cemetery near the visitor center. An early morning stroll on the monument's walkways provides the chance to see many Plains species of birds such as sparrows, western kingbirds and red-tailed hawks.

The Highway 212 shortcut is a mile-saver for drivers looking to minimize distance. But it's a shame to pass through in haste, for there are more than a few travelers' nuggets to unearth on the Warrior Trail. **TL**

Anglers in hand-powered craft find excellent success in the protected bays of Tongue River Reservoir State Park for species like this smallmouth bass.



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➤ The living area of the Cougar Half-Ton 32RLI has comfortable seating, an impressive entertainment center and a convenient galley island to handle food-prep and cleanup.

MID-LEVEL PRICE

COMFORT, QUALITY AND SOPHISTICATION ARE COMMON DENOMINATORS AMONG TRAVEL TRAILERS IN THE \$35,000 TO \$60,000 RANGE

— by Bruce W. Smith

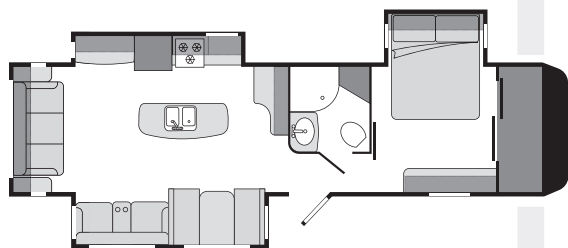
If you haven't checked out travel trailers in the \$35,000 to \$60,000 range lately, the choices can be overwhelming. Competition between brands is fierce, with each RV manufacturer continually improving on build materials, layout design, standard features and custom options. For the sake of comparison, we've highlighted five

midpriced 2019 models with residential comfort, roominess and plenty of amenities, typical items on RV shoppers' must-have lists. Each model offers something that sets it apart from others in this price range.

But don't take our word for it. Buying a travel trailer is like buying a house. Do a serious walk-through of each model that piques your

interest. Sit in every seat. Open every drawer and door. Study the layout from front to rear and bedroom to living room. Pay close attention to the comfort of the seating arrangement and how it's located in relation to the television screen. Whether you watch TV or not, you'll be spending much of your time there.

Move around the galley while noting where the



KEYSTONE COUGAR HALF-TON 32RLI

If cutting-edge technology and construction methods are high on your must-have list, few travel trailer manufacturers are savvier about incorporating those aspects into RVs than Keystone. The 2019 Cougar Half-Ton 32RLI is a case in point. A mobile app operates just about every function in the RV, from lights to slideouts to entertainment components and everything in between, using the iN-Command control system.

This nearly 36-foot travel trailer has three slideouts, starting with a streetside slide in the rear living area that houses the well-equipped kitchen and impressive entertainment center. Beneath the 54-inch 4K HDTV screen is a 30-inch, 5,500-Btu electric fireplace with a thermostat and remote control. In the curbside slide are a pair of plush recliners to stretch out on next to the generous booth dinette. A 68-inch trifold sleeper sofa lines the rear of the trailer, and a kitchen island in the center of the floor supplies an oversize stainless-steel sink and storage.

Up front in the bedroom, sleep should come easily on the king-size bed that's part of the third slide, providing easy walk-around space to get to either of the two big wardrobes. More storage is under the bed and in a collection of drawers. Adjacent to the bedroom is a sizable bathroom with a curved shower, linen closet and skylight to let in plenty of natural light.

Hidden from view is another key element of the Cougar Half-Ton 32RLI: its stout construction. The trailer is built with welded-aluminum framed walls, slides, cargo boxes and floors to combat road vibration and maximize overall structural integrity.

Underfoot are double-welded aluminum floor joists that span the width and length of the RV so the floor continues to feel as solid as the day the trailer was driven off the lot. Above its 7-foot ceiling is an array of arched aluminum rafters put together the same way as the rest of this Cougar's strong bones.

Exterior Length	35' 11"
Exterior Width	8'
Interior Height	7'
Exterior Height	11' 4"
Freshwater Cap.	60 gal.
Black-Water Cap.	30 gal.
Gray-Water Cap.	60 gal.
LP-Gas Cap.	14 gal.
UVW	8,416 lbs.
Hitch Weight	1,165 lbs.
Axle Weight (2)	5,200 lbs.
GVWR	10,500 lbs.
MSRP, Base	\$45,902

www.keystonerv.com

TOP-TIER STYLE

appliances are located. If you are going to spend a lot of time in any RV, convenience and functionality of the galley layout are important. My wife insists on a new RV having a residential-size refrigerator, as well as bright lighting in the bathroom and room to walk around the bed in the master bedroom. I require a roomy shower, comfortable recliners, double- or triple-sealed

slideouts and plenty of storage compartments.

Before heading out to an RV dealership or show, be sure to make up your own wish list, then check off the items as you inspect each trailer.

The Right Ride

Travel trailers in this price range often have a gross vehicle weight rating (GVWR) around 10,000 pounds with

lengths nearing 40 feet.

Trailers of this size can tax the capability of many half-ton pickups and most full-size SUVs, making three-quarter- and one-ton trucks better suited to the job.

Even with a heavy-duty truck, it's vital that the weight-distributing hitch is installed and set up properly, a task at which most RV dealers are experienced. Whether you are

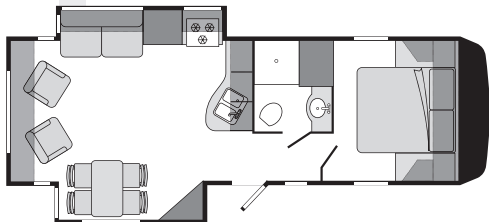
buying your first tow-behind or stepping up to a bigger trailer, it's wise to give the tow vehicle a thorough safety and equipment check before hitting the road.

With the tow vehicle suitably equipped and all the boxes on the must-have list checked off, RV life should be every bit the enjoyable experience you anticipated when the search for that new travel trailer began.

JAYCO EAGLE HT 270RLDS

Jayco's 28-year-old Eagle brand has stepped up the comfort and aesthetics to an industry-leading level with two choices in interior decor: Modern Farmhouse's contemporary styling, featuring painted white woodwork with rustic accents, and American Tradition's traditional look with glazed brown maple woodwork. Every fixture, fabric and feature has been carefully selected and installed. Hand-rubbed antiqued finishes, custom shiplap and barn-wood textures enhance the overall look and feel, while contrasting designer hardware and rustic lighting define each decor package.

Underfoot is Shaw residential carpeting butted up to IVC Trekk wood-plank flooring that makes the Eagle HT 270RLDS feel like home. Even the bathroom looks residential with a porcelain toilet, a stone-and-glass backsplash along



the countertop and plenty of light streaming in through the skylight.

Recliners are standard on the nearly 34-foot rear-living HT 270RLDS, as is a trifold sofa located in the streetside slide, which also houses the refrigerator and three-burner cooktop. The curbside slide contains the entertainment system, available electric fireplace and dinette table with four freestanding chairs; an L-shaped dinette is optional. The master bedroom up front has a walk-around queen bed with mirrored wardrobes and nightstands on either side.

Unseen yet even more important than the layout and decor is the construction. Jayco's Magnum Truss Roof System, with screwed-down 3/8-inch roof decking, is claimed to be significantly stronger than competitors in this class. The Eagle HT line also

incorporates 5/8-inch floor decking and 2-by-2-inch studs in the walls, with oversize nail plates at each joint and double-layer fiberglass insulation in the ceiling and floor.

Between the build quality, decor options and quiet Helix air-conditioning system and forced-air heating, the Eagle HT 270RLDS is a worthy contender in this price category.

Exterior Length	33' 11"
Exterior Width	8'
Interior Height	7'
Exterior Height	11' 10"
Freshwater Cap.	43 gal.
Black-Water Cap.	32½ gal.
Gray-Water Cap. (2)	65 gal.
LP-Gas Cap.	14 gal.
UVW	7,800 lbs.
Hitch Weight	990 lbs.
Axle Weight (2)	5,145 lbs.
GVWR	9,995 lbs.
MSRP, Base	\$43,789

www.jayco.com



🔧 All 2019 Jayco Eagle models offer two new interior-decor choices. The Modern Farmhouse style follows residential trends and features rustic white woodwork with antiqued hardware.

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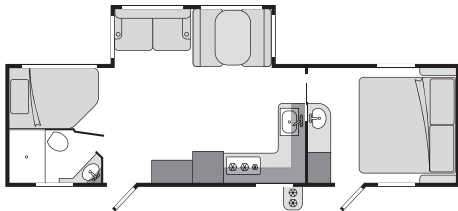


TRAVEL LITE EVOKE MODEL B

From the elegantly curved, soft-close cabinetry to the water-resistant Infinity woven-vinyl flooring, Furrrion entertainment system, 10-cubic-foot double-door refrigerator, extra-wide bunk beds in the rear and spacious king bed up front, the new full-body Evoke Model B was built to impress buyers shopping for a midpriced travel trailer.

One of three floorplans offered in the Evoke line, the

Exterior Length	31' 6"
Exterior Width	8' 6"
Interior Height	6' 9"
Exterior Height	10' 4"
Freshwater Cap.	54 gal.
Black-Water Cap.	40 gal.
Gray-Water Cap.	40 gal.
LP-Gas Cap.	14 gal.
UVW	7,020 lbs.
Hitch Weight	715 lbs.
Axle Weight (2)	5,100 lbs.
GVWR	9,515 lbs.
MSRP, Base	\$37,997
www.travelliterv.com	



31½-foot, single-slide Model B is designed to accommodate large groups. The layout appeals to families, with double-over-double bunks and an adjacent rear-corner bath. Up front, the master bedroom has its own vanity and sink, along with a king-size bed, a small fridge and an exterior entry door, one of two on the trailer.

High-end features include Granicote countertops and tables, stainless-steel Furrrion appliances that complement the Americana fridge, and a 24-foot smart awning that automatically retracts when it's too windy. The trailer rides on a Lippert Equa-Flex equalizer and 102-inch-wide axles for comfortable towing.



COACHMEN CATALINA LEGACY 303RKP

Coachmen, a division of Forest River, has introduced the Catalina Legacy 303RKP, a unit that measures just over 35 feet and pushes the boundaries with a 6-by-10-foot fold-down patio deck accessible through sliding-glass doors on the curb side of the trailer.

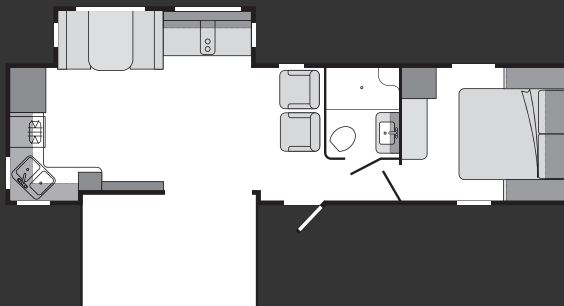
The wide-open living area in this rear-kitchen floorplan is furnished with two recliners midship. A bench dinette and comfy jackknife sofa fill the streetside slide, opposite the entertainment center with its 32-inch LED TV on a swing-arm bracket and optional electric fireplace. The bathroom is airy with a residential-size 48-by-30-inch shower.

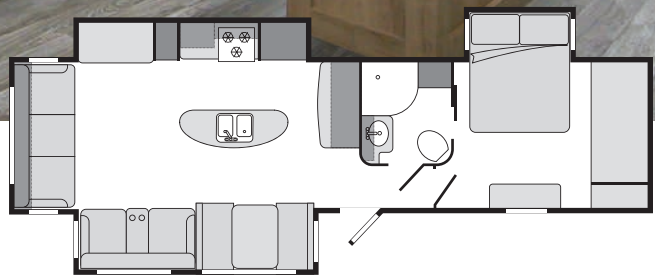
A walk-around queen bed dominates the master bedroom, which features his-and-her wardrobes, a closet and abundant additional storage in the cabinet below the TV. Throughout the trailer, flooring is ¾-inch tongue-and-

groove plywood, counter-tops are drop-edge Thermofoil, and the light oak cabinetry is screwed together for strength.

But the coolest feature is stepping through those sliding-glass doors onto the patio, with its blue LED lighting, exterior speakers and TV hookups. The drop-down patio, which has a 1,500-pound capacity, takes less than two minutes to set up. It's supported by a sturdy stabilizer leg and features solid-step stairs furnished with a handrail that can be attached to the platform. A 21-foot awning covers the patio so everyone on deck can enjoy the outdoors, rain or shine.

Exterior Length	35' 3"
Exterior Width	8'
Interior Height	6' 9"
Exterior Height	11' 3"
Freshwater Cap.	44 gal.
Black-Water Cap.	30 gal.
Gray-Water Cap.	70 gal.
LP-Gas Cap.	10 gal.
UVW	7,746 lbs.
Hitch Weight	808 lbs.
Axle Weight (2)	5,100 lbs.
GVWR	9,800 lbs.
MSRP, Base	\$37,575
www.coachmenrv.com	





WINNEBAGO MINNIE PLUS 30RLSS

Just shy of 37 feet, the Minnie Plus 30RLSS is a luxurious rear-living floorplan with three slideouts. The two in the back are large opposing slides, with the streetside slide containing the large entertainment center and nicely appointed galley, and the curbside slide housing oversize recliners and a bench dinette or optional freestanding table and four chairs. In between, tucked in the comfy rear nook, is an oversize trifold sofa that matches the recliners, giving

yet another place to lounge and relax.

The Minnie Plus' domed ceiling, big windows and overall decor exude richness and comfort. The kitchen offers an 8-cubic-foot refrigerator and a three-burner range, along with a pantry and overhead cabinet for storage. Adjacent to the slide is a hutch, providing additional storage space, plus a center island offers more drawers, cabinets and countertop, as well as a double sink.

Down the hall is a queen

bed on the front streetside slide, which opens the master bedroom into a spacious, well-appointed sanctuary with a full-width wardrobe and dresser. The bedroom also has a sliding door for direct access to the bathroom, which features a curved-front corner shower and the same rich cabinetry as the rest of the trailer.

The Minnie Plus is built on a BAL-engineered chassis

with a claimed industry-leading strength-to-weight ratio and rust protection. Exterior-grade tongue-and-groove plywood flooring, aluminum-tube side-wall construction and high-gloss fiberglass side walls add to the overall durability. The standard iN-Command control system runs most of the trailer's electrical systems with the touch of a phone app.

➔ As elegant as the kitchen in a custom home, the galley in the Minnie Plus 30RLSS maximizes counter and storage space, with the curved central island as its focal point. Above the fireplace, the big LED TV swivels outward so it can be viewed while preparing meals.



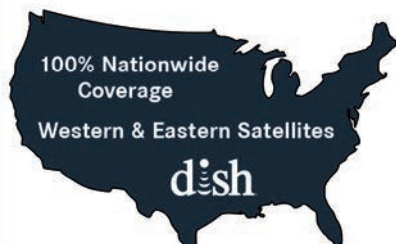
Exterior Length	36' 11"
Exterior Width	8'
Interior Height	6' 8½"
Exterior Height	10' 10"
Freshwater Cap.	50 gal.
Black-Water Cap.	41 gal.
Gray-Water Cap.	41 gal.
LP-Gas Cap.	14 gal.
UVW	8,860 lbs.
Hitch Weight	1,020 lbs.
Axle Weight (2)	5,100 lbs.
GVWR	9,995 lbs.
MSRP, Base	\$49,113
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WORTHY CONTENDERS

In addition to the featured models, eight more travel trailers in the \$35,000 to \$60,000 range caught our eye because of their layout, interior treatments and other cool features, including several that can be towed by half-ton pickups. Any of these new RVs would make trailer life quite comfortable.



BIGFOOT 25B25RQ

With its 7,500-pound GVWR, this molded-fiberglass travel trailer is well suited for towing behind many half-ton pickups. Its exterior is a full-fiberglass shell much like a boat — no wood or aluminum framing. Thick polystyrene-foam insulation keeps occupants comfortable down to minus-10 degrees Fahrenheit. The plush interior rivals many more traditionally built towables in this price range.

Exterior Length 25' 6"
GVWR 7,500 lbs.
MSRP, Base \$57,645
www.bigfootrv.com



GRAND DESIGN IMAGINE 2400BH

Towable by many half-ton trucks, this bunkhouse model has double-bed bunks in the rear and a residential queen bed in the front. An oversize U-shaped dinette in the single slideout with a view of the 32-inch LED TV on a swing arm are among the amenities inside. The exterior features an outside kitchen, a 21-foot power awning and substantial drop-frame pass-through storage.

Exterior Length 29' 11"
GVWR 7,495 lbs.
MSRP, Base \$34,450
www.granddesignrv.com



COACHMEN SPIRIT 3373RL

Opposing slides at the rear provide a spacious living area that features theater seating, a trifold sofa sleeper, sofa end tables, a 40-inch TV and an electric fireplace. There's a large kitchen island and a pet center that conveniently slides under the dinette. Motion-activated LED floor lights, a big walk-in shower and fishing-rod storage in the cargo area are just a few of the well-appointed 3373RL's special features.

Exterior Length 36' 6"
GVWR 9,800 lbs.
MSRP, Base \$45,070
www.coachmenrv.com



KEYSTONE OUTBACK 341RD

A 55-inch HDTV stretches out above a 48-inch electric fireplace along the rear wall of the 341RD for easy viewing from the pair of theater seats, two sofa sleepers in opposing slides and the dinette, with a bench seat and two free-standing chairs. The king-size bed in the master bedroom has a built-in pet kennel underneath that doubles as a storage cabinet, and the huge wardrobe is easy to access. Outside, there's a 21-foot power awning and a fold-away bike carrier.

Exterior Length 38' 8"
GVWR 10,500 lbs.
MSRP, Base \$47,018
www.keystonerv.com



LANCE 2465

The new flagship of Lance travel trailers is the ultralight dual-slide 2465, sporting a king bed in the master suite at the rear and an inviting wrap-around sofa bed in the bright, airy living room up front. High-end cabinetry, appliances, aluminum framing and state-of-the-art manufacturing processes ensure comfort that extends year-round with dual-pane windows and advanced ducted heating. This trailer also tows well behind half-ton pickups.

Exterior Length 24' 11"
 GVWR 7,300 lbs.
 MSRP, Base \$47,407
www.lancecamper.com



NORTHWOOD ARCTIC FOX 25W

A spacious garden tub, booth dinette and a single slideout with a jackknife sofa and copious storage are just the tip of the standard features found on Northwood's flagship travel trailer. A large residential fridge and built-in microwave stock the kitchen, and plush furnishings and hardwood cabinet doors with roller-bearing drawer guides spruce up the interior. Northwood is known for its proprietary chassis, welded aluminum-framed construction and four-season features that include high-density insulation and heated holding tanks.

Exterior Length 29' 6"
 GVWR 10,000 lbs.
 MSRP, Base \$47,874
www.northwoodmfg.com



OLIVER LEGACY ELITE

Oliver Travel Trailers are handcrafted and built to order, taking approximately 10 weeks to build. They are uniquely constructed and feature a double-hulled fiberglass shell mounted on an aluminum frame with a steel subassembly. The single-axle Legacy Elite sleeps three and has a GVWR of just 5,000 pounds, but it's loaded with upscale features and built from premium materials. It's also one of the most energy-efficient and aerodynamic designs on the market, with a long list of add-ons and upgrades to suit a wide range of buyer preferences.

Exterior Length 18' 5"
 GVWR 5,000 lbs.
 MSRP, Base \$47,900
www.olivertraveltrailers.com



VENTURE SPORTTREK TOURING ST343VIK

An electric fireplace, window seating and a king bed in the master suite, plus a sophisticated residential kitchen, rich walnut cabinetry, solid-surface countertops and a recessed gas cooktop for added counter space highlight this model. Panoramic windows bring in lots of natural light, and wide doorways throughout let you roam in comfort. The new Weather-Shield Package is designed to keep the cold of winter and heat of summer comfortably controlled.

Exterior Length 37' 8"
 GVWR 9,995 lbs.
 MSRP, Base \$45,485
www.venture-rv.com **TV**



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Great Escape

— by Chris Hemer



Ford breaks the mold with a small SUV that is faster, roomier and more fuel-efficient than ever

In the early '90s, America was in love with the SUV, a vehicle that could fit the whole family and all of its trappings in relative comfort yet could conquer dirt roads and snow-covered byways if needed. It soon became a reality that the only adversities most of these vehicles would ever face were the speed bumps in the parking lot of the local mall. No matter; consumers continued to snap them up in droves, and recently they've begun outselling passenger cars.

But now something strange is happening: The trucklike vehicles we thought we wanted are actually becoming

more like the cars we thought we didn't. It turns out that go-anywhere capability isn't nearly as important as comfort, cargo capacity, a high seating position and greater safety. Oh, and let's not forget a buttery-smooth ride, limolike silence, respectable mileage and a state-of-the-art infotainment system.

Enter the all-new 2020 Ford Escape. During a late-March unveiling at the historical Greenfield Village in Dearborn, Michigan, it became obvious how much the Escape has changed, and in what ways. For example, all-wheel drive is still available, but there are no longer any off-road pretenses attached to this fourth-generation Escape. You won't find any chunky tires, tow hooks or skid plates here. As Ford explains it, this new Escape is for the "urban customer" who appreciates flexibility, utility and performance.

We weren't granted an opportunity to drive the new Escape at the unveiling. The models we viewed were preproduction and may change slightly by the time they are introduced in the fall of this year.

Fourth-Gen Features

With the 2020 model, Ford sought to create not just a redesigned Escape but an entirely new model that is better than its predecessor in every measurable way. A new architecture incorporating high-strength steel is lighter and more rigid than before. This, combined with an aluminum hood, control arms, mini spare and other weight-saving tricks, reduces weight by up to 200 pounds over the outgoing model, according to Ford. This is also the most aerodynamic Escape ever, owing to a sleek new profile and wind-cheating features like active grille shutters, front-tire spoilers and redesigned fog-light pockets and side-view mirrors.

Two new engine offerings promise to make the 2020 Escape the best-performing one ever. A base 1.5-liter three-cylinder EcoBoost, standard on S, SE and SEL models, is projected to produce 180 horsepower and 177 lb-ft of torque, and when properly configured, is rated to tow 2,000

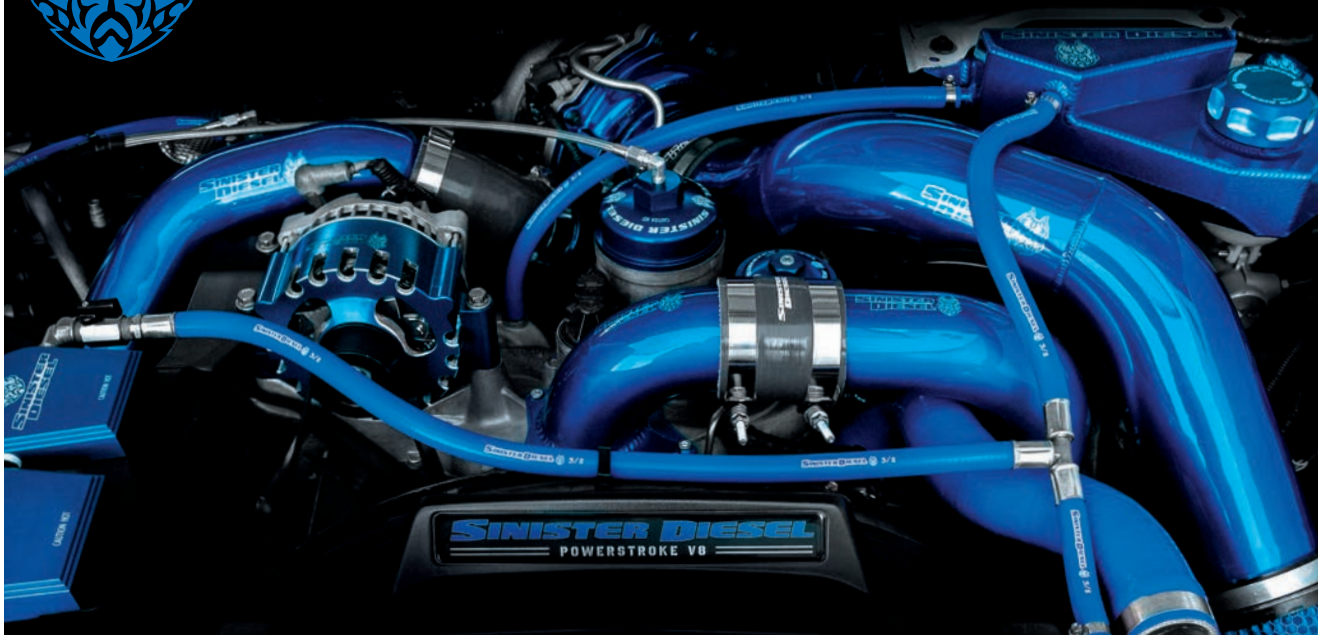


Ⓢ With the sliding second-row seats in the full-forward position, the new Escape's cargo area offers 37.5 cubic feet of space in gasoline models. In the rearward position, the Escape offers best-in-class second-row legroom. Right: The available head-up display on Titanium models projects vehicle speed and other information onto a 6-inch display on the windshield.



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SPECIFICATIONS

2020 FORD ESCAPE

Engines: 1.5L EcoBoost inline 3-cylinder, 180 hp, 177 lb-ft of torque. 2.0L EcoBoost 4-cylinder, 250 hp, 275 lb-ft of torque. 2.5L Hybrid, 198 hp. 2.5L Plug-In Hybrid, 209 hp

Transmissions: 8-speed automatic. 8-speed automatic with SelectShift and paddle shifters

Drivetrain: Front-wheel drive. Available intelligent all-wheel drive with AWD disconnect

Brakes: Four-wheel disc with ABS

Curb Weight (FWD/AWD): EcoBoost: 3,299/3,464. Hybrid: 3,399/3,551. Plug-In: 3,554/3,706

Fuel Capacity (gal.): 1.5L: 14.7. 2.0L: 15.8. Hybrid: 14.2. Plug-In: 11

Wheelbase (in.): 106.7

Towing Capacity (lbs.): 1.5L: 2,000. 2.0L: 3,500. Hybrid: 1,500

☺ The Escape is Ford's second-best seller, right behind the F-150. This fourth-generation model is targeted at the urban customer.



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⊖ The Escape's interior was still in the preproduction stage at this reveal and may change slightly by the time the vehicle hits dealer showrooms in the fall. However, features like a console-mounted rotary gear selector and available 8-inch touchscreen will make it to production.

pounds, according to Ford. SE, Sport and Titanium models are fitted with a new 2.0-liter EcoBoost four-cylinder projected to churn out 250 horsepower and 275 lb-ft of torque on 93-octane fuel, good for a tow rating of up to 3,500 pounds. Both engines are paired with a new eight-speed automatic transmission.

The 2020 model year also marks the return of the Escape Hybrid, both standard and plug-in models. Powered by Ford's fourth-generation propulsion system, which incorporates a 2.5-liter Atkinson cycle four-cylinder engine

SE, Sport and Titanium models are fitted with a new 2.0-liter EcoBoost four-cylinder projected to churn out 250 horsepower and 275 lb-ft of torque on 93-octane fuel, good for a tow rating of up to 3,500 pounds.

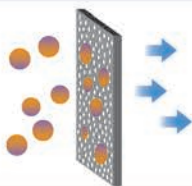
and CVT transmission, the hybrid is projected to produce 198 combined system horsepower and an impressive 85 MPH top speed in electric-only mode. The plug-in variant, available in every trim level except S and SE Sport, is projected to produce 209 horsepower as well as best-in-class range, and the ability to travel at least 30 miles in EV-only mode. Both models are available with all-wheel-drive and are rated to tow 1,500 pounds, a 500-pound improvement over the last hybrid model offered in 2012.

In addition to a wider and longer track, the 2020 Escape improves dynamically as well, with a new suspension system, larger tires, an all-new electric-power-steering system and selectable drive modes,

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An 8-inch touchscreen, standard on SE models and higher, shares information with an available 12.3-inch all-digital instrument cluster. Originally offered on the Mustang, then added to the 2020 Explorer, this feature is completely customizable by the driver to display basics such as speedometer, tachometer, trip meter and fuel economy, but can also display the drive mode selected with 3D animated color graphics.

A first for Ford in North America, Titanium models are also available with an all-new head-up display that projects important details onto a 6-inch screen on the windshield, providing easy access to information like vehicle speed, without having to take one's eyes off the road.

Smart New Technologies

Standard on all Escape models is Co-Pilot360, Ford's suite of safety technologies that includes the Blind Spot Information System (BLIS) with Cross-Traffic Alert, Pre-Collision Assist with Automatic Emergency Braking (AEB), auto high-beam headlamps and rearview camera.

Available features include Adaptive Cruise Control with Stop-and-Go and Lane Centering, Evasive Steering Assist, which helps the driver complete an emergency lane change, and Active Park Assist, which allows the driver to park in a parallel or perpendicular spot with the touch of a button. Again, we didn't get a chance to sample this system yet, but Ford claims that Active Park Assist works its magic without the driver having to touch the steering wheel, gear selector, throttle or brake pedal.

As we spend more time in our vehicles during urban commutes, drivers expect more convenience and entertainment technologies to get them through their busy days. With this in mind, FordPass Connect is a standard feature on all Escape models and provides 4G LTE Wi-Fi for up to 10 mobile devices with a compatible mobile subscription service, according to Ford.

FordPass Connect also provides

drivers with remote access to the vehicle, allowing them to use their smartphone to lock, unlock and locate their Escape, in addition to monitoring key vehicle diagnostics. Available Ford Sync 3 is compatible with Apple CarPlay, Android Auto, Ford+Alexa and Waze navigation, and compatible devices can stay charged with an available wireless charging pad on the front-center console. Also offered are type A and C

USB charging ports, as well as three 12-volt DC charging sockets.

The Escape is Ford's second-best-selling vehicle behind the F-150, underscoring America's seemingly insatiable desire for utility vehicles that offer carlike dynamics and comfort. With this 2020 model, have they delivered on all fronts? We plan to find out with a full test as soon as it becomes available. **TL**

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OR STORAGE SPOT A BREEZE

— by Bob Dawson

RV CAMERA SYSTEM

Cost \$419.99
Difficulty
Setup 2-3 hours

We've all told our kids we have eyes in the back of our heads, right? Well — spoiler alert — that was a myth. But eyes in the back of our RVs? Yep, that's 100 percent reality. A wireless backup camera is a great addition to any rig to help get into those tight spots or minimize confusion that can

happen even between the most experienced partners.

These days, there are myriad systems to choose from with different specs on the cameras and various sizes of monitors. ASA Electronics has been in this game almost since the beginning, and its Voyager Digital Wireless Observation System (WVOS43) features support for up to four of its wireless cameras (\$299.99 each) and a compact 4.3-inch monitor that can be stored in the console or glove box.

With just a little planning, installation is relatively straightforward. The Voyager manual breaks it all down into 10 steps for installing the camera (though it omits the parts about drilling for the camera wiring, connecting to the 12-volt DC wires and sealing that wiring), five steps for installing the monitor in the cab and seven steps for



powering up and pairing the camera to the monitor.

Installation starts with choosing a suitable location for the camera. As high as possible on the back of the RV is best to provide the optimal camera view. Most RVs will have a clearance light centered near the top of the back wall. That's the power source you're going to want to tap into, so above that clearance light is an ideal position. Below it is OK, too, if there isn't space above; just make sure the camera doesn't obstruct the clearance light.

Also, make sure you're leaving a space where you will drill a 3/4-inch hole to connect the camera wiring to the clearance-light wiring. I used a pencil and the bracket for a template and marked on the trailer wall where I planned to mount the camera.

Next, the clearance light was removed and the wiring tested with a voltage meter. To do this, the tow vehicle has to be connected to the trailer and the clearance lights turned on to locate the 12-volt DC and ground leads. The camera picks up its power from this connection when the clearance lights are on. With that info, the camera wiring harness was connected to the clearance-light wiring.

Before drilling, keep in mind that laminate walls have a lightweight aluminum structure for support and to provide



- 1) The camera is positioned as high as possible on the back of the trailer, and close to a clearance light to easily access that wiring.
- 2) After removing the center clearance light, a voltage meter is used to identify 12-volt DC and ground leads.
- 3) For the camera wiring to go through the wall and connect to the rear-light wiring inside a cabinet, a 3/4-inch hole was drilled between the camera position and the clearance light.
- 4) With the wiring connected and fished through the 3/4-inch hole, additional holes were pre-drilled for the bracket mounting screws.

TOOLS AND SUPPLIES

- ☐ Waterproof sealant
- ☐ Drill with a 3/8-inch bit and 3/4-inch hole saw
- ☐ Phillips screwdriver and driver bit
- ☐ Wire-crimping tool
- ☐ String and needle-nose pliers
- ☐ Ladder (two if you have a helper)

5) After mounting the bracket, the camera was installed in the bracket with the supplied set-screws. 6) Waterproof sealant was applied to the camera wire grommet, then the grommet was pushed into the hole in the trailer wall.

a foundation for securing panels to each other. It's important to drill through a panel where there is no aluminum so as not to damage the structure in any way. An ultrasonic stud finder can be helpful.

We then drilled the 3/4-inch hole for the camera wire. This will be a tricky step for some RVs more than others. On the test trailer's laminate walls, we stayed pretty close to the clearance light with this hole so we could be certain we'd be drilling into the adjoining cabinet space inside the trailer where the clearance-light wiring was accessible. We did have to remove and then reinstall a short piece of flashing at the back of a top shelf on the inside of the trailer that's there to hide the clearance-light wiring.

With that wiring hole drilled, we attached the camera bracket to the trailer wall. You'll want to mark and predrill the screw holes, then apply weatherproof sealant in the holes, on the back of the bracket and on the screws before applying the screws to permanently attach the bracket.

With the bracket attached, the camera was mounted with the supplied hex-head screws. You'll want to leave the screws a bit loose until installing the monitor and adjusting the camera angle.

We then connected the camera wire to the wiring we previously connected to the clearance light. The Voyager kit comes with a snap-on connector to connect to that wiring. This step may involve fishing the clearance-light wiring to the 3/4-inch hole, so string and a pair of needle-nose pliers might come in handy. For this project, with the holes drilled through the laminate walls, we connected these wires on the inside.

With that connection made, we applied sealant to the grommet, pushed the wiring into the RV wall, pushed the grommet into the 3/4-inch hole and reinstalled the clearance light.

We then headed to the cab of the truck to connect the monitor to an



accessories port and mounted it with the suction cup. Next, we turned on the ignition to get power to that port and powered on the monitor.

The pairing process started with pushing the Select/Pair button on the monitor. When the monitor displayed its Pairing Start message, the clearance lights turned on to power up the camera and continue the pairing process.

The Pairing/Start message then changed to a Save Data message, indicating that the camera was paired, and, sure enough, we could then see the camera image on our monitor. It was helpful to have a buddy at this stage to go to the back of the rig and adjust the camera. When the monitor shows just the right camera angle, we tightened down the camera screws.

The biggest backup challenge with this travel trailer is getting it into the tight storage space. With inches to spare on either side, that task usually involves jumping into and out of the truck to be sure we're not too close on the blind side. With the Voyager Digital Wireless Observation System installed, we're now able to slip the rig right in.

The 4.3-inch monitor is small enough that we can keep it on while towing, and those eyes in the back of the trailer give us a little extra peace of mind for maneuvering through cramped fuel stations and highway lane changes. Pulling into camp, maneuvering the rig is now easier as well. And the IR LEDs on the camera make after-sundown campground arrivals and returns to the storage lot practically stress-free. **TV**

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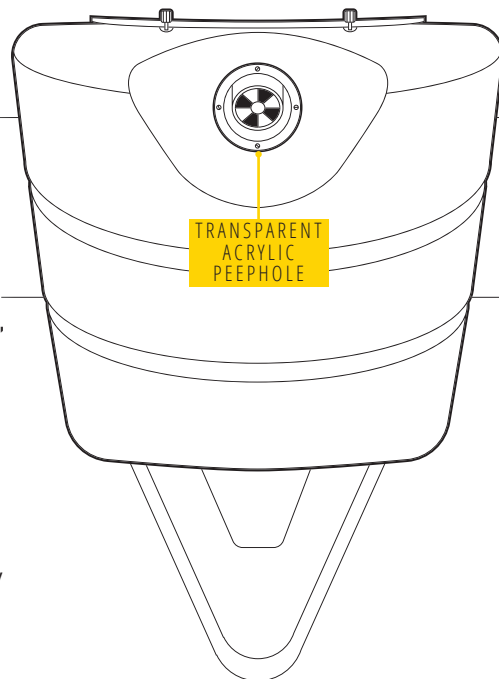


EASY LP-GAS LEVEL CHECK

My wife and I created a way to quickly check LP-gas levels anytime we are near our travel trailer's A-frame. Instead of having to lift the ABS-plastic cover to check the auto-switchover indicator on the regulator or, even worse, finding out there's no LP-gas left when the refrigerator light conveys the bad news, we solved the guessing game by constructing a peephole in the cover.

We measured the diameter of the auto-switchover indicator and cut a hole in the cover with a hole saw, just in front of where the gauge is located. We then got a scrap of plexiglass and cut a round piece of the transparent acrylic that is about half an inch larger in circumference than the hole we cut in the cover. We put the piece of plexiglass over the hole in the cover, drilled four small holes in both the plexiglass and the cover, and attached the two with tiny brass nuts and bolts. Before attaching the plexiglass, we put a small bead of RTV silicone around the exterior edge of the hole to seal everything.

Jim Windle, Dillwyn, Virginia



and is a perfect solution. We now have a queen-size bed for adult guests. We bought our fold-and-carry 36-pound massage table (no headrest) from Amazon. When it's not in use, it's stored upright in its case out of the way inside. Or we leave it at home if we know we won't be needing it.

Andy Marsden, Richmond, Texas

Sleep Like a Baby

● We have a Venture RV with a dinette that converts into a bed that is OK for little children but pretty small for most guests, so we came up with a simple and affordable solution. We bought a height-adjustable portable massage table that fits at the end of the cushions when the dinette is set up as a bed. The portable table is 72 inches long and 36 inches wide, with a 2-inch foam pad on it,



the cabinet door. This keeps all the loose stuff from spilling out onto the floor.

Deborah Johannes, Box Elder, South Dakota

Staying Power

● After being on the road all day, it's nice to get settled in for the night. There's nothing more annoying than opening a cabinet and having the contents come flying out at you. We came up with the perfect fix: tension rods purchased at Walmart. For our needs, we use ones that extend from 10 to 18 inches. We place several of them vertically in front of paperwork, kitchenware, etc., just inside



TECH ED TIP

➔ When you turn on a faucet in your RV, does the water pump sound like the herd of buffalo in *Dances with Wolves*? This is often the result of air in the pump chambers that gets there when the pump draws air from the tank. To fix it, turn the pump off, open all the kitchen and bath faucets, hot and cold, then turn the pump on and off, then back on. This should purge the air. Then turn off the faucets. If it keeps reoccurring or the pump loses prime, you'll need to check the pump intake for leaks.

—Chris Dougherty **TL**



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SUMMER HOME

A 1950S-INSPIRED FACELIFT FRESHENS UP AN AGING FIFTH-WHEEL

INVESTMENT ⚙️ **Cost:** \$5,500 | **Time:** 300 hours

When my wife, Pat, and I began our search for a used camper, we knew we wanted a simple trailer with no slideouts or hydraulic jacks. We narrowed the search to fifth-wheels built by R-Vision in the late 1990s. Not only do they have a full bath and queen bed, which were on our wish list, they also have a fiberglass skin, welded-aluminum frame and enclosed underbody with axles that allow them to sit lower to the ground.

After weeks of searching, we purchased a Trail-Lite for \$5,000 that had a great layout and weighed only 4,395 pounds. The tires, brakes, bearings, battery and 12-volt electrical connection to the tow vehicle were immediately replaced. The rest of the transformation of what we now call our Summer Home occurred over the following two years while the trailer was being used for frequent camping trips.

Inside, the first thing to go was the thin RV mattress. It has been replaced with a residential innerspring mattress. Accent wallpaper was removed, and the faucets and showerhead were replaced with chrome RV fixtures. Flooring in the lower level was swapped out for black-and-white peel-and-stick vinyl tiles, and cushions were reupholstered in a 1950s-café style. Pat sewed

curtains that complement the '50s look. Two 23-inch HDTVs were installed, along with an iRV radio, satellite radio and Bluetooth transmitter. The favorite item with guests is a retro-look red wall clock purchased for \$10 on Amazon.

Outside, the bumper and trim around the bottom were painted, and the faded multicolored decals were removed and replaced with new Trail-Lite decals and simple red and gray horizontal stripes. Chrome hubcaps and trim rings were added, and finally, the blue-and-white awning was replaced with a solid gray one. A Reese Sidewinder hitch was installed for towing with our shortbed pickup.

Almost all parts and materials were bargains that were ordered online, and we did most of the labor ourselves. We now have a little more than \$10,000 invested, including the purchase price and all the upgrades, and we could not be happier with the results. Our Summer Home is dependable, comfortable and never fails to attract attention as we travel about the country.

— **Bill Aldridge**, Palm Coast, Florida **TV**



Left: The Trail-Lite had good bones to start with but dated decor. Far left: The flooring, drapes, seat covers and wallpaper border all had to go.

RV RENOVATIONS

Have you modified your RV or remodeled it completely? Tell us about it in 500 words or less, including the total cost and time spent, and email your description to info@trailerlife.com. Include an ample selection of photos illustrating the project, along with your full name and mailing address. We'll pay \$50 for every RV Makeover we publish.

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A man in a plaid shirt is smiling while grilling corn on the cob. The background is a warm, golden-brown bokeh.

HOT

A family of four is walking on a sandy beach. A young girl is in the foreground, followed by a man, a woman, and another girl. The background is a bright, hazy beach scene.

HOT

A green travel trailer is parked on a paved area next to a green pickup truck. The background is a dense forest of trees.

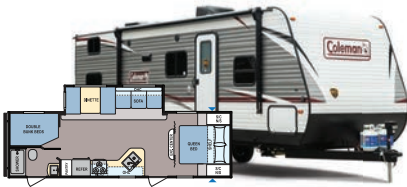
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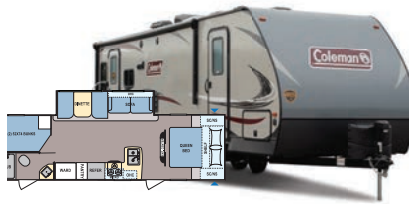
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TITAN 20-FOOT SEWER HOSE KIT \$49.99

Do you enjoy dumping holding tanks with a hose that comes apart at the connections or cracks and leaves sewage in the compartment? If not — and we'd be worried if you said yes — then investing in a good, modern sewer-hose kit is essential. To fit the bill, Thetford offers the premium-quality Titan line of sewer-hose kits and connectors. Thetford has long been in a leadership role in offering products for RV-sanitation systems that make these inevitable duties easier and better. The foundation of its Titan system is the thermoplastic elastomer (TPE) hose, which Thetford claims is crush-proof, flexible and resistant to damage from use in extreme temperatures (we couldn't crush it). The connectors have four prongs for secure locking, and the ergonomic threaded handle makes twisting into a sewer connection easy. The 20-foot Titan Premium Sewer Kit includes two 10-foot TPE hoses that can be combined when the dump port isn't near the RV. The kit's universal adapter is made of translucent material, allowing users to see when the tank has drained, and has a revolving design so the elbow can be positioned in any direction.

www.thetford.com/products/evacuation/titan



STAFF PICK ✨ We use Thetford Titan kits when conducting RV tests, and they work well. Having two or more hoses is essential for long runs to some sewer connections, and the handle keeps everything clean and neat. The fittings and hose are large but easy to handle.
— *Chris Dougherty, Technical Editor*

SNOOZ WHITE-NOISE SOUND MACHINE \$79.99

RV parks and campgrounds can be noisy places, and even during quiet hours things can go bump in the night. Some RVers rely on the sound of a fan to drown out the din. Putting a new spin on that old technique, the Snooz encloses a small fan that generates soothing sounds without creating a draft. The easily portable Snooz weighs 1.1 pounds, measures 3.2 inches tall by 5.6 inches around and plugs into 120-volt AC power. A twist of its shell adjusts the sound level from a whisper to a rumble.

www.getsnooz.com



KITCHENAID SMART DISPLAY

The Smart Display from KitchenAid allows RV cooks to instantly access recipes and cooking videos, make shopping lists, watch TV, listen to music and control smart gadgets that work with Google Assistant. The water-resistant 10-inch voice- and touch-activated device is an easy-to-use smart hub that travels from the RV's galley counter to the recliner, picnic table or wherever it's needed. KitchenAid says the new Smart Display will be priced between \$200 and \$300.

www.kitchenaid.com



SALVINCO LED READING LIGHT \$59

SalVinCo specializes in 12-volt DC lights for RV and marine use. The company's new LED Reading Light with USB Port has a flexible neck that stretches out more than 6 inches and provides 160 lumens of light with a neutral 3,500 K rating. The fixture has a satin-nickel finish, soft-touch switch and optional blue or white night-light. Its compact size (2.4-inch base, 4.5-inch length) and convenient USB port for charging phones and supplying power to peripheral devices make it a good fit for RVs.

www.salvinco.com



AIR LIFT WIRELESSONE \$499

The second generation of Air Lift Company's WirelessOne onboard air-compressor system allows wireless control of all brands and types of air springs via a handheld remote or the WirelessOne mobile app on the user's Apple iOS or Android Bluetooth-enabled device. The kit includes an air compressor rated at 100 PSI, a manifold, air line, plug-and-play wiring harness and mounting hardware.

www.airliftcompany.com

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LEVEL UP

After trying and failing to get a hydraulic-leveling cylinder replaced under the warranty, a Michigan couple came to RV Resolutions for help:

FF In February 2013, we purchased a new Lifestyle LS36FW made by EverGreen. The fifth-wheel has a Quadra Bigfoot four-point hydraulic leveling system. We had an issue with the right-front jack, and while at the EverGreen factory in Middlebury, Indiana, for other repairs, we notified Quadra about it.

At that time the service manager at Quadra said he could send a service truck to the EverGreen factory or we could stop by Quadra's shop

in White Pigeon, Michigan, for repairs. We chose to stop by the Quadra facility as it was only about 12 miles from the EverGreen factory. The repair was covered under the Quadra warranty.

Fast-forward to November 2018 when we called Quadra to get a rear-jack cylinder replaced as there was problem with it. That cylinder had to be removed because the snap ring that held the piston seal in place had come out and let the seal drop, which leaked the fluid out. We spoke with Patrick Rowe at Quadra, and he told us the cylinder was not covered under the warranty because the system was not installed at Quadra's facility. This system was installed in the fifth-wheel as standard equipment at the EverGreen factory.

We are forwarding copies of the Bigfoot warranty, which states that the leveling system has a lifetime warranty on the cylinder. Nowhere does it say that the system must be installed at the Quadra facility.

Any help or suggestions you can give us would be greatly appreciated. We are asking for a replacement cylinder, not labor fees.

Judith and John J. Robertson, Burton, Michigan

THE COMPANY RESPONDS

RV Resolutions conveyed the circumstances of the Robertsons' complaint to Quadra Manufacturing and received this reply:

I just received the correspondence from RV Resolutions in regard to Judith and John Robertson. In the packet of information that was forwarded was the outdated warranty. Since that time, Quadra has revised its manuals to properly explain the different warranties.

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The new manuals state that the new warranty guidelines void all previous warranty guidelines.

However, since the Robertsons did properly register their warranty and are the original owners of the RV, and their warranty guideline is extremely vague, I am sending them a new QE116 cylinder, but they are responsible for labor and freight. Thank you for bringing this to my attention.

Patrick Rowe, Parts Department
Quadra Manufacturing, White Pigeon, Michigan

John Robertson followed up, letting us know the issue had been resolved to his satisfaction:

“We have contacted Patrick Rowe and accepted his proposal. We have received the replacement part and paid the freight. Thank you, *Trailer Life* and RV Resolutions, for your involvement. We could not have accomplished this without your assistance.

J.J.R.

Reality TV 2

“In the April issue, RV Resolutions dedicated two half pages to William “Herb” Sims’ TV wiring problem in his 2018 Keystone Cougar fifth-wheel. He clearly tried to fix it himself but eventually asked for RV Resolutions’ assistance. It was good to read that a dealership made the repair. However, you left out a most important detail. What was the fix?

Mike Mayes, Lemoore, California

We checked in with Herb Sims, who said he had since discovered that the repairs to the living room television had affected reception elsewhere in the RV:

“In retrospect, I should have done a better inspection prior to receiving the

fifth-wheel back from the dealership. The technicians ran a second line from the distribution amp in the master bedroom to the second bedroom. That was necessary. What was also necessary was to add a second cable run from the distribution amp to the living room TV, but they did not do this. And they removed the fifth drop, which is on the exterior of the fifth-wheel, so we cannot watch TV outside.

William “Herb” Sims, New Market, Alabama

Alisha Howton, Keystone’s customer-support manager, is working with Sims to resolve the problem. We’ll post any new information we receive, along with Sims’ April letter and the full version of his follow-up letter at www.trailerlife.com/rv-gear/rv-resolutions/reality-tv.

NEED HELP RESOLVING AN RV ISSUE ?

RV Resolutions is *Trailer Life*’s 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, mail a typed letter to *Trailer Life* RV Resolutions, 2750 Park View Court, Suite 240, Oxnard, California 93036. Include copies of appropriate bills and correspondence along with a self-addressed, stamped envelope. Selected letters will be edited and published unless otherwise requested.



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NEW TIRE SIZE INFLATION



Q I have a 2013 Outdoors RV (ORV) Timber Ridge 26RLS travel trailer with an unloaded weight of 7,200 pounds and a 1,500-pound cargo capacity. The unit came with load-range D Goodyear tires and an ORV-recommended inflation pressure of 65 PSI, the maximum for load-range D tires. I have since upgraded to load-range E tires. The maximum inflation rating for these tires is 80 PSI. Should I run the new tires at 65 PSI, ORV's recommended inflation setting, or closer to 80 PSI, the load-range E maximum?

John Goldsmith, Chilliwack, British Columbia

A Make sure the wheels can handle the extra inflation pressure. Each wheel will be marked, usually on the inside of the rim or center, providing maximum load and pressure. If the wheels are rated for that extra pressure, that gives some flexibility.

Most quality tire manufacturers publish a chart of inflation pressures and weight ratings for each tire size, called a "load and inflation table." A tire rated for its max load at 80 PSI will have a reduced load rating at 65 PSI, but if 65 PSI provides enough to safely carry your trailer's weight, that's the pressure you should use. The lower air pressure will also have the effect of softening the ride on your trailer, thereby reducing the jarring road impacts transmitted to the trailer body.

To learn more about load and inflation tables, search the internet for your tire manufacturer, tire size and model. We also frequently cover this subject here in RV Clinic so you can find out more by going to the RV Clinic FAQ list and checking our archived RV Clinic letters on the *Trailer Life* website, www.trailerlife.com.

Loosening Stabilizing Jacks

Q I own a 2017 Prime Time Avenger ATI. I spray-lubed the stabilizing jacks with a silicone. When arriving at our campsite, I found two of the stabilizers would not stay tight. I have tried cleaning them, to no avail. Recently, all four are having the same problem. I purchased an aftermarket part to keep them from moving. However, as soon as I remove the crank, they begin

loosening right away. I have never had this problem with my other trailers. Any suggestions?

Michael Stone, Ellenton, Florida

A Most stabilizing jacks use a long-threaded rod, known as a worm gear, to drive the mechanism that tightens and applies the lift to the jack. It's a feature of a worm-drive mechanism that prevents movement by applying pressure to its drive mechanism, so I'm truly puzzled about how these jacks can be coming loose once you tighten them up. Yours is the first such letter we've received about this, and there are tens of thousands of those jacks in use.

It's possible the jack-pad feet are sinking into the ground when you start moving around inside the trailer, and that would have the effect of making them seem looser. Each jack has a metal pad that's a few inches wide and long, but unless the ground is hard-packed soil or rock, those pads tend to sink in. If you place a larger foot under the jack pad, such as a piece of 2-by-6- or 2-by-8-inch lumber a foot or more long, you'll likely find the jacks stay a lot more secure and don't loosen as you've experienced.

Wheel-Bearing Grease Type

In the October 2018 RV Clinic discussions of wheel-bearing grease, there was no mention of grease type. Wheel-bearing grease can be made with two bases: lithium and sodium. Never mix the two as they do not work together. If you don't know which is already in the EZ Lube axle bearing, you have no alternative but to disassemble, clean and repack the bearing so you will then know for sure which grease to use.

Personally, I never use the EZ Lube zerk fitting, as I have seen grease escape onto the brake shoes, even on factory-assembled axles when no one else has touched the axles. Plus, I like to inspect the brakes for function, wear and bearings, and install a new seal on a regular basis.

Jerry Ahlstrom, Reno, Nevada

Thank you for the heads-up on grease types, Jerry. That's good to know and will help some of our readers.

Rubber-Roof Repair

Q We live on the coast in Georgia and have a 2004 Terry Quantum 32-foot travel trailer that has a rubber roof with most of the white coating worn off. What RV roof coating can you recommend?

Jay Stewart, Brunswick, Georgia

GOOD AS NEW? DUCTED AIR-CONDITIONER USE

➔ How new does a travel trailer have to be to have ducted air? Is it quieter than air conditioning that is not ducted?

Beth Hunt, Union Point, Georgia

In-ceiling ducted air conditioning has been in use for at least 20 years, Beth, so you can find that feature on many used trailers at multiple price points. Yes, it can be quieter than the single-point A/C because you don't always have the air blasting down from the ceiling in one place, although the fan is still noisy and can be heard through the ceiling plenum and vibration through the roof. Have a salesperson demonstrate the feature when shopping, and you can hear the difference the ducting makes or doesn't make on the unit you're considering purchasing.

A Dicor makes a rubber-roof repair kit called the Roof Renew Kit that's designed specifically for renewing an EPDM membrane. It includes a cleaner/activator that's sort of a primer treatment, plus a new rubber-coating material. In the event you have any tears, it also includes seam-sealing tape. I helped do a 32-foot trailer with this kit, and it works great. It's a good way to extend the life of your RV's roof.

Water-Tank Capacity, Fantasy Versus Real World

Q I purchased a 2019 Winnebago Minnie Plus 27RLTS fifth-wheel in July of 2018. It is supposed to have a 50-gallon freshwater tank and a 10-gallon water heater. I could get only about 30 gallons in the water tank. I bought it in Salt Lake City at Motor Sportsland, and the dealership could get only 31 gallons in it.

Winnebago is now saying that, although the tank measurements (length, width and depth) compute to 50 gallons, it should hold only 40 gallons because of the overflow hose being on the side of the tank. That 40 plus the 10 in the water heater add up to 50 gallons of freshwater capacity. Yes, Winnebago has changed the wording in its brochures since. We can still get only 30 gallons in a tank that is supposed to hold 40 gallons.

I know of two other people who have purchased the same RV with the same problem. Winnebago now wants me to take it to another dealer to make sure the tank is the right one and is installed properly. I will do this in the next few weeks. Is this a common problem? I feel like Winnebago is dancing me around until I get tired of fighting, but I'm not going to let it drop.

Leon Steele, via email

A Manufacturers sometimes play fast and loose with things like tank capacities. You may see a footnote that reads, "freshwater capacity includes 5- or 10-gallon water heater," and that covers the irregularity.

For my own curiosity, I'd like to



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know how you, or the second RV dealer, know you're adding exactly 30 gallons of water to the tank. I've never seen a water hose with a flowmeter calibrated in gallons or any other unit of measure, so I need to presume you're adding the water using, for example, a 5-gallon bucket at a time. That's a good way to do it and would help keep them honest.

The location of the overflow pipe fitting on the tank doesn't make a difference in tank capacity if it's designed and plumbed right. Some manufacturers go cheap and just use an L-fitting with the hose or pipe aimed at the ground, and, in that case, the tank can't be filled past the fitting, as the Winnebago spokesperson told you. That lazy arrangement also means every time you drive, the water sloshes around, and a bit escapes through the overflow hose with each slosh. This is the voice of experience speaking: During a number of road tests, we've filled the tank at home and found that we were down 20 percent on freshwater when we arrived at the campground, without using any water en route.

If installed properly, the L-fitting is aimed up, with the hose or pipe making a U-turn at some point above the top of the tank and the drain-hose end pointed back toward the ground. As the water sloshes to that side, it needs to travel all the way up the pipe to the U-turn before leaking out, and that slows the excess flow considerably.

Ask Winnebago to take a second look at the overflow-line routing, and perhaps its service people can come up with the correct solution. You know, the one they should have used in the first place.

Linoleum or Plank Flooring?

Q I have an older Keystone Everest 32-foot fifth-wheel in which the carpet is getting worn. I would like to replace it with something easier to clean like linoleum. I've thought of using easier-to-install click-lock vinyl planks, but I'm concerned that they would not hold up to the flexing that occurs due to road conditions, especially on unpaved roads, which we frequently use to get to our favorite camping sites. Would I be

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better off going to sheet linoleum, even though it's more work?

Joe Montoya, Santa Fe, New Mexico

A Plank-type flooring is used by manufacturers in new RVs and for aftermarket conversions you described. It's considerably more flexible than a single-sheet linoleum-type product because it's made up of smaller, individual pieces and will flex. Just be sure to select a product that's water-resistant due to the sometimes-rugged conditions to which an RV floor is exposed.

Greasable Shackles

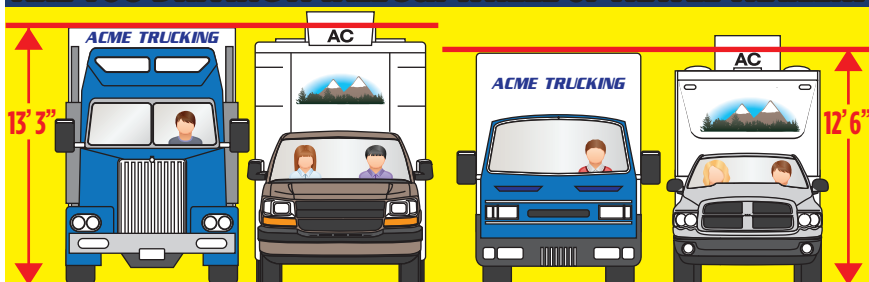
Q I'm French-speaking and live near Montreal in Canada. Last October, just before storing my fifth-wheel trailer for the winter, a friend and I installed, as recommended, on the suspension, greasable shackles and the hardware from Dexter axles. Unfortunately, it seems that three of the zerk fittings don't let the grease penetrate inside the kit to lubricate the sleeve. The grease is spilling at the end of the grease gun.

I did not drive the trailer on the road yet so I don't know if it would leave some clearance in the assembly or if the zerk fittings are defective. Nobody seems to know the right answer, and we will leave for a trip to the West Coast, including the Rockies and Pacific Ocean.

Claude Messier, Bois des Filion, Montreal

A To test the zerk fittings, remove them from the shackle, pop them in the grease gun one at a time and give it a pump. The grease should flow smoothly from the end of the fitting. If not, it may be defective and need to be replaced. More likely, I expect the greasable space is a tight fit, so to speak, and the grease is escaping from the end of the grease-gun fitting.

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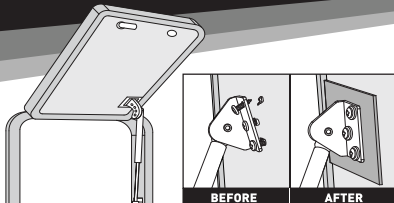


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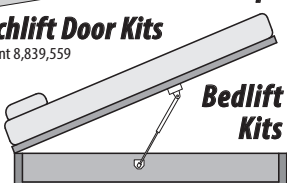
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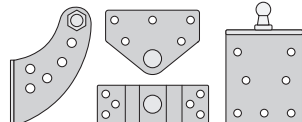
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While every effort is made to maintain accuracy and completeness, last-minute changes may occasionally result in omissions or errors.

It's often necessary to hold the grease-gun fitting tighter by pushing it against the zerk fitting, to avoid leakage. It may seem to need three hands to do this, but a solid shaft on the grease gun instead of a flexible rubber shaft can help. With the process of holding the grease gun tighter, you'll likely find the grease flows well into the new shackles, which will work better than the original equipment parts.

Kingpin Fifth-Wheel Hitch

Q In the November 2018 "Hook Me Up" roundup of trailer hitches, Chris Hemer wrote about the various hitches on the market and which are best suited for various setups. One thing I have heard about is a kingpin setup to tow a fifth-wheel via an attachment to the pin box. This type of connection was not mentioned in the article. I would like to know your opinion of these



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types of setups for fifth-wheel towing. Some pros I can see are size and weight advantages, available bed use without the large traditional hitch in the way, and ease of setup and removal.

David Sassner, Newport, North Carolina

A The biggest advantage of the commercial- or agricultural-style kingpin fifth-wheel hitch, which has a gooseneck hitch ball in the bed and the hitch mechanism on the trailer, is the ease of clearing out the truck bed for other hauling duties. In some cases, the hitch ball can be rotated 180 degrees into the floor when not in use; other models simply allow for easy removal of the ball.

There are products that can bolt to your trailer as replacements for the standard fifth-wheel pin box, and you can learn all about them via an internet search. You can also visit a dealer that sells agricultural or industrial trailers, and they can guide you toward both the trailer-hitch part and the gooseneck-

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RV CLINIC

ball-mount part of the system. It's a setup not as commonly used as a traditional fifth-wheel hitch, but it works, as long as the fifth-wheel structure is capable of handling the additional leverage.

Used Trailer Purchase

Q I am looking at a 2004 SunnyBrook fifth-wheel. It's just what I want, but I am concerned about the cost of future maintenance on the air conditioner, refrigerator and slide motors, etc. What is the life expectancy? What about resale values?

Mike Beasley, via email

A You ask very good questions, Mike, but there are no easy or specific answers. Most of the components in that trailer you mentioned can be replaced or upgraded. The life expectancy of each of these components depends on how well they were cared for and maintained, how often they were used versus kept in static storage, and pure luck. Some items, such as a water heater, can have a somewhat reduced life span due to typical tank corrosion, and that, too, varies due to the mineral content in the water used in the RV, for example, and proper maintenance.

We can't guess on any costs because that varies widely from dealer to dealer, and you'd need to ask one for a specific quote, for example, about what it would cost for a complete furnace replacement or seasonal air-conditioner service. You might be better off hiring a professional RV technician to get an unbiased third-party opinion on the condition of the trailer, which can save you money in the long run and provide peace of mind.

Tire Changing and Spring Bars

Q I own a small single-axle Jayco travel trailer and have thus far been lucky enough to have avoided a tire failure on the road. After reading the answer to "Hitch-Weight Percent?" in April, I wondered if the weight-distributing (WD) spring bars should be relaxed when jacking the trailer for a tire change, since the WD bars transfer weight to both the tow vehicle's front

axle and the travel trailer's axle. The owner's manual and everything I've read do not address this, but logic would almost dictate doing so.

Don West, Hillsborough, New Hampshire

A Your thought process is right on the money, Don. The spring bars do indeed transfer some of the hitch weight back to the trailer axle, so releasing the tension on the spring bars before you start a jacking and tire-change procedure will effectively lighten the load. Before releasing the spring bars, you'll need to drop the A-frame jack and raise the hitch somewhat to reduce the tension on the bars, and having that jack deployed will help further stabilize the trailer during the tire change. Given your good luck with tires so far, let's hope you never need to do this.

Multimeter Use

The answer you provided to Mike Ruvo in May's "Electrical Handle Short Circuit" needs some clarification. To assume that any reader is familiar with the operation of a multimeter is not wise. You say to place probes on the wall-outlet ground pin hole and the suspected accessory, and "If it shows current flow...." That would suggest to neophytes that they might set the meter on an amps-measurement setting to measure "current flow."

That is wholly incorrect. You should be measuring voltage, the difference in potential referenced to ground. If the meter is mistakenly set on the current-measuring mode, the user is likely to have a handful of fireworks, at worst, or blow the protection fuse in the meter, at best. RV Clinic is usually very helpful and informative.

Tom Wilbeck, Longview, Texas

You're right, Tom, we should have said "If it shows voltage" instead of "current flow." Thanks for pointing that out. **TL**

HAVE A TECH QUESTION ?

Email rvclinic@trailerlife.com or write to RV Clinic, 2750 Park View Court, Suite 240, Oxnard, California 93036. Include your full name and hometown. Selected letters will be answered in the magazine, but time does not permit individual replies. No phone calls, please.

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☼ SUN AND SAND

Clockwise: The *Minne Ha Ha* departs on a scenic cruise of Lake George, a gull laughs at beachgoers from the water's edge, and families enjoy the protected strand.



Million Dollar Beach

In upstate New York, an Adirondack strand is the place to cool off on a hot day

— by Lisa Ballard

The sun massages my back as I lie on my beach towel. I hear the gulls call, the rumble of a passing motorboat and the gentle lap of waves against the shore. The beach is my happy place.

Surprisingly, this beach is not on the coast. It's in the Adirondack Park in upstate New York. Known as Million Dollar Beach because it cost \$1 million to create it in 1951, this

1,700-foot public strand on the edge of Lake George Village is rich in sand, and has protected swimming zones and a picnic area. It's a treasured oasis for beachgoers adjacent to Lake George Battleground State Campground.

I walk to the water and dunk under to cool off, then watch a kid construct a sand castle. A couple coaxes their toddler into the water for her first

swim. Another preschooler giggles as his father swings him across the water.

Million Dollar Beach is more than just a beach. It's a place where families celebrate summer together.

➡ If You Go

Public access to the beach is from May 25 to September 2 this year. In addition to Lake George Battleground, the area offers a variety of RV parks and public campgrounds. www.visitlakegeorge.com 



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