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TRAILER LIFE

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Coachmen's Crowd-Pleasing Chaparral

RV Know-How

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Under the Dome

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inTech's Luna teardrop has a large automotive windshield and dual entry doors. Page 10

On the cover: The 2018 Coachmen Chaparral 381RD takes to the road in Elkhart County, Indiana. Photo by Shawn Spence

Spring Flings

March begins the season of renewal and, for many, a return to RV camping



March 17 has always been a big day to celebrate America's Irish heritage, often with parties and parades. As a 23-year veteran of the fire service in New York, I marched in the New York City St. Patrick's Day Parade many times, and what an amazing experience that was.

One year I took a bus tour of Ireland with some friends from the fire department, and to my delight, there were RVs. In fact, on the route around the Ring of Kerry, we saw many of them. The Republic of Ireland has more than 90 campgrounds, and some are in the most scenic destinations on the Emerald Island. While you probably wouldn't want to transport a tow vehicle and trailer across the Atlantic for a "holiday," as they call it, small motorhomes can be rented for vacationing in one of the most beautiful places in Europe.

If you're looking for Celtic culture here at home, check out the regions that were populated by Irish immigrants. In my neck of the woods, New York's upper Hudson Valley has towns featuring many Irish-American sites. And Irish festivals can be found all across North America. I have traveled to many of these over the years, and they're *savage craic* (lots of fun) with lively music, traditional food and a big variety of Irish-made goods, not to mention Guinness stout on tap.

Whatever the theme, fairs and festivals are fine additions to any RV trip, if they aren't the reason for it in the first place. They're even more memorable when your whole crew tags along. Coachmen may have had that in mind with the Chaparral 381RD, a 42-foot fifth-wheel with five slideouts and plenty of room for hosting family and friends, not to mention a surprisingly modest retail price. Barb Riley put the 2018 model to the test by hosting a dinner party for eight (page 20).

If your RV travel companions include four-legged friends, you'll want to look out for their welfare on the road and in the campground. Jerry Smith covers some simple things pet owners can do to ensure safe and pleasant RV adventures (page 48).

Wildfires scorched much of California last year, and the Thomas Fire blazed through Ventura and Santa Barbara counties near our West Coast office. A number of colleagues have family members and neighbors who lost their homes, but with the resilient nature of Californians, many are now on the road to recovery. North of the fire's reach, Stuart and Janet Wilson take us on a tour of California's central coast and share ways to participate in natural and architectural preservation (page 40). Continuing the preservation theme, Pamela Selbert explores dozens of New Hampshire's historic covered bridges (page 54).

Whether you're celebrating St. Patrick's Day or setting out on that first RV trip of the season, I hope to see you out there! 🚐

— Chris Dougherty, Technical Editor

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Know What You Can Tow

Seeing your *2018 Guide to Towing* enclosed with the January issue had me anticipating finding the formula for calculating towing capacities of various vehicles, but I did not. The reason I am asking is to see if there is anything I can do to my Toyota to increase the towing capacity. Even with the tow package, the truck is still limited in its towing capacity, and I want to make improvements so I can tow a larger, more comfortable RV without having to purchase a different pickup.

Tommy Reeves
Alexandria, Louisiana

Technical Editor Chris Dougherty responds: *There is no set "formula" for determining the towing capacity of a vehicle. It depends on the capability of the whole system, from the strength of the steel frame and the bolts that hold it together, to the wheels, tires and individual components of the powertrain. An analogy I like to use is an E150 lawn tractor and a 9370R agricultural tractor. Both are John Deeres, yet the E150 from your local home center won't till a wheat field, and the 9370R won't mow your yard. Tow vehicles are the same way — it's about matching the machine to the task.*

People have been "tuning" up their vehicles for the past 50 or 60 years to gain more power and torque, with varying amounts of success. There are suspension enhancements to make vehicles handle better under heavy loads, and tires and wheels can be exchanged for heavier-duty versions. But none of these modifications can increase towing capacity. For



Taking Things to Heart

On my way home from work today, I saw a large fifth-wheel on the side of the road. Being a fifth-wheel owner myself, I pulled over to see about lending a hand. As it turned out, a tire on the trailer had lost its tread. My reason for writing is that the RVer had no tools to change a tire — no jack, no lug wrench, no roadside-assistance plan.

A friend of his pulled over, and he had a cordless impact wrench and a small hydraulic bottle jack in his pickup. The RVer wanted to put the bottle jack under the bare axle to lift it. Knowing better, I got the scissor jack from my truck, and we used it on the frame with some wood and got the offending wheel off the ground. The RVer commented that the fifth-wheel was only two years old. Did I mention that it was 92 degrees?

From reading *Trailer Life*, I've learned not to put jacks directly on the axles, and that tires can blow at any time (especially when it's hot) and tire age doesn't matter (just keep an eye on them). The magazine is always saying these things, and I took them to heart. From now on I'm storing the breaker bar and sockets permanently in my truck cab, and anytime I tow the fifth-wheel I'm putting the box with the jack and safety stands in the bed.

Rod Mutzabaugh, Dauphin, Pennsylvania

tow-vehicle reliability and, more importantly, safety, do not to exceed the vehicle's stated capacities. Instead, replace it with one that can handle the RV you plan on towing, with some room for future expansion.

SuperGlide Guidance

I use an earlier version of the PullRite SuperGlide hitch in my 2003 Chevy 2500 HD shortbed and therefore really enjoyed Chris Hemer's January article, "Get Shorty," which covers the installation of a new SuperGlide 16K in the same truck as mine. Several related items were not discussed, possibly due to space limitations.

The first is that the install and removal weight can be reduced by pulling two pins and transferring the head separately. Second, no mention was made of the adapter plate that must be mounted on the fifth-wheel to engage with the head, and its hookup limitation of plus- or minus-15 degrees. Third, the head can articulate side to side, which is great; just be sure that you set considerable bed-rail-to-RV clearance to avoid contact when maneuvering on uneven terrain.

Also, my SuperGlide has round tubes that must be lubricated, or the tube will gall and the warranty will be voided.

Bryan Berlin, Tucson, Arizona

Chris Hemer replies: *You are correct, Bryan. We can't address everything because of space restrictions, and, yes, the head removal does reduce the weight, but the base is still hefty. Note that the SuperGlide we installed (part number 2700) is significantly lighter than your older model and can be handled by two people without disassembling into two pieces.*

With respect to the adjustment and maintenance points you bring up, this is absolutely true for this and many other hitches. It's important to thoroughly read the directions for proper installation, operation and maintenance of the hitch.

Keeping Sway at Bay

I just finished reading "Sway Control Reimagined," Ed Bolduc's January article about the Eaz-Lift ReCurve R6. I've always been happy with the performance we've gotten from our

previous Hensley and current ProPride equipment. If there is a drawback, it's the fact that hooking up is more challenging. We have never really tried to hook up at an angle.

My question to you is, how does the ReCurve R6 — and other hitches that may be similar to it — stack up to the Hensley and ProPride? Is there any reason for me to even consider switching? I remember the days of using a ball mount and the increased flexibility it gave us in hooking up, but I'm not about to downgrade my sway control to get that additional convenience back.

John Ceglarek, Mattawan, Michigan

Ed Bolduc replies: *We compared the ReCurve R6 to conventional weight-distributing (WD) hitches with sway control, and the ReCurve separates itself from similar hitches with its ability to manually and automatically remove the sway-control function, making cornering and hookup much easier.*

I have towed with Hensley hitches. The Hensley (and ProPride, if it functions as well as the Hensley) is in a different class when it comes to sway control. It eliminates the ability of the trailer to pivot on the hitch ball, essentially locking the trailer and tow vehicle together when a lateral force is applied to the trailer. The ReCurve has advantages such as less weight, easier initial installation, the ability to hook up at an angle and a lower retail price. But if you don't want to sacrifice sway-control performance, a Hensley or similar hitch is the best choice.

After reading "Sway Control Reimagined," I have a question. If you invest in a sway-control WD system, you seem limited to using that setup with only one particular trailer, unless you do a lot of adjustments. Would it be more economical to install airbags and a simple friction sway-control bar?

Garrison Kopp, Abingdon, Virginia

Chris Dougherty replies: *If you have a heavy enough tow vehicle and a heavy-duty enough hitch rated to handle the full, loaded tongue weight*

of the trailer, then, yes, a friction sway-control bar would be an option, with the airbags there to improve loaded handling only.

My F-350 has a Class V hitch, so I can tow a variety of unloaded trailers on a matching drawbar and ball, but even so, I almost always use the WD kit. The kit transfers the tongue-weight load to the trailer's and truck's axles, reducing the downward force exerted on the hitch. When I tow weight-on

without the kit, the ride is much harsher. If you're going to tow more than one trailer, consider a WD kit with the easiest brackets to move and a wide selection of springs to match the trailers you'll be towing. 📧

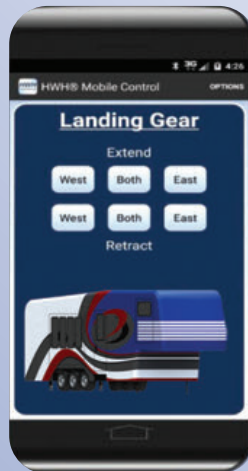
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Adjacent to the Stonehenge replica (below), Carhenge's Car Art Preserve features sculptures created from various automotive parts including (far left) a spawning salmon and (left) Dino, the dinosaur, inspired by *The Flintstones*.

Nebraska's Stonehenge

A unique attraction in the town of Alliance, Carhenge mimics England's prehistoric monument with a carefully arranged ring of vintage cars

article by Suzan Jackson

Just north of tiny Alliance, Nebraska, is an unusual roadside attraction, a bit of unique Americana known as Carhenge. Seemingly in the middle of nowhere (though not far from the Oregon Trail and on the way to South Dakota's Black Hills) stands a full-size replica of Stonehenge...made out of classic American cars and arranged to reproduce the ancient cluster of monoliths in England.

Jim Reinders created this unusual sculpture as a tribute to his late father. Reinders lived in England and is fascinated with Stonehenge, so he studied its design and thought it would be fun if his hometown had a "Stonehenge West." His family decided to create a replica as a memorial, and in 1987 about 35 family members gathered to build it.

They carefully placed 39 vintage American automobiles in the shape, arrangement and dimensions of Stonehenge. The vertical cars are buried trunk-down in 5-foot-deep pits, with other cars forming the arches, fallen stones and "heel stone." The

whole thing is spray-painted gray to mimic Stonehenge. Carhenge was officially dedicated to Jim's father on the summer solstice in 1987 and has been open to the public ever since.

The site also features the Car Art Preserve with colorful metal sculptures made from cars and car parts, including a dinosaur, a flower and a prizewinning spawning-salmon sculpture. Reinders himself added the sculpture *Four Seasons*, using Ford cars to represent wheat in Nebraska during spring, summer, fall and winter.

Carhenge is open daily year-round with free admission and attracts more than 68,000 visitors annually from all over the world. The Pit Stop Gift Shop is open during the summer months. In town, the Knight Museum and Sandhills Center complex is known for its local-history exhibits and research room with microfilmed newspapers, photos and genealogical files.

Less than an hour's drive southwest of Carhenge is Chimney Rock National Historic Site in Bayard, Nebraska, another worthwhile stop

in the region. Chimney Rock is a prominent natural landmark along the Oregon and California trails that was well known to pioneers and Native Americans. A museum in the visitor center explores the unique rock formation and the human history of the area along the westward trails.

For those seeking RV accommodations, Over the Hill Campground, a new RV park next to Carhenge, is scheduled to open this summer. Located on County Road 59, the park will have 15 campsites with water hookups and four with full hookups, and plenty of room for self-contained RVs. In Bayard, Chimney Rock Pioneer Crossing Campground offers 16 pull-through sites with full hookups and views of Chimney Rock. Those wanting more amenities can travel to Gering, about 60 miles southwest of Alliance, to Robidoux RV Park, with 42 paved sites, including 37 with full hookups.

Carhenge

308-762-3569, www.carhenge.com

Chimney Rock National Historic Site

www.nebraskahistory.org/sites/rock

RV Parks

Over the Hill Campground, Alliance

308-762-3763

Chimney Rock Pioneer Crossing Campground, Bayard

308-631-4700

www.chimneyrockpioneer Crossing.com

Robidoux RV Park, Gering

308-436-2046

www.gering.org/robidoux-rv-park



inTech Luna Teardrop

RVers who like good things that come in small packages and want to experience the outdoors will appreciate inTech's Luna, featuring a front windshield that spans the front of the teardrop trailer. At more than 2 feet tall and 6 feet wide, the three-ply tempered-glass windshield is the only one in the industry to grace the front of a teardrop, according to the company. The uniquely shaped Luna has a rounded back, front-leaning cap and large frameless windows that open outward.

Step inside the 4-foot, 7⁷/₈-inch-tall Luna's interior and nearly 7-foot-long floor space via one of two rounded entry doors — one on each side — to a 40-inch TV, a Bluetooth-enabled AM/FM stereo with DVD player, and a table centered under the windshield. Two 30-by-82-inch futon sofa beds have

inTech's Luna has dual entry doors and opposing 21-by-37-inch windows with cast-aluminum valances covered in fabric. Under the foam floor by the entry doors are storage bins.



backrests with cupholders and can be configured for sitting and sleeping. Optional are a Dometic 10,500-Btu air conditioner with heat pump and a MaxxAir roof vent with remote.

Outside, the rear wall lifts to reveal a full kitchen with lots of headroom, a spice rack with bungee restraint, speakers, a microwave, a three-burner range with a drip pan incorporated into the single-basin sink with a spring-coil pull-down faucet, and a 12-volt DC Dometic refrigerator/freezer on a lock-out sliding tray. Optional is 12-volt/120-volt refrigerator with a mobile app to control temperature.

The 1,800-pound (claimed) Luna is all-aluminum constructed with a fully welded cage frame and has a fiberglass exterior roof and side walls. Gross vehicle weight rating is 2,200 pounds. Freshwater capacity is 8 gallons, and a 5-gallon LP-gas cylinder is housed inside a storage compartment on the A-frame for a clean look. Base MSRP is \$16,537, and the fully loaded price is \$19,995. inTech RV, 574-773-9536, www.intechrv.com

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TIRES



Southern California Chocolate and Wine Festival

Pechanga RV Resort and Casino in Temecula, California, is hosting its 10th-annual Chocolate Decadence and Wine Festival with proceeds supporting various housing projects for underprivileged families through Habitat for Humanity. The complex recently expanded its open-year-round RV park to include more than 200 luxury RV sites and provides 24/7 shuttle service to the neighboring casino.

The festival takes place Friday, March 9 (7 to 10 p.m.), and Saturday, March 10 (1 to 5 p.m.), and will include hundreds of wine varieties and chocolate confections in every mouth-watering combination imaginable, plus gourmet food, live music, a silent auction and raffles.

Friday's event runs \$60 per person (\$80 for early entry VIP tickets) and includes unlimited tasting of wine, spirits and confections, and a souvenir wine glass.

Saturday's event is \$65 per person (\$90 for early entry VIP) and includes the above, as well as gourmet food samples. Tickets for both days are \$100 and \$140, and Designated Driver tickets are \$35 and \$40 respectively. Guests must be 21 or older.

The fund-raiser will be hosted in Pechanga's new 40,000-square-foot Pechanga Summit event center. The adjacent casino has 4,000 slots and table games, live entertainment with concerts and guest stars, a comedy club and a variety of restaurants. RV resort guests receive free use of the driving range at the 18-hole Journey golf course. Nearby are 40-plus wineries to explore.

888-732-4264, www.pechanga.com



SoCal Adventure Hotel

In the unique town of Ojai, California, where chain stores are prohibited and boutique hotels, specialty shops and art galleries abound, the Caravan Outpost offers 11 Airstream trailers for rent. Set up in a horseshoe shape to make a small community surrounded by palm trees, the Airstreams have a queen bed and a bathroom, and some offer additional sleeping for children or small guests. Restrooms, showers and barbecue grills are available. Ojai, which is surrounded by mountains, is known for its comfortable climate and hiking and biking trails. Airstream rentals range from \$179 to \$359 per night. Caravan Outpost, 805-836-4891, www.caravanoutpost.com

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NEWSWIRE

ARVC AWARDS



RV Parks of the Year

Ocean Lakes Family Campground in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina, was named Mega Park of the Year for 2017, the industry's highest award, by the National Association of RV Parks and Campgrounds (ARVC). Open year-round, Ocean Lakes offers 859 campsites on its 310 acres and hosts Sandy Harbor Water Park.

Other ARVC awards went to Moonshine Creek Campground in North Carolina, Yogi Bear's Jellystone Park at Kozy Rest in Pennsylvania, Cherry Hill Park in Maryland, River's End Campground in Georgia, and Evergreen Campsites and Resort in Wisconsin. www.oceanlakes.com, www.arvc.org

NADA REPORT



Light-Truck Sales

Releasing its 2018 forecast, the National Automobile Dealers Association (NADA) predicted the U.S. sale of 16.7 million new cars and light trucks this year. According to NADA senior economist Patrick Manzi, the vehicle-segment mix will continue to favor light-truck sales, which in 2017 accounted for nearly 64 percent of all new light vehicles sold. The light-truck market share is likely to top 65 percent in 2018, Manzi said. According to NADA Chairman Mark Scarpelli, "We are looking at a stable market where demand — particularly for light trucks, SUVs and crossovers — continues to be very healthy." www.nada.org

RV SITES



Yosemite Lakes RV Resort

Yosemite Lakes RV Resort, a Good Sam Park and Thousand Trails facility open year-round in Groveland, California, has made more of its 170 RV sites available during the winter months. "There are great areas for cross-country skiing within 30 minutes of our campground and several snow-play areas that are even closer," said park manager Miguel Ortiz. The South Fork of the Tuolumne River runs through the resort, which has 231 full-hookup sites and is 5 miles from Yosemite National Park's west gate. Guests can receive discounts on skis, snowshoes and mountain-bike rentals from nearby outfitters. www.stayatyosemite.com

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Maine's Fox Carlton Pond Sporting Camps

Fox Carlton Pond Sporting Camps, Campground and RV Park in Phillips, Maine, opens for the season on May 11 with its new Sugar Ridge area featuring RV sites with hammock-hanging areas. The 64-acre campground, noted for its fishing, has a private pond (no license required), and use of demo fly rods, kayaks, canoes and paddle boats is included in the campsite fee. The 5-acre catch-and-release pond is stocked with

brook and rainbow trout, and along the Sandy River fishing is open for trout.

Open through October 14, the campground is ideal for outdoorsy people who like to relax and commune with nature or want to fish, hike, bike or explore trails on ATVs. The campground offers basketball, pickleball and horseshoe courts. RV sites have electric and water hookups, and there's a dump station.

The camp's Fly Rod Crosby Days

takes place May 18 to 20 with all things fly-fishing including clinics, fly-tying lessons and a guided trip to Rapid River. The sixth-annual Fly Casting Clinic is scheduled for June 9, and Autumn and Fall Foliage Days are September 30 through October 14. More activities include a gold-panning clinic, a guided mountain hike, mountain-bike rentals and a guided ride, and an exhibitor fair with outdoor and veterans' organizations.

Downtown Phillips (www.phillipsmaine.com) is home to the Sandy River and Rangeley Lakes Railroad museum (www.srll-rr.org), which is dedicated to the preservation and restoration of one of Maine's original narrow-gauge railroads, and offers rides on steam locomotives. The museum and chamber stage numerous events including evening lantern-lit train rides, Civil War and Western re-enactments, Ghost Trains, and Old Home Days the third week in August with bathtub races. **Fox Carlton Pond Sporting Camps, 207-491-5865, www.foxcarltonpond.com**

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“Dog-Tracking” Trailer

While investigating unusual tire wear on his family’s travel trailer, a California RVer discovered cracks in the frame. His wife asked RV Resolutions for help pursuing restitution for the repair costs:

► We had been looking for just the right trailer for so long and were excited when we bought a new 2014 KZ Spree. Since then, we have taken about eight weeklong trips and one three-week trip. It’s not a ton of use, but with two small children in school, owning a busy business, and my husband, Jason, being a firefighter, we get away when we can.

Last March when Jason went to get the trailer from storage for a trip up the Northern California coast, he noticed the tires were wearing poorly. Being a mechanical guy, he got underneath the trailer and found the problem. The spring hangers were bent, and the frame was cracked in several places.

I called KZ right away and was told the company would pay for just the bushings. We had to fix the trailer no matter what, so we hired a mobile-repair guy. He told us he thought the plastic bushings were substandard, causing misalignment and resulting in wandering — or “dog tracking” — which ripped the axle from the spring

hangers and cracked the frame.

I went back and forth with KZ for months, and they kept reassuring me that they were working on our behalf. However, in June they stopped replying, and we are at a loss of \$3,918.75. We are hoping there is something you can do to help.

Rayna Hess, Pacheco, California

THE COMPANY RESPONDS

After forwarding the Hesses’ account to KZRV, we received the following letter from a company representative:

KZRV, the trailer manufacturer, and Lippert Components, the frame manufacturer, have reviewed the photographs and correspondence regarding the request for reimbursement. The Spree 329IK has a warranty that is valid for two years. Our records indicate the Hesses’ warranty expired on June 5, 2015. In an effort to assist the customer, KZRV and Lippert Components will each contribute \$1,500 toward the repair cost. A check will be processed within the next 30 days and mailed to Mrs. Hess.

**Mark Owens, Aftermarket Services Manager
KZRV, Shippshewana, Indiana**

Out-of-Pocket Roof Repairs

Hoping to be reimbursed for the full cost of fixing his travel trailer’s rubber roof, an Arizona reader contacted us:

► While covering the canopy of my 2017 Heartland Sundance XLT, I noticed a subsection of the roof had separated from the side wall and was lifting and stretching the rubber roof. I took the trailer to my sales dealer, La Mesa RV Center in Phoenix. The technicians determined that the separation ran the full length of the roof on both sides.

The trailer was out of its one-year warranty, since I purchased it in May 2016 and the problem was noticed in August 2017. Heartland agreed to pay for the materials and six hours of labor, but the service writer said La Mesa would need 10 hours to make the repairs. I had to cover the extra four hours at a cost of \$600.

When La Mesa stripped back the roof material, they found that the

plywood had been cut short up to 12 inches in places and the screws used to hold the wood in place had come out. An aluminum section had to be fabricated to bridge the gap between the roof wood and the side walls to secure the proper screws.

It is my opinion that Heartland did a poor job in the manufacture of the roof and should cover the entire repair costs.

Don Stuckey, Glendale, Arizona

THE COMPANY RESPONDS

We forwarded Don Stuckey’s request, and Heartland responded as follows:

Heartland did not hear from the

customer that there was an issue with the amount of time we approved for the repair until we received the letter from RV Resolutions. As a gesture of goodwill, Heartland will agree to reimburse Mr. Stuckey two additional hours of the labor he was charged for.

**Anthony Roberts
Warranty Claims Manager
Heartland RV, Elkhart, Indiana**

Don Stuckey sent a follow-up note:

► I am satisfied with Heartland’s response and very satisfied with your help. Thank you very much.

D.S. 📧

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

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2018 RV SHOW LINEUP

MARVEL CHARACTER APPEARANCES

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Map#	Event Name	Dates**	Venue
01	Colorado RV Adventure Travel Show	1/4/18 - 1/6/18	Colorado Convention Center
02	Wisconsin RV Show	1/5/18 - 1/7/18	Wisconsin Center District
03	Knoxville RV Show	1/5/18 - 1/7/18	Sevierville Convention Center
04	Greater Atlanta RV Show	1/5/18 - 1/7/18	Georgia Int'l Convention Center
05	South Carolina RV & Camping Show - Greenville	1/5/18 - 1/7/18	TD Convention Center
06	Mid America RV Show	1/11/18 - 1/14/18	Kansas City Convention Center - Bartle Hall
07	Washington Camping RV Expo	1/12/18 - 1/14/18	Dulles Expo Center
08	Greater Chicago RV Show	1/19/18 - 1/21/18	Renaissance Schaumburg Convention Center
09	New Jersey RV & Camping Show - Edison	1/19/18 - 1/21/18	New Jersey Convention & Exposition Center
10	Lexington RV Show	1/19/18 - 1/21/18	Kentucky Horse Park
11	Cincinnati - Dayton RV Show	1/25/18 - 1/28/18	Dayton Convention Center
12	Greater Phoenix RV Show	1/26/18 - 1/28/18	Phoenix Convention Center
13	Minneapolis/St. Paul RV, Vacation & Camping Show	2/9/18 - 2/11/18	Minneapolis Convention Center
14	Richmond Camping RV Expo	2/9/18 - 2/11/18	Richmond International Raceway Complex

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Map#	Event Name	Dates**	Venue
15	Chattanooga RV Show	2/16/18 - 2/18/18	Chattanooga Convention Center
16	Atlantic City RV & Camping Show	2/16/18 - 2/18/18	Atlantic City Convention Center
17	Gulf Coast RV Show - Mobile	2/16/18 - 2/18/18	Mobile Convention Center
18	Harrisburg RV & Camping Show - Pennsylvania	2/22/18 - 2/25/18	PA Farm Show Complex & Event Center
19	Columbus RV Show	2/23/18 - 2/25/18	Greater Columbus Convention Center
20	Colorado RV, Sports & Travel Show	3/1/18 - 3/4/18	National Western Complex
21	Central Illinois RV Show - Peoria	3/2/18 - 3/4/18	Peoria Civic Center
22	Rhode Island RV & Camping Show	3/2/18 - 3/4/18	Rhode Island Convention Center
23	Virginia RV Show - Hampton	3/9/18 - 3/11/18	Hampton Roads Convention Center
24	Memphis RV Show	3/16/18 - 3/18/18	Memphis Cook Convention Center
25	Springfield RV & Camping Show	3/23/18 - 3/25/18	BOS Convention Center
26	Greater Tucson RV Show	3/23/18 - 3/25/18	Tucson Convention Center
27	Good Sam Indy RV Super Show	4/12/18 - 4/15/18	Indianapolis Motor Speedway

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Supersize Fiver

Living large in the five-slide, nearly 43-foot Coachmen Chaparral 381RD

As with most things in life, there's more than one point of entry into the RVing lifestyle, and there are most certainly divergent paths within it. While some may be looking for a way to adjust slowly to RV ownership or downsize what they already have, others are searching for a trail that goes deeper into the woods, so to speak.

Perhaps you've been on the road and now want more comfort and amenities for longer, farther treks. Maybe you'd like a prime central gathering place for your family and

camping companions. Or maybe the phrase "roughing it" is simply not in your lexicon and you'd like an RV that reflects that. The 2018 Coachmen Chaparral 381RD showed it'll fit the bill for any of those scenarios.

The 381RD is a five-slide fifth-wheel with two slideouts in the living room and one each in the kitchen, dining area and bedroom. This 42-foot, 10-inch model is a mid-profile unit, the largest of three Chaparral segments, in front of the Lites and X-Lites. We've seen plenty of large and deluxe RVs, and just



The 42-foot, 10-inch fifth-wheel has plenty of space and comfort for any type of gathering or activity.



Opposing slideouts and reclining theater seats make the living room a great place to entertain a crowd or just kick back for some quiet time, with an abundance of natural light via plentiful windows.

because one has plenty of space doesn't mean it's been properly maximized — but here, every inch is used well.

One feature that stands out is the bathroom, which is still fully accessible with all the slideouts retracted, an attribute that should be present in every RV made. Having your own bathroom to use in lieu of public restrooms is one of the major benefits of owning an RV, so you should be able to utilize it at any pit stop.

Once we opened the slideouts, extended the electric awning (with an LED light strip), and deployed the electric front jacks and rear stabilizers, the rest of the hookup procedure was augmented by a conveniently condensed

LED-lit command center where there are two 120-volt AC outlets, cable and satellite hookups, freshwater hookup, tank-flush levers, winterization and tank-fill connections, an outdoor hot-and-cold shower and more.

Inside, there's an abundance of natural light through the numerous windows — 13, to be precise, plus three more in the bedroom. It's a task to open and close all those shades, so you have to decide whether letting in all that light is worth it. My answer is always yes. I would rather have the option of keeping some closed if I didn't want to go to the trouble but throw everything open on the days I want all the light I can get. All

those windows also offer a nice cross-breeze, and if you're in a scenic area, you get a great all-around view.

At night, you're still good to go; there are plenty of recessed LED ceiling lights, and they're segmented nicely so you can pick and choose which areas to illuminate. The switches are even located close to the lights they control — a revolutionary concept, right? — so you don't have to operate them all from the central control panel just inside the entry door. You can actually be sitting on the sofa and reach up to switch the lights above it. It would be nice to have softer light options in the living room, but at least there was the optional

(Right) Spacious hanging wardrobes, a cabinet with washer-dryer hookups and an optional king-size bed in a slideout grace the Chaparral 381RD's bedroom. **(Far right)** A skylight and a white molded shower liner with a corner seat give the bathroom a spa-like feel. It has deep cabinets and under-sink storage, and is accessible even with all slides retracted.





(Above, left and middle) Between the solid-surface counters, island and bar and the freestanding dinette, there's ample space in the kitchen for food prep and other activities, including dining seating for eight. (Above right) The numerous cabinets and large lighted pantry provide plenty of storage, even for fragile dishware.

electric fireplace, whose flickering-flame lights and hot-air blower can be run separately or simultaneously.

The accoutrements and Brindle decor made for a very pleasant atmosphere with warm wood tones, flooring and fabrics, as well as the elegant touch of darker accents, such as the freestanding dining table and chairs, and barstools throughout the kitchen — and, oh, what a kitchen! Come with me, friends, while I wax poetic.

I sing of the plentiful cabinet space, both up and down, surrounding the stove and sink. Upper cabinets featured tinted cross-patterned glass, and while I usually dislike glass cabinets, it's dark enough to keep the contents (and the messiness thereof) mostly a mystery. Behold the pop-open dish-brush drawer just beneath the sink, and the wine-bottle space next to the microwave. See the vertical-pull drawer with a kitchen-size trash can in it, ready to be bagged. Room for a trash can, even a small one, is a critical element that too many RVs mysteriously lack.

There's a glorious pantry, too, with a bright LED light and a tinted-glass door behind which lipped shelves and slide-out drawers reside; the bottom drawer is sectioned to keep plates and other breakables secure during travel. The optional 14.7-cubic-foot Haier residential refrigerator has double doors with two freezer drawers below.

The "Kitchen Island of Paradise" is the most functional one I've ever seen in an RV. It's a great size for counter space and storage with three slide-out drawers, including one that's deep enough for pots and pans, all enclosed by a cabinet front for a tidy look. There's even a bar space at the end with two curved-seat cushioned stools, and an outlet for appliances or a laptop if you choose to do non-edible work there. Mosaic-tile pendant lights over the island add illumination and style.

Optional solid-surface countertops grace the island and kitchen work areas. There are matching-material covers for the deep double stainless-steel sink, which features an arched spout-or-spray faucet. Over the sink there's an under-cabinet light, and behind it is a dark-wood accent wall that matches the island. It's a lovely choice, as it adds interest and texture without being overly busy. The same can be said for the faux-stone backsplash behind the 30-inch microwave and stove area, which has nice side counter space for utensils or small appliances that can be plugged into the electrical outlet there. The folding-glass cover for the three-burner gas cooktop provides for even more workspace.

Next to that beautiful kitchen, for which I still have cartoon hearts streaming from my eyes, there's a bar facing the living area with two more of those cushioned stools and another cabinet on the side. The living room itself is well-appointed and comfortable, with a ceiling fan and more of

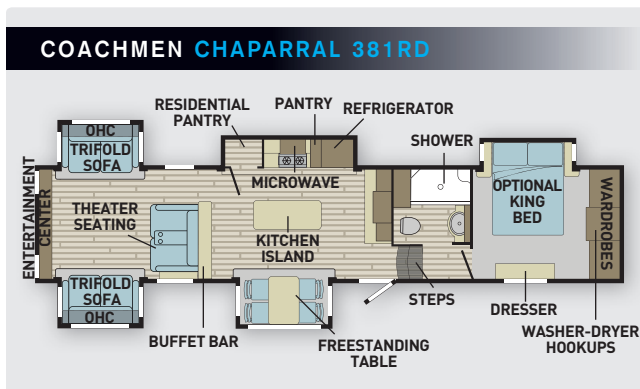


ILLUSTRATION BY ROB ROY

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those tinted-glass cabinets. Three-seat sofas bookend the living room, albeit with no side tables for either, and two optional theater-seat recliners with cupholders in the center were a great vantage point from which to watch the optional 50-inch TV. While they sit up against the bar, they're not anchored to the floor, so you can scoot them forward and recline without the bar being a hindrance — although short-clearance seat backs would be a preference. There's even a little ledge between the wall and theater seats with an electrical/USB outlet at the back. Add in that Ultraleather finish, and you have prime movie-viewing spots.

The 381RD looked great so far, but I still had to determine functionality. The real test came one dark and stormy night when our group's usual picnic-table potluck was rained out and we had to relocate. With our large party, my digs were naturally declared the shelter of choice, so the eight of us piled in. As everyone gravitated toward their area of work and interest, I took notes on how well the Chaparral accommodated them all.

In the kitchen, a few people got to work with a flurry of dinner preparations. The stovetop was put into use, vegetables were washed in the sink, and there was general prep and assembly on the island. The others found their way to seats at the bar and in the living room. They flipped through the many channels available through the King Jack over-the-air HDTV antenna and cable-TV hookup, taking particular enjoyment from those recliners. I received all thumbs-up comments from both factions, with one exception: When

people in the recliners are conversing with people seated on the curbside sofa, the slideout corner can obstruct their view of each other. One of the best features, to my mind, was that, once dinner was served, every one of us had tabletop seating, between the four dinette chairs and the four barstools. Not one person had to balance a plate on their lap. That's a significant feat in any RV, even one as large as this. Someone thought that out, and we appreciated it.

Once the rain abated and everyone excused themselves quite some time later — a sweet courtesy, after catching me rubbing my eyes — I was left to explore the 381RD's bedroom and bathroom. The front bedroom has a large center sliding-door cabinet with washer-dryer hookups, flanked by two lighted wardrobes with double mirrored doors, hanging rods inside and drawers underneath. There's also a floor dresser on the curbside wall with an electrical/USB outlet. The bed has ledges with cupholders and power outlets on both sides, which I loved, unlike the optional king-size mattress. It's described as "pillow-top" but, of course, everything is relative in RV-speak, so it was still maybe just 5 inches tall and had very little give, and it wasn't as comfortable as I'd hoped.

Use of the bathroom, though, was a joy. RV bathrooms are a necessity for which I've never minded cutting corners. But in the Chaparral, I didn't feel like I was sacrificing anything. To the contrary, I felt a bit spoiled. Again, the storage is plentiful with a medicine cabinet, under-sink storage and deep cabinets for linens. The shower is roomy, light and bright with its white molded stone-pattern liner, which lent itself to a spa-like feel with the skylight overhead. It has a corner seat and tripane-glass sliding doors that seal perfectly in the tracks so no water escapes. I did wish there was more light in the shower; the skylight helps for daytime use, but at night it's pretty dim in there. The sink here is also solid-surface, with a good amount of counter space and a power outlet.

Have I conveyed yet just how much utility and space there is in the Chaparral 381RD? While this fifth-wheel is a

SPECIFICATIONS

2018 COACHMEN CHAPARRAL 381RD

Exterior Length	42' 10"
Exterior Width	8'
Exterior Height	12' 4"
Interior Width	7' 9"
Interior Height	8' 4"
Construction	Laminated and double-welded aluminum-framed floor and Azdel side walls, fiberglass exterior and TPO roof
Freshwater Cap.	48 gal.
Black/Gray-Water Cap.	45/90 gal.
LP-Gas Cap.	14 gal.
Water-Heater Cap.	10 gal.
Refrigerator	14.7 cu. ft.
Furnace	30,000 Btu
Air Conditioners (2)	15,000/13,500 Btu
Converter	55 amp
Battery	Dealer installed
Tires	ST235/80R16E
Suspension	Dexter rubber equalization with EZ-Flex
Weight (freshwater, water heater, LP-gas full; no cargo)	12,480 lbs.
Hitch Weight	3,120 lbs.
Axle Weight	9,360 lbs.
GVWR	14,500 lbs.
GAWR	7,000 lbs.
Cargo Carrying Cap.	2,020 lbs.
MSRP, Base	\$51,823
MSRP, As Tested	\$61,654
Basic Warranty	1 year

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monster in look and feel, in a good way, it doesn't tow like one, thanks to a few key elements, such as the Dexter E-Z Flex rubber equalizer suspension and the aerodynamic Turn-Tec front-cap design, which has a 90-degree turning radius and allows towing by many 6-foot-bed trucks.

There's a weight advantage, too, with the Azdel-composite-backed side walls. Azdel is 50 percent lighter than wood and impervious to mildew, rot and mold. Since it is void of moisture, it virtually eliminates delamination. This is a huge plus in my book.

If you're looking to upsize your life on the road in a smart way, take a look at the Coachmen Chaparral 381RD. Considering all the thought put into both its construction and design, it's pretty clear that this fiver is the whole package. 🚐

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STARS OF THE SHOW



FIFTEEN INNOVATIVE RVs FOR 2018

There are more than a half-million reasons why the RV industry could have spent the 2018 model year doing nothing more than playing catch-up. Half a million is a big number in anyone's book, and the most recent estimate by Recreation Vehicle Industry Association (RVIA) prognosticator Richard Curtin pegged final 2017 wholesale RV shipments at 505,600 units, the most since the association began recording them in 1978. What that means, aside from continuing the industry's nine-year run, is that manufacturers are pretty busy filling orders.

But as attendees discovered at last fall's trade shows — where new models and floorplans are often first shown to North American RV dealers — the manufacturers haven't chosen to rest on their reputations. While the ongoing popularity of RVs has been influenced by tax reform, better finances and more available credit, it has more to do with a manufacturing base that continues to design and engineer innovative new RVs across the entire price spectrum.

Those accolades, though, aren't limited just to RV manufacturers. Perhaps in no other year has the technology developed by, or in conjunction with, builders' supplier partners wielded greater influence than on many of 2018's new designs. Keystone's new two-patio, bath-and-a-half **Fuzion 424** toy hauler is a case in point.

"One of the biggest complaints we hear from customers is, 'Hey, my unit won't cool down,'" said Jeremiah Dumka, product manager for Keystone's Fuzion and Impact brands. "Builders have been putting three air conditioners on big units for a long time, but they've been on an energy-management system where one shuts down and another starts up.

"We have developed a system in conjunction with Dometic that allows owners to run all three A/C units at once off 50-amp service," Dumka explained, referring to the Fuzion's Omni-Chill system. "And if you're at a campground that has only 30-amp power available, you can run two air conditioners."

The 43½-foot, three-slideout floorplan also incorporates a peninsula dining table with integrated swing-out barstool seating, an innovation Keystone debuted last year. Other interesting functions include storage for the loft ladder and a huge hidden pantry behind a swing-out panel that houses the entertainment system.

With a starting price of \$112,000, the toy hauler includes a rear half bath that's accessible from the garage but actually occupies real estate in the kitchen area, freeing up the entire 12½-foot garage, which, by the way, carries a whopping 5,000-pound capacity. The 424 also has auto-start capability for its onboard generator, a feature that can be programmed into its iN-Command control system.

The Fuzion 424 isn't the only new model with unique features. The 2018 towables on the following pages, along with those showcased in the January issue, underscore why RVIA's Curtin expects wholesale shipments in the coming year to surpass 520,000 RVs, more than 85 percent of which will be hooked up behind the family car, SUV or truck.



(Far left) Utilizing the corner space behind the entertainment center and electric fireplace, the Fuzion 424 incorporates a hidden pantry. (Left) The Fuzion's front porch is outfitted with LED lighting and a TV.



Airstream Globetrotter 27FB

Airstream

Airstream, a subsidiary of Thor Industries, introduced the 28-foot **Globetrotter 27FB** as the first model in a sleek new line of travel trailers. If the Globetrotter name sounds familiar, it's because Airstream has used it in the past. According to Justin Humphreys, vice president of sales and marketing, resurrecting the name made sense after the company went overseas to work on the interior with British design firm Astheimer.

"Since the Airstream shell doesn't change a whole lot, we try to have a new set of eyes look at a space that we've been designing in for years," Humphreys said. Astheimer's design cue was for a layout that flows. "The furniture all wraps around each end — around the bed, around the dinettes, even in the cabinetry you'll see a lot of flow to the design. It's very simple and very modern," he explained.

With a base price of \$99,900, the upscale 27FB features a north-south queen bed up front (a twin-bed model is also available). The streetside bench of the rear dinette extends along the wall for a 63-inch lounge/bed that abuts a 6.7-cubic-foot refrigerator, a wardrobe and a shower. Along the curbside wall, the toilet and sink are opposite the shower, and a well-appointed galley is just off the entry door.

Cherokee

Forest River's Cherokee division debuted the Alpha Wolf line. "The all-new Alpha Wolf brand is part of our next step in the laminated series of Cherokee products," said John Quake, Cherokee's general manager. "Every wall in this trailer — including the slide room — is fully laminated, making it a lighter-weight coach designed specifically for lighter-weight trucks or SUVs."

With a base MSRP of \$23,900, a dry weight of 5,500 pounds and a gross



Cherokee Alpha Wolf 26DBH-L



vehicle weight rating (GVWR) of 7,200 pounds, the **Alpha Wolf 26DBH-L** features a large flush-floor slide, an 8-cubic-foot refrigerator, a walk-in pantry and plush mattresses on the rear bunks. The front master suite has a queen bed and lockable doors.

"The front cap is part of our Limited package, along with an oversize 20-foot awning, exterior camp kitchen, full pass-through storage and MORryde double entry steps," Quake added. The Alpha Wolf is initially offered in two floorplans, including the rear-kitchen 27RK-L, which features a large living-room slide. Two additional floorplans are in the works.



CrossRoads

When CrossRoads RV, a subsidiary of Thor, redesigned its line of **Cameo** fifth-wheels, it did so with the theme of "twice is nice," according to Regional Sales Manager Nino Porpiglia.

"What we mean by that is that there are two of all of the large features," he explained. "For example, there are two fireplaces, two televisions, two power



vent fans." Add to that a pair of awnings, along with a 2-inch receiver and an upgraded suspension, pinbox and exterior high-gloss finish, all standard.

By putting the new models on a straight frame-rail chassis, versus a drop chassis, CrossRoads was able to reposition the price category, Porpiglia said. Base price is \$63,000, and lengths range from 35 feet, 2 inches to 42½ feet.

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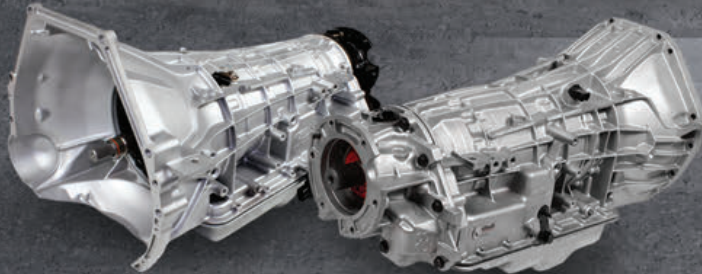


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Grand Design

A division of Winnebago Industries, Grand Design launched its new line of Transcend travel trailers. Priced between \$20,000 and \$30,000, the eight trailers vary in length from 25 to 36 feet and have dry weights in the high-5,000-pound to mid-6,000-pound range.

While the non-laminated Transcend can be described as a “stick-and-tin” trailer, Grand Design officials shy away from the entry-level association attached to that label. “We focused on quality,” said Product Manager Peter Kinden.

The initial floorplan, the 32-foot **Transcend 27BHS** bunkhouse, sleeps 10 and weighs about 6,400 pounds dry. Features include a power A-frame jack, a power awning, aluminum entry steps and an upgraded insulation package.



Heartland

The 41-foot, 5-inch **Gateway 3700RD** has what A.J. Jones, senior general manager of Thor subsidiary Heartland RV, said is “the biggest kitchen I know of that’s been put into a fifth-wheel.” Situated amidships, just inside and forward of the entry door, the U-shaped kitchen has ample counter space and a raised bar facing the rear living area. A large refrigerator and sizable pantry sit in their own streetside slideout.

Putting the spacious den in the rear, the layout features opposing slides with a love seat, a sofa sleeper and theater seating facing the rear-wall entertainment center. The front master suite has a standard queen bed in a slideout and a large front-wall closet with washer-and-dryer prep. The exterior also has a substantial amount of front-end storage and a full outdoor kitchen under the awning.

Heartland’s new fiver has a 15,500-pound GVWR and a starting price of \$68,097.

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Keystone

Another division of Thor Industries, Keystone RV debuted the **Cougar 32BHS**, one of three new floorplans in the nine-model fifth-wheel line. With two separate bathrooms, the 36-foot triple-slide bunkhouse will appeal to families, said Product Manager Matt Christensen.

“That’s the big catch on this floorplan,” Christensen said. “Plus, it has a big outside kitchen with the Capital Grill cooktop that we introduced for 2018. We’re putting it in all of those models.”

The 32BHS has a dry weight of 9,200 pounds and a \$45,277 MSRP.



Lance

With the 24-foot **2465**, Lance has released its longest ultralight travel trailer to date. Director of Marketing Bob Rogers said the 5,500-pound (dry) double-slide trailer’s other unique feature is the king bed in the rear.

“I think that’s a first in an ultralight travel trailer,” Rogers said. The 2465 comes with a pair of 40-inch LED TVs, including one in the master suite that disappears into a cabinet. Other highlights are a roof rack, a J-lounge sofa with an optional recliner in the front living area, and an optional fireplace, disc brakes and third LP-gas cylinder. Pricing was undetermined at press time.



Liberty Outdoors

Lightweight travel trailer manufacturer Liberty Outdoors displayed a prototype of its new retro-inspired **Serro Scotty Sportsman**, a 14-foot, 1,700-pound (dry) trailer that will retail in the high teens, according to Dylan DeHoff, Liberty’s chief operating officer.

The focus on capturing the brand’s vintage appeal is by design, DeHoff said. “We’ve tried to keep the outside as retro as possible. It’s true to the old Sportsman — windows in the same exact spot, same metal. Everything’s the exact same, but we built it with modern construction.”

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nüCamp

Following the success of its Cirrus 820 truck camper, designed for shortbed pickups, nüCamp has introduced a model for longbed owners, the **Cirrus 920**, with a 2,905-pound dry weight and a \$39,429 starting price.

"We've kept all the great things of the 820 and brought them to the 920," nüCamp President Scott Hubble said, "but now with the extra 18 to 20 inches, we've been able to put in some new features." Those features include a convection microwave oven, a slim-line refrigerator, a pullout pantry, additional kitchen storage, a 27-inch TV in the living area and a 19-inch TV in the cabover bed.

The 920 has two 6-volt, 220-amp AGM batteries on board and two 5-gallon LP-gas cylinders. "Between the double LP, the AGM batteries with more than a couple hundred amp hours and a couple hundred watts of solar, you've got a variety of power options to choose from," Hubble said.



Riverside

Towable manufacturer Riverside RV made a splash at the Louisville show with 19 units on display from its revamped Mount McKinley and its 12-model Retro lines.

"As far as the Retro, the biggest thing about what we're doing is, obviously, the old-school vintage trailer but with modern amenities," said Regional Sales Manager Chris Daniels, while seated inside the **Retro 189R**, a 23-foot, 9-inch couple's trailer that weighs 3,760 pounds unloaded.

The Retro features aluminum construction with 30-gauge aluminum siding. "Compared to the rest of the industry, it's almost double the gauge of aluminum, so it almost feels like siding on a house," Daniels said. Other features include a walk-around queen bed up front and a dry bath at the rear.



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STARS OF THE SHOW



Taxa Outdoors

Trailers designed for off-pavement pursuits continue to surge in popularity, and the 18-foot **Mantis** from Taxa Outdoors garnered plenty of attention at the Louisville show. "When designing the Mantis, we had to have room for four kayaks and four bikes, along with all the gear a person would take," said Garrett Finney, Taxa founder, CEO and lead designer.

"All our products excel at being off the grid or boondocking," Finney said. Beyond 14 inches of ground clearance, the Mantis has impressive headroom with its pop-up roof and dual-purpose appointments that include a couch that converts to a full-size bed. The trailer sleeps four and has a shower and a cassette toilet. The 6-foot, 9-inch travel height, sub-2,800-pound dry weight and aerodynamic shape make the Mantis easy to tow. "We tried to design the tow vehicle purchase out of the equation," said Finney. The trailer retails for around \$33,000 and fits in a standard garage.

Vanleigh

Vanleigh RV, the towable division of Tiffin Motorhomes, introduced its new **Beacon** luxury fifth-wheel. Targeting full-time RVers, the Beacon comes equipped with a roster of standard features including full-body paint and a high-gloss, ultra-shine wood finish on solid hardwood cabinetry.

The Beacon debuts with three models, the 38RLB, 39FBB and 39GBB. All are 38 feet, 11 inches with opposing slides in the rear living area and a bed slide in the upper level. The mid-bath 38RLB has an unloaded weight of 13,500 pounds, and the bath-and-a-half 39FBB and wine-bar-equipped 39GBB weigh in at 14,500



pounds dry. The latter two configurations offer spacious bedroom suites in the upper level with large master baths and roomy front wardrobes.

With a base MSRP around \$120,000, the Beacon is equipped with a 7-inch Spyder Controls multiplex system with a color screen, an 18-cubic-foot Whirlpool refrigerator and a second patio awning.

Venture

Venture RV, a division of Thor subsidiary KZ, brought a prototype of the **Sport Trek Touring Edition 302** to the Louisville show. Dave Boggs, KZ's general manager overseeing Venture and Livin' Lite, said the 33-foot travel trailer is notable for its front-bedroom, rear-bath floorplan. "There are a lot of rear baths out there, but we've separated ours with a king-bed slide





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STARS OF THE SHOW

up front with a double-door entry to the bedroom area," Boggs said.

Unlike other rear-bath configurations, Boggs pointed out that the 302 features a living area designed so the seating area is directly across from the entertainment center. "The other thing that separates us is we have a large walk-in closet on this floorplan, with a dresser and a mirror," Boggs added.

The trailer has a 7,100-pound dry weight and a \$37,500 base price.



Winnebago

"One of the nice things about this new floorplan is that it has two entry doors," said Winnebago Towables' Director of Marketing Mark Gerber of the new **Winnebago Minnie 2606RL**. "One enters into a nice living room with an oversize dinette, a big 68-inch sofa in the rear and great viewing for the TV from the whole area. The other door enters into the corner of the front bedroom with easy access to the mid-bath."

The bathroom has a roomy shower with a large wardrobe next to the sink and vanity, and the bedroom features a full-size king bed. Gerber also noted that there's no carpet throughout the entire 28-foot, 10-inch unit; Winnebago opted instead for vinyl floor for easy cleaning.

"This 8-foot-wide box is the most populated segment of the business," said Gerber. "We thought this segment from other manufacturers looked the same, so we created a new interior look." Like all of the Minnie trailers, exteriors are available in eight distinctive colors.

With a 7,000-pound GVWR and an MSRP around \$28,000, the 2606RL sleeps five adults with a sofa bed aft and a streetside dinette handling three guests. 🚐

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ON THE GOL

GIVING BACK WHILE ON A SEASIDE TOUR OF CENTRAL CALIFORNIA



Midway between Los Angeles and San Francisco, California's scenic Route 1 hugs the Pacific shore for much of its 100-mile wander through San Luis Obispo County. It's a popular vacation destination and a favorite of ours. Pismo Beach, Morro Bay, Cambria and San Simeon — each community offers a distinct appeal and ways visitors can give back as they travel up or down the coast.

We unhitched our travel trailer at three campgrounds during a recent exploration of the area. Enjoying perfect weather, we hiked atop ocean bluffs and through sand dunes, strolled beaches and quaint main streets, toured historic lighthouses, cruised Morro Bay, and observed elephant seals and migrating gray whales. We also visited a couple of memorable wineries and succumbed to a surfeit of culinary temptations. And beyond paying for the goods and services we received, we did uncover some small ways to give back.

PISMO BEACH

Look carefully or you may miss the Guadalupe-Nipomo Dunes Center, just south of the Santa Maria River and the San Luis Obispo County line. Housed in a vintage Craftsman-style bungalow along Route 1, the Dunes Center is supported by federal, state and local agencies and a private nonprofit. Each handles different responsibilities for the coastal dunes that stretch from Pismo Beach 15 miles south to Point Sal.

In the small visitor center, Will, the education coordinator, provided historical and natural-history information, and supplied a helpful recreation map. The exhibit displaying artifacts from the set of the 1923 silent movie *The Ten Commandments*, shot in the dunes, reminded us of a tiny archaeological museum. Don't miss digging in the sand on the projected-light topo map.

While you're there, you can arrange to volunteer on an environmental-stewardship project. Or you can simply

(Left, from top) Iconic Morro Rock, a 581-foot-high volcanic plug, identifies the harbor town of Morro Bay. Farther north in Cambria, a sunny afternoon treats hikers to panoramic views from the bluffs of Fiscalini Ranch Preserve, 434 idyllic acres of public open space.



DEN COAST

make a donation to support the center's important conservation work, as we did.

We drove out to Rancho Guadalupe Dunes Preserve County Park, a popular surf-fishing spot, and visited freshwater Oso Flaco Lake. The lake offered an easy hike with views of dunes, beach and colorful waterfowl, including ruddy ducks and cinnamon teal.

While camping in the quintessential beach town of Pismo Beach, we strolled the boardwalk, pier and small downtown, and walked on the beach at sunset. And since we were in the neighborhood, we couldn't miss eating at Jocko's, the iconic steak house in nearby Nipomo. This popular place serves quantities large enough that we enjoyed leftovers the following day.

MORRO BAY

Morro Bay was our next temporary residence. As the name implies, it's more harbor than beach town. Instead of a boardwalk, it has an embarcadero, with a fair share of souvenir and T-shirt shops among the art galleries. But the big difference is the working harbor with its marina and commercial fishing fleet.

While sea lions lounged on their private dock in the middle of the bay and sea otters paddled nearby, we got a good look at the Morro Bay Estuary aboard Captain Stew's Bay Cruise. In the shadow of Morro Rock, the estuary is home to commercial oyster beds and an array of wildlife, and we learned that the Navy had an amphibious training base here during World War II.

Sportfishing charters, and kayak and paddleboard rentals provide more ways to experience Morro Bay and the ocean just beyond. Not to be missed is Tognazzini's Dockside Restaurant, featuring fresh seafood, much of it locally caught. It's a genuine local institution established by a fishing family to market its catch.

From its headquarters on the embarcadero, the Morro Bay National Estuary Program protects this wetland habitat, and organizes restoration and cleanup events, though none were planned while we were visiting. Again, if you can't volunteer, making any size donation helps support organizations like this one.

We signed up for a tour of the Point

San Luis Lighthouse near Avila Beach. We had visited a decade ago when the only way to the lighthouse was hiking or kayaking. This time we rode a shuttle to the now-renovated lighthouse and toured the building with knowledgeable docents. We observed an artful restoration with period furnishings.

The nonprofit Point San Luis Lighthouse Keepers are responsible for the upkeep of the 1890 structure and other buildings on the site. By paying for a tour, we contributed in a small way to the restoration and maintenance of this historic place.

SAN SIMEON

Heading north to the Piedras Blancas elephant-seal rookery, we arrived to see a beach crowded with seals, including huge males weighing up to 5,000 pounds and sporting pronounced proboscises, the inspiration for the species' name. Docents from Friends of the Elephant Seal answer visitors' questions,



Pulling over for a break and a beach view along coast-hugging Route 1.



A classic symbol of coastal culture, the Pismo Beach Pier has welcomed tourists and fisherfolk since 1924.

explaining that northern elephant seals travel up to 3,000 miles into the north Pacific and Gulf of Alaska, returning to the rookery to birth, rest and breed. The species has made a remarkable recovery from near-extinction about a century ago to more than 225,000 now.

Less than 10 minutes back down Route 1, we pulled into the parking lot of Sebastian's, now part of the Hearst Ranch Winery in the old village of San Simeon. It's across the highway from Hearst San Simeon State Historical Monument, better known as Hearst Castle. Opened as a general store in 1852 when the village served as a whaling and fishing port, Sebastian's is now a café and wine-tasting bar. Although the wine is mostly grown and produced inland near Paso Robles, the association of the family name and Hearst Castle draws visitors.

The venerable space was bustling when we arrived in late afternoon to

be greeted by Geraldine, who poured several wines for us to taste and explained the vineyard's grape varieties and winemaking approach. We enjoyed learning about the winery, but when we discovered Geraldine was a fellow RVer, we traded stories about our favorite travel adventures. The well-crafted wine was very much to our taste, and one, the Pergola petite sirah, ended up in our trailer's "cellar."

CAMBRIA

That evening we dined at Linn's on Main Street in Cambria, just south of San Simeon. Linn's is another local institution, known throughout the central coast as a bakery, but the family also operates a café, restaurant and specialty market. We'd describe the food we enjoyed in the high-ceilinged eatery as elevated down-home cooking.

Cambria is another appealing small town that is easy to hang out in, with an

(Below, from left) One-of-a-kind shops and galleries enliven the scene on a walking tour of Cambria's historic village. At nearby Stolo Family Vineyards, visitors sample local whites and reds. A short drive up the coast, Piedras Blancas Light Station has been without its beacon since 1949 when the lantern room was removed after suffering earthquake damage.



CAMPING ON THE GOLDEN COAST

MORRO BAY

A ½-mile stroll from the embarcadero, **Cypress RV and Mobile Home Park** is situated near the harbor. 805-772-2515

Morro Bay State Park offers 27 public campsites 2 miles from the center of the embarcadero. 805-772-2560, www.parks.ca.gov

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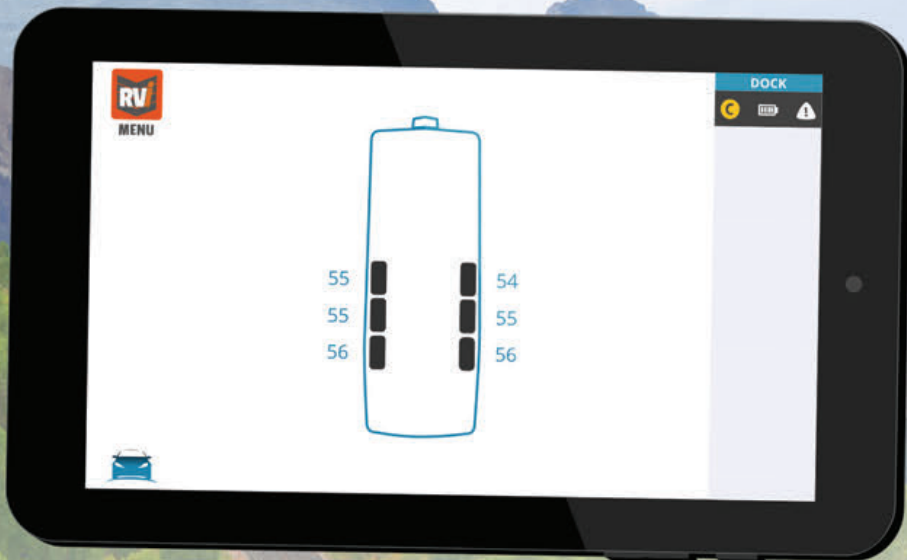
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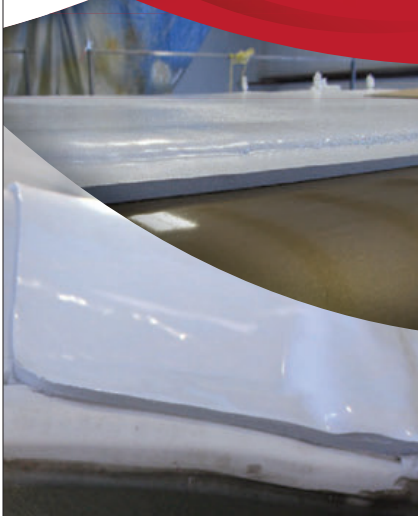
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ON THE GOLDEN COAST

abundance of one-of-a-kind shops and galleries, good restaurants, beautiful ocean bluffs and historical architecture. Stopping by the Cambria Chamber of Commerce and Visitor Center on Main Street, we picked up a walking-tour map. Beginning at the town's eastern edge, the tour weaves through the center of the historic East Village. We strolled past structures dating from the 1860s to the 1930s, a mix of styles and functions.

The Shop Next Door, built in the 1880s and next to the 1877 Squibb House on Burton Drive, features beautifully handcrafted furniture, and the Vault Gallery, housed in a 1928 bank building on Main Street, struck our fancy with its eclectic collection from local artists and photographers. Having worked up an appetite, we headed for Indigo Moon, also on Main Street, where, seated on the covered back deck, we savored blackened salmon salad and salmon tacos with mango salsa.

Fiscalini Ranch Preserve is a 434-acre gem in the center of Cambria. Acquired as public open space in 2000 after several unsuccessful attempts at development, its miles of trails are accessible every day from dawn to dusk. Friends of the Fiscalini Ranch Preserve hold



Below the road to Point San Luis Lighthouse, RVs park along Avila Beach Drive, named for its quiet seaside terminus just north of Pismo Beach.

a conservation easement on the property, raise funds to support the preserve and organize volunteers for various projects. We hiked a loop on the Marine Terrace and Bluff trails with unobstructed views of the Pacific and northward-migrating gray whales breaching and spouting.

Two miles east of the center of Cambria's East Village, on Santa Rosa Creek Road, Stolo Family Vineyards defies the odds and conventional wine wisdom. Charlene and Donald Stolo and their talented crew coax some exceptional chardonnay, sauvignon blanc, pinot noir and, most surprisingly, Syrah, from their small hillside and creekside vineyard, 3 miles as the gull flies from the Pacific shore.

With coastal fog, onshore breezes and moderate temperatures, ripening grapes to the peak of flavor can be

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Patrons at Sebastian's in San Simeon enjoy a view of hilltop Hearst Castle. A mercantile store opened in 1852, Sebastian's now serves as a tasting room for Hearst Ranch Winery.

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ON THE GOLDEN COAST

challenging, but attentive viticultural practices help. The small, rustic-modern winery, with its sun-bathed tasting room, was a welcoming and comfortable environment in which to savor some lovely and highly rated estate wines.

Several buildings on the historic walking tour are restaurants, and we returned to one of them, Robin's, for dinner. We first thought the menu, self-described as "handcrafted global cuisine," seemed pretentious, but we quickly reconsidered. It was an apt description of dishes that ranged from prawn enchiladas to pork osso buco, and included the tandoori chicken and pad thai we ordered. Local ingredients and deft and inventive preparation yielded a meal that exceeded our high expectations.

PIEDRAS BLANCAS LIGHT STATION

On our final morning, we headed 12 miles north on Route 1 to the Piedras Blancas Light Station. Once 100 feet tall with a large first-order Fresnel lens, today the lighthouse tower stands at 70 feet, missing its lantern and watch room. The U.S. Coast Guard removed the top in 1949 when it was found to be structurally unsound following an earthquake.

Now owned by the Bureau of Land Management, the nonprofit Piedras Blancas Light Station Association provides maintenance, conducts public tours and raises money for these and other projects. So far, a redwood water tower that once served the station was reconstructed and the brick fog signal building was restored. The big, expensive undertaking is restoring the top 30 feet of the tower including the lantern. Financial donations will help realize that dream, and volunteers are encouraged to give of their time.

Near the lighthouse on the Piedras Blanca bluffs, a state park project proposes extending a coastal trail from the elephant-seal viewpoints to the beach at Arroya de la Cruz and creating a 29-space campground, which would be welcome additions to the region.

We could easily spend a week in each of these communities and never run out of enjoyable experiences or good places to eat. And surely we could dig up some more ways to give a little back. 📱



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RVing With Pets

TIPS FOR KEEPING YOUR FURRY FRIENDS HAPPY, HEALTHY AND SAFE WHEN YOU TRAVEL

You're hitting the road, heading down that long highway to wide-open spaces or just driving a short distance to a really nice RV park for the weekend. What could be better than taking along your best friends, especially if those friends have tails? But while bringing pets along on a vacation sounds like great fun, sometimes the pets themselves have other ideas. Even those that enjoy the journey need special care and consideration to keep them safe and happy while traveling.



Before You Go

Some animals have a hard time adjusting to the idea that “home” is moving and that the view out the window is constantly changing or that there are strangers walking by the site all day. Before you leave, get your pet acclimated to your RV. Transfer some daily activities like mealtime and playtime inside, so the RV becomes a place where happy things go on. Leave your dog inside alone for a short time to see if it is prone to barking. The barking

might not bother you, but your campsite neighbors will probably disagree.

After your pet seems comfortable, go for a trial drive and watch for nervousness or carsickness. You might have to start with short trips and work your way up to longer stretches. Eating in the RV and playing outside it while tethered lets your dog ease into the idea of a longer trip. It's important, too, not to get angry with nervous or scared dogs during this acclimation period. Remember, only happy things should happen in the RV.

Along with your own luggage, you'll need to pack a bag for your pet. First and most obvious is food, preferably enough to last through the trip and get you home in case you can't find your pet's regular brand while on the road. This is particularly important for dogs, some of which suffer intestinal distress when a new food is introduced suddenly. Also pack bowls for food and water, toys, brushes, poop bags, litter and a litter box, leashes and collars. If your pet takes medication, stock up before you go and write down your vet-

erinarian's emergency information. Talk to the vet about potential problems like ticks or heartworm at your destination and points along the way, and vaccinate your pet accordingly. It's also a good idea to have a record of your pet's medical history and proof of vaccinations.

Make sure your pet's collar has a license, tags for rabies and other vaccinations, an emergency contact tag with your cell number — there's no point in the campsite next door phoning your landline to tell you they found your dog — and a "travel tag" with your RV's make, model and license-plate number. If your pet is microchipped, know exactly where the chip is, and write down the number.

Dogs, especially long-haired ones, can quickly fill an RV with fur and, worse, odor. A pretrip visit to the groomer for a brushing, clip and bath makes your canine pal a much more pleasant travel companion, as do regular brushings to remove burrs and stickers from long fur.

One last pretrip chore is to make sure the campgrounds or parks where you're planning to stay allow pets, and under what conditions. Some, for example, allow small dogs but not big ones or a certain breed, or charge a fee based on the size and number of four-legged guests staying with you. Once you're there, abide by the rules governing where pets can go and how they should behave.



TRIED & TESTED

You wear seat belts while you're driving or riding in a vehicle, and your furry friends deserve the same level of protection. The nonprofit Center for Pet Safety crash-tests pet-travel harnesses and carriers that range from what the CPS calls "distraction prevention" (virtually useless in a crash) all the way up to crates that can survive a rollover without splitting or deforming. CPS Certification ensures that the product will give your pet the best chance of survival in an accident. www.centerforpetsafety.org

FOR THE LOVE OF ALL THAT'S WARM AND FUZZY, DON'T LET YOUR PET SIT IN YOUR LAP WHILE YOU'RE DRIVING. YOU MIGHT THINK IT'S CUTE, BUT IT WON'T BE IF YOU GET IN A CRASH AND THE AIRBAG GOES OFF.

On the Road

Never leave your pet inside a trailer while you're towing. Pets should ride with the humans, in crates, carriers or harnesses that prevent them from wandering around inside the vehicle and distracting the driver. The device should be secured in case of an accident to keep the occupant from flying around inside the vehicle. For the love of all that's warm and fuzzy, don't let your pet sit in your lap while you're driving. You might think it's cute, but it won't be if you get in a crash and the airbag goes off.

Dogs are creatures not only of hair and drool, but of habit, too. More than cats, they like to stick to routines for food, walks and bathroom breaks. Try to keep to a schedule for these activities, but don't rush it once you stop to take care of them.

Dogs get more information about their surroundings through their nose than their eyes, and to them, a leisurely sniff in a new place is as good as a tourist-information booth or a vista point to you. Take the opportunity to stretch your legs and smell the roses, or whatever is growing nearby.

Wherever you go, pick up after your pet. Many public parks and RV campgrounds have poop-bag dispensers, so you don't have to carry bags with you, but bring some of your own for those rest stops in the middle of nowhere.

Every pet owner knows, or should know, how fast a car or truck with the windows closed can heat up on a sunny day, even if the air temperature isn't that high. Keep this in mind if you leave your pet in the tow vehicle or RV while you're buying groceries or gas, or sightseeing. Make sure there's plenty of water within easy reach, and turn on the air conditioning, if possible. Also, don't lose track of time and forget about the little guy back in the rig holding his knees together. Set the timer on your watch or phone

to remind you someone needs to go outside soon.

Also, we've heard stories of the air conditioner failing because of a power surge and pets becoming dangerously overheated inside the RV. A wireless temperature monitor lets you keep tabs remotely on the conditions inside your RV while your pet is waiting for your return.

In the Campground

Although your cat might not mind, your dog won't want to spend the whole vacation in the RV any more than you do. A long, securely anchored tie-out line (preferably made of something too tough to chew through) gives your dog some leeway to explore your site without getting lost. A folding exercise pen for use in the campsite doubles as a barrier across the RV's door to let the breeze in without letting the dog out. A water bowl nearby is mandatory in either case.

First impressions are valuable when meeting new people, and the way you relate to your pet says a lot about you. If your dog pulls at the leash and darts left and right as you trail behind shouting angry commands, your campground neighbors are going to wonder whether you or the dog is in charge. Basic obedience training shows everyone which end of the leash the boss is on, and few things are better at turning strangers into friends than a happy, well-behaved dog.

Dogs are welcome in some campgrounds and merely tolerated in others. When you and your dog are out and about, you're representing everyone who travels with a pet, so be on your best behavior. Obey all park rules about where dogs can go, and never leave the RV with your dog without a couple of poop bags stashed in your pocket.

You can usually tell who likes dogs and who doesn't, so steer clear of anyone who looks fearful or steps aside

RVing With Pets

when you approach. Most small children love dogs and will run to them. If your dog isn't used to this, ask the child, or the child's parents, to slow down, and tell them when it's safe to pet your dog and how to do it by first extending a closed hand, not outstretched fingers, to see how the dog reacts.

Some dogs don't like a strange hand on their head and will shy away or even nip. Others will leap happily on strangers, which could lead to a fall if the stranger is a small child or an elderly or unprepared adult. Make sure you know how your dog reacts to new people before you leave on a trip so there are no unpleasant surprises later.

Don't leave your pet tethered outside the RV alone in areas where wild animals live. With nowhere to run, a dog is easy prey for big cats, bears and other predators. Even in more densely populated campgrounds, a child might run through your site and scare your dog into a defensive

response. Cats love to hide out in small spaces, so make sure you know exactly where they are before you open or close slideouts or latch a closet door. They'll also dart out of the RV faster than you can react, if you don't secure them first.

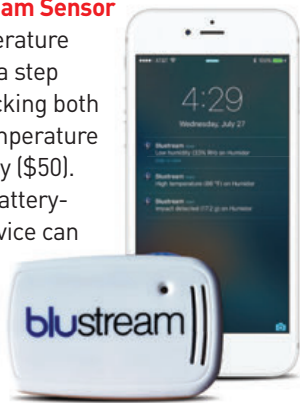
Older pets love to travel, too, but sometimes they need special help getting up and down steps. A ramp with a grippy surface or raised slats placed across the ramp for traction helps your old buddy get in and out on his own. A lightweight plastic or aluminum folding ramp is easy to deploy for use into getting into and out of the RV and tow vehicle.

If it's your first time traveling with pets, the sheer amount of stuff you need to bring can be overwhelming. Pick the right stuff, though, and every vacation will be fun for all family members, regardless of whether they have tails and whiskers. Here's a selection of products to help make every outing with your furry friends a memorable one.



The **Nimble Pet Temperature Monitor** (starting at \$129) lets you keep track of the temperature inside an RV so your pet doesn't get overheated. It sends a text or email alert through a cellular network when the temperature exceeds the permissible level and has a built-in GPS to track your RV's location. It works with both Android and iOS systems for remote monitoring. www.rvpetsafety.com

The **Blustream Sensor** takes temperature monitoring a step further, tracking both ambient temperature and humidity (\$50). The small battery-powered device can be placed anywhere in an RV and wirelessly reports to



smart devices with a free mobile app. www.blustreamcorp.com/rvs



RVers can monitor the comfort of their pets as well as the security of their trailer with the **HomeMinder Remote Video and Temperature monitoring system** (\$249). The RVT works with any iPhone, iPad or Android device to provide real-time video images along with sending high- and low-temperature notifications and motion-sensing alerts.

www.minderresearch.com/homeminder

Another way to keep tabs on four-legged companions when you're away from your RV is with the **Pet-Peep PetCam** (\$99) with a motion detector.

Recording, tilting and panning can be controlled via the iPhone or Android mobile app. The PetCam can be set up to alert you with emailed photos. www.pet-peeps.com

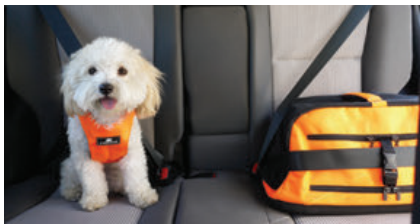


Eureka Products' **Marco Polo tracking tag** can reunite you and your pet, should your furry friend go missing. The lightweight waterproof tag has a range of up to 2 miles, and the unique identification is expandable for as many as three pets (\$234.95/one pet, \$334.95/two pets, \$434.95/three pets). Four "safe" zones can be programmed in to alert you when they've wandered off. The device requires a very small amount of RF energy that the company claims is safe for pets. www.eurekaproducts.com



I.C.E. (In Case of Emergency) Products' **Collar ID** (\$15) is made of weatherproof material that wraps around a dog collar and secures with hook-and-loop strips. The pet owner can record contact, medication and veterinarian information and "wrap" it up in a durable and lightweight tag that's portable from collar to collar. Should your dog amble off, your

contact information is readily accessible by the finder. The I.C.E. collar comes in a two-pack so snowbirds can record a summer and winter address.
www.iceproducts.net



Sleepypod safety harnesses were top-rated in the Center for Pet Safety's 2017 tests. Three points of contact reduce forward and lateral movement in the event of a crash or sudden stop. Two loops provide attachment points for seat-belt insertion through, then into, the vehicle's seat belt. The pet-restraint harness comes in four sizes for small, medium, large and extra-large dogs from 18 to 90 pounds. The Clickit Sport (\$69.99 to \$89.99) has plastic buckles, while the Clickit Terrain (\$89.99 to

\$99.99) has metal buckles. Sleepypod recommends that pets weighing less than 18 pounds be transported in a crash-tested carrier for safe travel, and offers three options.
www.sleepypod.com



Hofmann RV Products' **Telescoping Pet Ramps** make it easier for your furry friends to get into and out of your RV and tow vehicle. The lightweight, collapsible ramps come in two models (\$160 and \$190) and support up to 400 pounds. A carry handle and high-traction surface are standard. The company also makes access gates and kennels.
www.hofmannccr.com

The **Retractable Cable Tie-Out Stake** (\$29.49)

from Howard Pet Products rotates 360 degrees for maximum play area. Available in models for small, medium and large dogs, the coated, braided cable gives pets from 706 to 1,256 square feet to roam. Just push the stake into the ground to secure it in place. The reel has a reflective strip so you can see it at night. The company also makes a retractable bracket-mounted tie-out that can be attached to a tree, a post, a trailer hitch or a patio.
www.lixit.com



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RVing With Pets



The **MaxxLock Exercise Pen** (\$92.74 for the SplitDoor shown) comes in five

sizes and encircles 16 square feet of exercise area. The folding pen includes ground stakes and corner stabilizers, and is easy to set up and take down with no tools. It can also be used as a door barrier to keep pets inside the RV and still open to the breeze on hot days.
www.petsgohere.com

The **Good2Go No-Spill Dog Bowl** (\$9.99) keeps water from spilling when placed

in a moving vehicle and reduces food spillover during feeding. The plastic bowl holds two cups of water or food and is dishwasher safe.
www.petco.com



Pet Zone's **OdorLess Disposable Cat Litter Box and Liner** (\$11.22 for a three-pack) can be used as either a litter box or a litter-box liner. The waterproof box is claimed to eliminate odors faster than competing products. Made in the USA, it cleans up in a jiffy — just toss the box and replace it.
www.chewy.com



Flexi retractable leashes (prices vary) never slacken because they're always under slight tension. Your dog can wander, but you can stop him with the push of a thumb brake. There's also a function that sets the leash at a fixed length. Flexi leashes come in a wide variety of styles and sizes for small to very large dogs. Accessories such as lights and a storage box for poop bags or treats are available.
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gently tightens along the shoulders as needed to help direct the cat, and the bungee leash provides gentle give when walking.

www.petsafe.net



The **Gunner G1 Intermediate dog crate** (\$499.99) was rated Top Performing Crate for 2015 by the Center for Pet Safety when used with Gunner reinforced connection straps. Gunner says it's the market's only double-wall roto-molded dog crate, and it comes with an escape-proof door, elevated feet and water-repelling windows. The company makes five crates for dogs up to 110 pounds.

www.gunnerkennels.com



The **Camco RV Aluminum Screen Door Standard Grille** (part number 43980, \$40.40) adds durability to flimsy screen doors to keep pets from charging through when they see something appealing outside. The 29-by-22.5-by-

1-inch grille covers the lower portion of the existing screen, and installation is simple. The grille weighs less than 3 pounds, and the support brackets adjust from 20 to 29 inches. Camco also offers deluxe screen door grilles in black or white.

www.camco.net

Camping World also sells a **Screen Door Grille** (\$46.99) that keeps pets



from clawing through mesh-screen doors and getting outside. The decorative 3.5-pound grille comes in white, black or silver.

www.campingworld.com

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STANDING THE TEST OF TIME, THE GRANITE STATE HAS MORE THAN 50 COVERED BRIDGES, ANTIQUE TREASURES FROM A SLOWER AND SIMPLER AMERICAN LIFESTYLE

Today, many of the country's venerable covered bridges can't be driven over in motorized vehicles. And where driving is allowed, it's limited to slow-moving motorcycles or automobiles, nothing bigger. You likely won't encounter most historic covered bridges unless you go looking, and you certainly won't come across them on freeways.

But the antique treasures can still be found on picturesque back roads in more than half the U.S. states. Back when bridges were made exclusively of wood, generally untreated, a roof and walls would be added to protect the deck from the weather, giving it a longer service life. A cover also provided shelter from the elements to travelers, and reassured horses and livestock that may have been alarmed by rushing water.

My husband, Guy, and I have gone in search of these anachronistic gems on a number of occasions — our travels

often involve following "trails" of one sort or another. We were pleased to find on a recent trip to the Northeast that New Hampshire has preserved 54 of the more than 400 covered bridges that once graced its many waterways.

Between 1805 and 1885, some 10,000 covered bridges were built in the United States, many of them in New England. Various configurations were used, but all covered bridges consisted of a roadway supported on either side by a wooden truss and a roof. The framework was of heavy timbers or "chords" connected with diagonal

or vertical trusses in half a dozen or so patterns, fastened together with wooden pins or "trunnels."

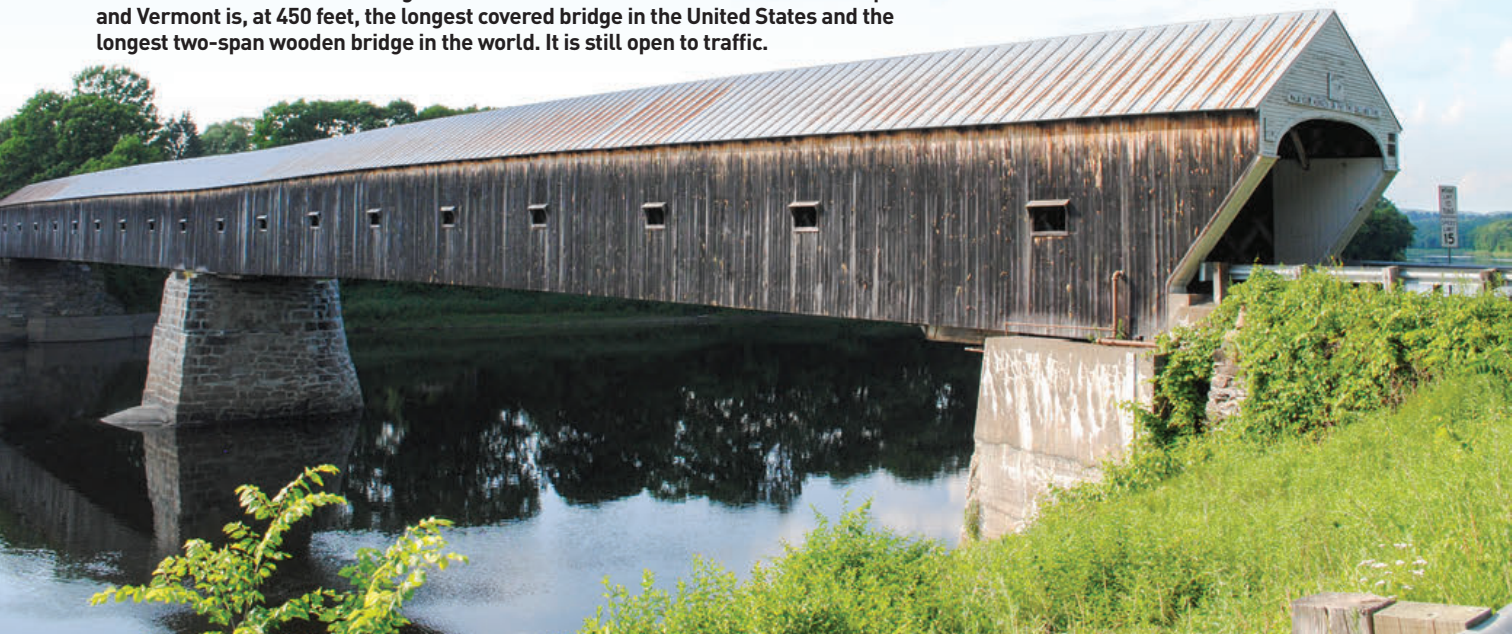
The use of coal-tar creosote to treat the wood, begun a century and a half ago, changed bridge building. The first pressure-creosoting plant in the United States appeared in 1865, with others built over the next half century. As using creosote-treated wood became commonplace, adding a cover was no longer necessary.

Another turning point in bridge building had come earlier, in the 1840s. Before that, most bridges were built entirely of wood. But in 1840, architect William Howe of Massachusetts patented a truss design that replaced wooden vertical posts with cast-iron rods. The Howe truss was considered the crowning achievement of the wood-bridge era.

But improved steel and concrete spelled doom for wood in bridge building, and by 1950, the year the National Society for the Preservation of Covered Bridges was formed, only about 1,500 remained in the United States. Others had succumbed to flood or fire, or simply neglect. In New Hampshire, in 1963, covered bridges became the first type of historical structure specifically protected by state law.

In 1987 Congress declared it to be "in the national interest to encourage the rehabilitation, reuse and preserva-

The 1866 Cornish-Windsor Bridge over the Connecticut River between New Hampshire and Vermont is, at 450 feet, the longest covered bridge in the United States and the longest two-span wooden bridge in the world. It is still open to traffic.



tion of bridges significant in American history, architecture, engineering and culture. Historical bridges are important links to our past ... and can represent significant resources for the future."

Each state was required to inventory its bridges to determine significance and address "rehabilitation, retention and study of historic bridges." "Historic" applies to any bridge eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places, created in 1966.

Many of New Hampshire's 54 preserved covered bridges are on the National Register, and others may eventually be added. Elizabeth Muzzy, director of the New Hampshire Division of Historic Resources, says the bridges are "among our most beloved icons." She adds that "creating your own tour of them is a great way to see the Granite State."

On our recent visit, Guy and I decided to go in search of the state's covered bridges, with the goal of seeing as many as possible in two days. We began in quaint Lancaster, which lies a few miles west of the White Mountain National Forest in the Connecticut River Valley. Three historic bridges are in the area.

Mechanic Street Bridge, just east of U.S. Route 2 in the town, crosses the Israel River, a boulder-laden stream, which, according to a sign,

provided water power to the town's early industries. The original 1780s' bridge became inadequate for the growing community, and in 1862 the current bridge, a 94-foot-long Paddleford truss, was built, "enabling horses and carriages to cross faster." There have been two renovations, in 1962 and 2006, and passenger cars may drive across today.

Edna Surridge of the Lancaster Visitors Center provided directions to the two other area bridges. Take Elm Street west from Route 2, opposite Mechanic Street. Follow the narrow, winding road for 5 miles (passing an odd Stonehenge-like rock formation along the way) to the one-lane 1911 Mount Orne Bridge just west of State Route 135. Also called the Lunenburg Bridge, the 266-foot-long Howe truss structure crosses the Connecticut into Lunenburg, Vermont. (Note: You can't drive your RV across the covered bridges, and turning around at some can be tricky, so be sure to plan ahead.)

From Lancaster drive north 9 miles on U.S. Route 3 to Groveton Village, where the 1852 Groveton Covered Bridge crosses the Upper Ammonoosuc River. This 126-foot-long Paddleford truss bridge owes its excellent condition to Route 3 being rerouted in 1939, bypassing the bridge.

Return to Lancaster on Route 3 and continue south, passing Weeks



(Top and above) Built in 1862, the beautiful Mechanic Street Bridge in Lancaster is also known as the Israel River Bridge. It connected the mechanics of the town with the farmers across the river.

State Park on Mount Prospect, named for U.S. Senator John Wingate Weeks, sponsor of legislation in 1910 to create the White Mountain National Forest. The road is good but steep, including a 14 percent grade into the antique town of Whitefield. Towering slate-blue mountains, thickly treed, rise on all



Stunning Franconia Notch is a major pass through the White Mountains. Interstate 93 transits the Notch but required an act of Congress, as it could only be a two-lane road.



(Far left) The authors discovered picturesque RV parks along the way, but it is best to make reservations in advance. (Left) In the town of Bath, a car crosses the 158-foot-long Swiftwater Bridge, built in 1849, as bathers sun themselves on the rocks of the Wild Ammonoosuc River below the historic span.

sides, and mountain meadows are festively spiked with purple lupine.

Route 3 joins Interstate 93 near Franconia and continues south. The Frost Place, a short drive west on I-93, is worth a visit. Once home to poet Robert Frost and now owned by the town of Franconia, it's a nonprofit educational center for poetry. Mountain views from the front porch are stunning.

Return to I-93/3 and continue south through dramatic Franconia Notch, a major pass through the White Mountains. Here the interstate is a super-two-lane parkway, one lane in each direction, with a 45-MPH speed limit. The road was a compromise between the government, which wanted a four-lane route, and environmentalists, who had concerns about the impact such a highway would have

on Franconia Notch.

The "notch" is bordered to the east by Franconia Ridge, six massive mountains ranging in height from 4,300 to 5,200 feet, and to the west by 4,100-foot Cannon Mountain and the sheer face of Cannon Cliff. Here in the heart of the national forest is 6,700-acre Franconia Notch State Park, which straddles the interstate for 8 miles, from Echo Lake to the Flume, and includes a number of attractions.

These are extremely popular, and parking can be a problem. But we found a spot at the Basin and, among dozens of others, walked the trail through the woods along aptly named Pemigewasset River, Abenaki for "swift current." Roaring white water races along, seemingly every which way, foaming down chutes and falls to the Basin, a large swirling-water "pothole."

The 30-foot-diameter, 15-foot-deep hole began taking shape some 25,000 years ago as the Ice Age came to a close. Water from the melting glacier bored deep through the granite bedrock, and for thousands of years spinning sand and stones created the pothole or "basin." Naturalist Henry David Thoreau, here in 1839, called it "perhaps the most remarkable curiosity of its kind in New England."

Franconia Notch State Park offers other attractions, notably Cannon Mountain Aerial Tramway (cable cars climb 4,180 feet to the summit), Echo Lake Beach and the Flume (an 800-foot-long, 90-foot-deep gorge where a boardwalk has been built). Admission is charged for these.

Two covered bridges cross the Pemigewasset at the Flume. Flume Bridge, built in 1871, is a 50-foot-long Paddleford truss with a hiker's walkway attached to the north side. Small park buses cross this bridge; visitors' vehicles may not.

Sentinel Pine Covered Bridge, a 60-foot-long "stringer," crosses the river at the "pool." This walking bridge, new in 1939, was built atop a 60-foot section of a white pine that had stood "like a sentry" nearby, towering 150 feet high before a storm toppled it a year earlier.

Continue to State Route 112 and turn right toward historic Bath. Swiftwater Covered Bridge, a Paddleford truss with added arches, crosses the Wild Ammonoosuc River east of town. The 158-foot-long Swiftwater, built in 1849, is the fourth bridge to stand at the site.

In the historic district of town, 256-foot-long Bath Covered Bridge, a Burr truss, fifth to be built on the site, spans the now-placid Ammonoosuc, providing bucolic views in both directions. Five miles west in Woodsville Village, the Ammonoosuc widens dramatically into a dam-created pool where the 374-foot Haverhill-Bath Covered Bridge, a Town lattice truss, crosses it. Water thunders over the dam under the bridge, which, at age 189, is the oldest covered bridge in the state still in use, though only to foot traffic since 1999. It was restored most recently in 2004.

From Woodsville Village, drive south on State Route 10. We suggest a brief stop at lovely Haverhill Common in North Haverhill. Bordered by imposing



The Israel River makes its rocky way east of Lancaster near three antique bridges.

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white-frame historic homes, the common, fenced with rough-hewn stone posts, was once pastureland for farm animals. Continue south through Lyme, founded in 1761, to Hanover, where we suggest a drive through Dartmouth College campus. Chartered in 1769, it's one of nine colonial colleges in operation before the American Revolution.

Where the road divides at West Lebanon, continue south on State Route 12A. Just north of Saint-Gaudens Road, which leads to Saint-Gaudens National Historic Site, watch for a small "Covered Bridge" sign at Mill Road on the left. The road is narrow and winding, and the secluded bridge, the Blow-Me-Down, is about a mile ahead. Folks in New Hampshire are gracious about letting RVers use their driveways to turn around, but it's best to ask first. Drivers in the state are similarly considerate, waiting patiently while RVers make difficult turnarounds.

The Blow-Me-Down, a king-post

truss, built in 1877, crosses a leafy gorge on Blow-Me-Down Brook. Guidebooks say it's in Cornish, but a local resident, Steve, who drove us there in his Jeep, said it's actually the tiny community of Squag City. The 85-foot bridge is open for auto traffic, though the road is little traveled.

Continue south on Route 12A to Saint-Gaudens National Historic Site, home to one of America's greatest sculptors, Augustus Saint-Gaudens (1848 to 1907). Among his many masterpieces are the \$20 "double eagle" gold coin, and bronze monuments to Civil War Admiral David Farragut and General William T. Sherman, a graceful Diana, and a "Standing Lincoln" commissioned for Chicago's Lincoln Park.

Through the efforts of the National Park Service, the state of New Hampshire and numerous foundations, the 12-foot-tall Lincoln, "captured in physical appearance and spirit," was recently recast from Saint-Gaudens' molds, and was to be dedicated in 2016 at the

WHERE TO STAY IN THE GRANITE STATE

New Hampshire has more than 100 commercial RV parks and public campgrounds, including 15 Good Sam Parks that offer members discounted campsites. To find them all, visit Good Sam's online guide to North American RV parks and campgrounds or purchase the 2018 edition of the *Good Sam RV Travel & Savings Guide* on the Camping World website.

www.campingworld.com/2018guide
www.goodsam.com/travel/campgroundsandrps

FOR MORE INFORMATION

The website of the National Society for the Preservation of Covered Bridges offers a state-by-state guide to historic covered bridges, with GPS coordinates and detailed descriptions, plus links to other helpful websites.

www.coveredbridgesociety.org

The New Hampshire Division of Historical Resources provides an online guide to the state's covered bridges that is searchable by bridge name or town.

www.nh.gov/nhdhr/bridges



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sculptor's historic site. We'd known it was coming, but didn't know exactly when — or when we'd be there — and thus, as we arrived on June 26, we were surprised and delighted to see several thousand folks gathered for the event, which was about to begin.

Shrouded by a parachute, the Lincoln stood nearby during speeches by Governor Maggie Hassan, Metropolitan Art Museum Curator Thayer Tolles, NPS Associate Director Stephanie Toothman, noted historian Harold Holzer and others. The 12th New Hampshire Volunteer Regiment Serenade Band played Civil War-era music. Then the parachute was whisked off, and the magnificent Lincoln revealed.

Numerous works by the sculptor are displayed at the historic site, as are his fine home and gardens, studios and much more, including 80-acre Blow-Me-Down Natural Area with a 2-mile hiking trail.

Continue south a quarter mile on

Route 12A to the 1866 Cornish-Windsor Bridge over the Connecticut. The fourth bridge to connect Cornish, New Hampshire, and Windsor, Vermont, the 460-foot-long Town lattice truss is the longest wooden bridge in the country, and the longest two-span covered bridge in the world. Originally a toll bridge, as were many of the others, the Cornish-Windsor was bought by the state of New Hampshire in 1936 and became toll free seven years later.

A mile south, turn left on Town House Road, then Mill Village Road to Root Hill Road, where the Dingleton Hill Covered Bridge crosses Mill Brook. New in 1882, the 80-foot multiple-king-post truss was rebuilt 101 years later. Turning around here is awkward; you must back into Mill Village Road.

We settled on McDermott Covered Bridge at Langdon as the last stop on this two-day trek. It's about 30 miles south of Cornish, a scenic route through more of the state's historic towns and elegant countryside.

Follow Route 12A and continue on Route 12 where the two merge at North Charlestown. At the town of Cold River, turn left on State Route 123 to Alstead. Just past the town, the road splits; take Route 123A and turn left on Crane Brook Road at the whimsical woolly mammoth statue.

The McDermott Covered Bridge and a "Welcome to Langdon, Established 1787" sign are just ahead. A placard on the bridge provides details. The 89-foot Town truss was built in 1864, restored from 2002 to 2007, and rededicated in 2008. A new bridge across the river nearby now carries Crane Brook Road, and the McDermott is closed to auto traffic. You can still walk it, however, which we did.

Thus ended our covered-bridge odyssey through New Hampshire. Director of the New Hampshire Division of Historic Resources Elizabeth Muzzy has it exactly right: We can't imagine a more pleasant way to see the Granite State. 🚗

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POWER PLAYERS

HOW TO CHOOSE AND MAINTAIN A PORTABLE GAS GENERATOR FOR RV USE

If you enjoy getting away from it all and dry camping in your RV, a portable generator is an important piece of equipment to have on board. Even if you rely on solar power to charge your trailer's batteries and use a big inverter to power appliances from the battery bank, you'll likely need a gas-powered generator to keep them charged if you get caught in a days-long winter storm or want to run a power-hungry air conditioner.

Generators serve two purposes for RVers: charging the battery bank and running the 120-volt AC systems and appliances. The size of the generator you choose will depend on whether you plan to use it primarily to charge the batteries or to power things like the microwave, TV, vacuum, and heating and cooling systems. If you use your generator as we do — simply to power an inverter/charger to condition the batteries when solar rays are insufficient — then a smaller generator

is adequate. However, if you use it to power the blender and hair dryer while running the air conditioner, a larger generator will be required.

Generators are sized by the watts they produce, and the typical range for portable gas generators for RV use is 1,000 to 3,000 watts or so. Many models can support a parallel-connection cable that will turn a pair of 1,000-watt generators into a 2,000-watt generator, for instance, or two 2,000-watt generators into a 4,000-watt workhorse. This is beneficial to RVers because it is much easier to lift and maneuver two 2,000-watt generators than a single 4,000-watt unit.

Portable generators have two power ratings: starting watts and running watts. The starting (or surge) rating is the maximum wattage the generator can produce for a short burst. This is helpful for starting appliances like power tools and air-conditioning units. The slightly lower running watts (also known as rated watts) is the wattage the generator



can provide continuously. This is important for keeping the microwave or blender going for a few minutes or the TV on for a few hours.

Another important consideration with portable generators is noise. Not only is it annoying to run a generator at an otherwise peaceful campsite, it's also unneighborly to force fellow campers to listen to it. Some destinations regulate the amount of noise a generator can make; national parks restrict generator noise to "60 decibels measured on the A-weighted scale at 50 feet."

Manufacturers provide decibel specs to quantify the noise factor and help consumers comparison shop. These ratings vary by the percentage of load on the generator (25, 50, 75 and 100 percent load are the most common decibel specifications). When camping, placing the generator away from where you'll be spending time outdoors and as far as possible from the neighbors' picnic tables helps reduce the noise impact. Find the "noisy side" of your generator (often the side with the exhaust port) and aim it away from other campers or toward the local shrubbery, which helps absorb the sound. Keep it far enough away to avoid starting any fires, of course.

Storing and carrying a portable generator is another consideration. Lugging a large generator in and out of the bed of the truck or the RV's storage compartment requires some muscle, and moving it across a campsite can be a two-person job for the heaviest ones. Weight is affected by the size of the gas tank and whether it is full or not. Fortunately, some of the largest portable generators have wheels. A small generator can be carried on a tray mounted on the trailer's hitch



receiver, and it may be able to operate from that position as well, avoiding the need to move it at all.

Most portable generators designed for RV use are inverter generators. Conventional generators use a gasoline, LP-gas or diesel engine to turn an alternator at around 3,600 RPM to create 60-hertz AC power, which is transmitted directly to the load. An inverter generator first creates alternating current (AC) via a small, high-efficiency alternator. The power is then converted to direct current (DC), where it can be filtered, and then is converted back to pure-sine-wave AC power via an inverter at 120 volts AC in a single phase.

The differences are in the purity of the sine wave and the size, as an inverter generator is limited to 4,000 watts, whereas a standard generator can be as big as 16 kilowatts in the RV world. While both units produce sine-wave AC power at a frequency of 60 hertz, a standard generator, especially a low-quality one, will have some artifact in the sine wave, whereas the inverter power will be filtered and absolutely pure. The purer the sine wave, the better the power is for electronics, at least theoretically. Many RVers have been running sensitive electronics with standard onboard generators for decades.

Another feature that distinguishes the various brands and models of portable generators is the starting mechanism. Most are started manually by pulling a cable-recoil cord, but a few are started electrically by pressing a button. Also, many portable generators do not have a fuel gauge, and for those that do, it is a very simple one. Most portable generators also lack an hour meter to indicate generator usage. Since the frequency of oil changes is based on hours of use, keeping a log of



Boost the Power

Many portable generators that are popular with RVers are capable of being connected to another generator from the same manufacturer, thereby increasing the power supply to produce enough energy to start and run large appliances and air conditioners. When connecting two parallel-capable generators, it is important to have the proper parallel cable and follow the manufacturer's requirements.

run-time hours or estimating the hours of usage is a good idea.

The length of time the generator can provide power before it runs out of gas is also important. This run time is determined by the size of the fuel tank and the efficiency of the engine plus the amount of load on the generator. Note that run time depends on the load at which the measurements were taken, and that is usually indicated in the generator's specifications.

Some generators have an "eco mode" that starts with the generator running at idle, then automatically increases its speed and fuel usage depending on the load placed on the unit. This is a tremendous fuel-saving feature. A few generators are dual-fuel models, meaning they can run on gasoline or LP-gas. While gasoline will give a generator a higher maximum-watt rating, using LP-gas in the same dual-fuel generator may allow it to run up to twice as long.

Fuel for the Long Run

Because many portable generators get intermittent use, adding a fuel stabilizer each time the generator's tank is filled will keep the gasoline fresh. If the gas is mixed with ethanol, adding an ethanol stabilizer will prevent the fuel and water from separating, making it easier to start a generator that has been idle for a month or more.

POWER PLAYERS

Generator Maintenance

Each make and model of generator has specific maintenance guidelines available from the manufacturer, and these can usually be downloaded from the manufacturer's website. In general, the essential maintenance items include changing the oil, cleaning or replacing the air filter, and inspecting and replacing the spark plug. We performed these tasks on a Yamaha 2400i inverter generator.

Changing the oil is an easy task that involves opening the cap below the oil reservoir, letting the old oil drain out into a container for disposal, and then using a funnel to pour the new oil into the reservoir. The air filter is generally a small piece of foam, and the hardest part is removing the compartment cover to access the filter. Likewise, reaching the spark plug in the heart of the generator may take some effort. Special tools required for removing and inspecting the spark plug include a spark-plug socket and a feeler gauge to check the gap.



1) To change the oil, position the generator so a disposable container can be placed below it. Here the generator straddles two stools above an empty snack-food container. **2)** On the bottom of the generator, remove the rubber cover from the oil-drain port. **3)** Use a socket and ratchet to remove the drain plug. **4)** On the front of the generator, remove the dipstick to ease the flow of oil while draining. **5)** Let the oil drain out of the generator into the disposable container. **6)** With the on/off button in the off position, slowly pull the start cord a few times to help remove any trapped oil.



7) Check the owner's manual (often available on the generator manufacturer's website) to find out how much oil is required, and estimate that amount using the hash marks on the side of the new oil container. **8)** Place a funnel in the oil-fill port, and slowly pour the oil into the funnel. **9)** Use the dipstick to check the oil level. **10)** Make sure the proper amount of oil is on the dipstick, according to the guidelines in the owner's manual. **11)** To access the air filter, unscrew and remove the side panel of the generator. **12)** Remove the plastic cover from the air filter.

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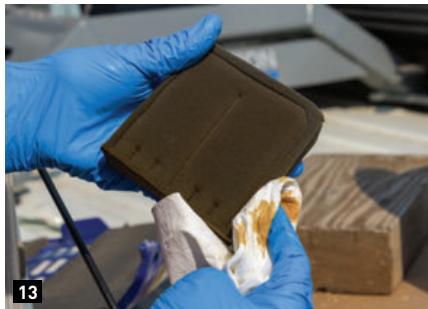


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POWER PLAYERS

13) The air filter is a foam pad. If the foam is in good shape, squeeze out excess oil, shake off any dust and wipe it down. If the filter has deteriorated, obtain a replacement from the manufacturer. **14)** Clean any dust around the edges of the air-filter compartment and wipe down the metal divider that holds the filter. Put the filter and its cover back in place and screw the generator's side panel back on. **15)** To access the exhaust spark arrester, unscrew and remove the opposite-side panel on the generator. **16)** Unscrew the clamp that holds the spark arrester and inspect the wire mesh to ensure it is not full of carbon. If it is, use a wire brush to remove any carbon deposits. **17)** Unscrew and remove

the back panel on the generator to access the spark plug. **18)** Using a spark-plug socket with a short extension on a ratchet, remove the spark plug. **19)** Use a feeler gauge to measure the spark-plug gap. If it is larger than the maximum gap noted in the owner's manual, the spark plug must be replaced. **20)** If the gap is within the specification, check its overall condition to determine if the engine is running well. The owner's manual should spell out the kinds of wear to look for. For instance, if it is wet, the generator engine is running rich, and if it is discolored, there may be other problems. Use a wire brush to clean off any debris. When finished, take the container with the old oil to an oil-recycling center.



13



14



15



16



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19



20

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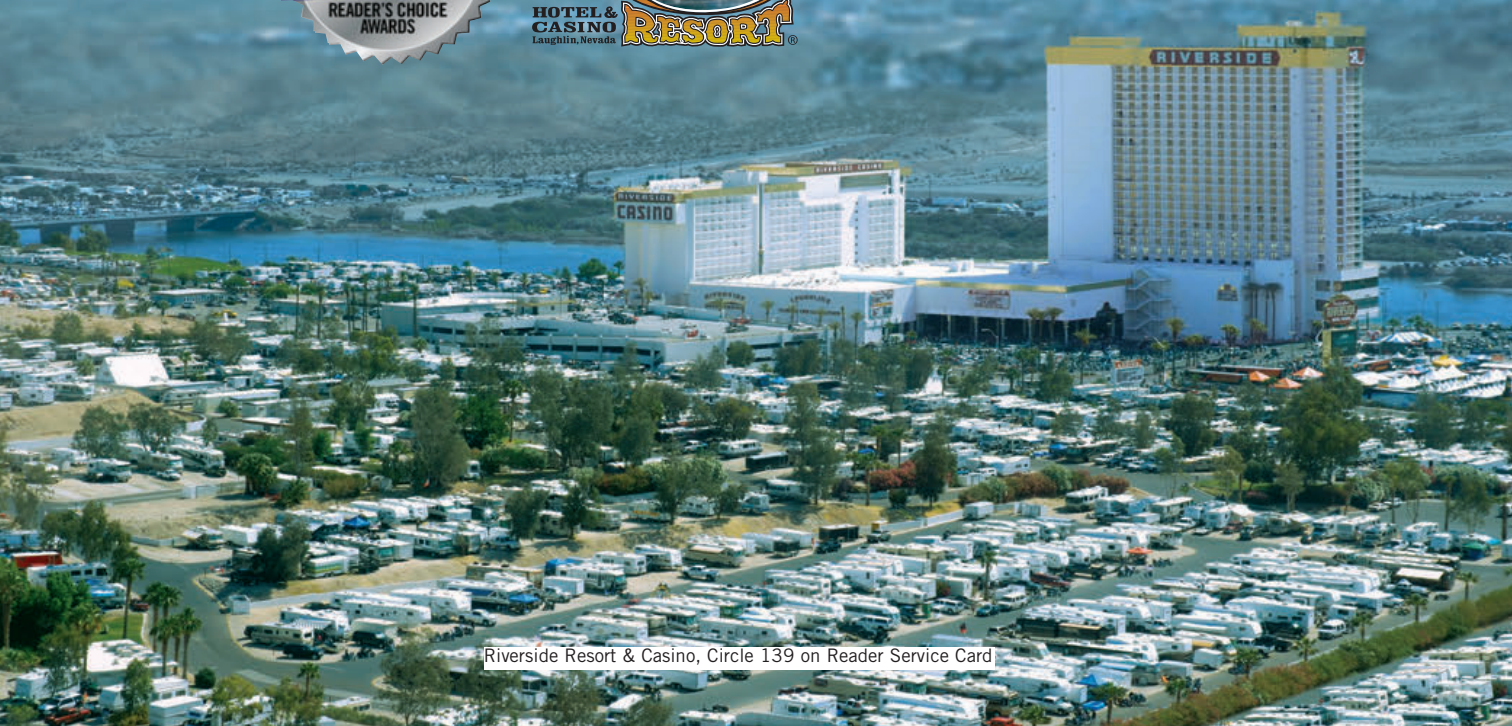
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POWER PLAYERS

Guide to Portable Generators

The following chart includes some of the most popular portable inverter generators for RV use. These generators fit in most RV storage compartments and are relatively quiet and efficient. Some have a sound rating below 49 decibels, which is quieter than a human voice during normal conversation, and most can run for seven hours or longer at 25 percent load.

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BRIGGS AND STRATTON , 800-743-4115, www.briggsandstratton.com/na/en_us/products/generators								
	P2200 PowerSmart	2,200	1,700	59 @ 25%	54 lbs.	1 gal.	8 hrs. @ 25%	\$599
	P3000 PowerSmart	3,000	2,600	59 @ 25%	84 lbs.	1.5 gal.	10 hrs. @ 25%	\$1,299
CHAMPION POWER EQUIPMENT , 877-338-0999, www.championpowerequipment.com/products/generators/portable-generators								
	2,000-Watt (6 models)	2,000	1,700	53 @ 25%	48.5 lbs.	1 gal.	9.5 hrs. @ 25%	\$549
	Dual Fuel 3400	3,400/gas	3,100/gas	59 @ 25%	95.7 lbs.	1.6 gal.	7.5 hrs./gas @ 25%	\$1,149
		3,060/LP-gas	2,790/LP-gas				14.5 hrs./LP-gas @ 25%	
ENERGIZER GENERATORS , 877-528-3772, www.energizergenerators.com/eng								
	eZV2000P	2,000	1,600	50 @ 25%	44 lbs.	1 gal.	11.5 hrs. @ 25%	\$599
	eZV3200P	3,200	2,800	52 @ 25%	95.7 lbs.	1.95 gal.	15.5 hrs. @ 25%	\$899
GENERAC POWER SYSTEMS , 800-511-0658, www.generacpowerproducts.com/pages/generators								
	iQ2000	2,000	1,600	—	46 lbs.	1 gal.	7.7 hrs. @ 25%	\$799
HONDA POWER EQUIPMENT , 770-497-6400, www.powerequipment.honda.com/generators								
	EU1000i	1,000	900	53 @ 25%	28.7 lbs.	0.6 gal.	7.1 hrs. @ 25%	\$949.95
	EU2200i	2,200	1,800	53 @ 25%	53.6 lbs.	0.95 gal.	8.1 hrs. @ 25%	\$1,149.95
	EU3000iS	3,000	2,800	49 @ 25%	131 lbs.	3.4 gal.	20 hrs. @ 25%	\$2,329.95
HYUNDAI POWER EQUIPMENT , 416-609-0159, www.hyundaipower.ca								
	HY2000si	2,000	1,600	50 @ 25%	44 lbs.	0.9 gal.	11.25 hrs. @ 25%	\$675/CAD
	HY3200	3,200	2,800	52 @ 25%	96 lbs.	1.9 gal.	15 hrs. @ 25%	\$1,249/CAD
POWERHOUSE GENERATORS , 877-544-4449, www.powerhouse-products.com/products-recreational								
	PH2400Pi	2,400	2,300	63.5 @ 25%	73.3 lbs.	1.3 gal.	7.1 hrs. @ 25%	\$877.09
	PH33000i	3,300	3,200	66.6 @ 25%	134.1 lbs.	4.34 gal.	16.6 hrs. @ 25%	\$1,601.09
YAMAHA POWER PRODUCTS , 800-962-7926, www.yamahamotorsports.com/generator								
	EF1000iS	1,000	900	47 @ 25%	27.9 lbs.	0.66 gal.	11.9 hrs. @ 25%	\$879
	EF2000iSv2	2,000	1,600	51.5 @ 25%	44.1 lbs.	1.1 gal.	10.5 hrs. @ 25%	\$1,099
	EF2400iSHC	2,400	2,000	53 @ 25%	75 lbs.	1.6 gal.	11 hrs. @ 25%	\$1,479
	EF3000iSEB	3,000/+500 boost	2,800	53 @ 25%	154 lbs.	3.4 gal.	18.6 hrs. @ 25%	\$2,469 

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GETTING THE

WINEGARD'S CARRYOUT G2+ AUTOMATIC SATELLITE ANTENNA USES

Satellite TV offers great program versatility, and RVers have jumped on the bandwagon with alacrity. While it's pretty simple to sign up with a carrier to provide favorite shows, finding the right antenna can be a bit more challenging. Sometimes the decision of whether to mount a sophisticated antenna on the roof can be muddled by potential problems with reception when parked under trees or areas where the southern sky is obstructed. Winegard is a primary supplier of satellite antennas for RVs, and even it realizes that sometimes portability can be more practical. So the company introduced its Carryout G2+, which makes a strong case for those who need to work around obstructions but don't want the hassle of a protracted setup and aiming procedure.

The G2+ is petite, smart, automatic and durable, and has a great pedigree for strong performance in a harsh RV environment. It's not necessary to route a separate power cord, and it can be hooked to dual receivers; it's capable of receiving HD programming from Dish and Bell (Canada). Those who subscribe to service from DirecTV have to settle for standard-definition picture quality. To enhance versatility, the antenna can be quickly switched with little effort to any of the aforementioned providers from the Power Inserter (more on that component later).

When comparing the size of the G2+ to standard-type antennas, the best descriptive word is "miniaturization." The base diameter is only 14 inches, and the dome and innards weigh only 10 pounds. Winegard has packed a lot of technology into a small package, starting with the ring-fed antenna (aluminum reflector), which is designed to capture strong signals, even though conventional wisdom looks to bigger dishes for such performance. A stepper motor moves the dish smoothly and quietly for relatively fast signal acquisition via a patented search algorithm. Programming obsolescence is mitigated by an integrated tuner that can be updated.

The other key element is durability for RV use. A glass-infused base helps neutralize shock and vibration, and brass hardware is used for superior longevity. Winegard claims that it has tested the antenna over thousands of miles on less-than-smooth roads.



RIGHT SIGNAL

HIGH-TECH MINIATURIZATION FOR PORTABILITY AND EASY SETUP

Setting up the G2+ in a campsite is painless. The dome can be placed on the ground, a table or optional tripod mount in any location that has a clear view to the southern sky. A 25-foot coax cable, provided by Winegard, makes it convenient to connect to the RV's satellite input (or through a window, if necessary) and usually provides enough distance to clear trees and other obstructions. Although the dome is relatively watertight and is not affected by rain, it should not be allowed to stand in more than an inch of puddled water.

We found the TR-1518 Tripod Mount (\$90) the perfect accessory for the dome, since it can be adjusted from 14.5 to 22 inches off the ground and can be anchored to stabilize it in the wind. The dome is designed to withstand winds up to 35 MPH.

Cable hookup is straightforward, connecting to the Power Inserter box placed near the satellite receiver from the primary port in the dome. The Power Inserter is plugged into a 120-volt AC source via a standard-type adapter. The provided 3-foot coax cable is used to connect the

Power Inserter to the SAT IN port in the receiver. Some owners might experience an operational hang-up at this point. If the RV is wired with low-quality coax (RG6 is required) and fitted with a number of barrel connectors, splitters and a video switch, resistance could prevent the dome from responding.

That is exactly what happened when we tested the G2+ in a fifth-wheel, which required routing of new cable to make the system work. A second satellite receiver can be connected to the other



BEAM IT IN

Under the petite dome is a 10-inch ring-fed antenna that is designed to outperform its diminutive size. The aluminum reflector pulls in stronger signals in adverse weather. A stepper motor allows the antenna to surf channels and acquire signals from the satellite faster. The glass-infused base controls shock and vibration under harsh conditions for improved service life.

GETTING THE RIGHT SIGNAL

port in the dome and does not have to route through the Power Inserter. From this point on, it was just a matter of connecting the two coax cables and pressing the button to activate the Power Inserter.

Before purchasing the Carryout G2+, it's important to verify receiver compatibility. Only certain receivers will work with this dome, and Winegard provides a website, www.winegard.com/receivers, that will guide users to the right matchups. Dish Hopper and Joey receivers are not compatible with the Carryout dome. The instructions also clearly guide the user through the receiver setup process.

We tested the dome in a number of locations, some with easy-to-find signals and some challenging. The dome does a decent job of picking through openings in tree branches and finds fairly strong signals in only a few minutes. Very heavy cloud cover, primarily in rainstorms, can block the signal, but again, we're dealing with a small-diameter antenna, and that situation is normally only temporary. Overall, signal reception is good, and the dome's diminutive size makes it a breeze to find suitable, out-of-the-way placement.

For those not concerned with obstructions and looking for additional convenience, the dome can be permanently mounted on the roof. Its small size makes finding a location on the roof practical, and the brackets in the Roof Mount Kit (RK-2000, \$50) attach to the dome base and can be screwed



1, 2) The cable from the primary port in the base of the dome is routed to a proprietary Power Inserter that's mounted near the satellite receiver. The 3-foot coax cable connects the receiver to the Power Inserter, which pulls power from the 120-volt AC adapter.

PHOTOS BY BOB LIVINGSTON

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GETTING THE RIGHT SIGNAL

3) The antenna can be placed on the ground in any area that has a clear view to the southern sky. The dome is not affected by rain but should not be allowed to stand in more than 1 inch of water. **4)** The provided 25-foot coax cable is connected to the primary port (marked "Main") from the Power Inserter. A second cable can be connected to the other port for servicing a separate receiver in another room; it does not have to run through the Power Inserter. It's important to use the right coax (RG6) to ensure proper performance of the antenna. **5)** Winegard's Tripod Mount is a highly desirable accessory. It has a quick-release platform attached to three legs that can be extended to place the dome from 14.5 to 22 inches off the ground. It's very stable and can be anchored to the ground. Using the tripod keeps the antenna out of water puddles and is more stable in the wind. It occupies very little storage space when the legs are removed (using pins and bails). **6)** A small handle, attached to the base, makes it easy to transport the dome. The handle can also be used to secure the antenna to the RV via a cable and padlock, preventing theft.



into the roof with little fanfare. It's just important to place the dome away from accessories, like the air conditioner, that can block the view to the southern sky, especially in northern locations where the satellites are lower in the sky. Also, make sure to use the proper sealant to prevent water intrusion through the screw holes.

Winegard also markets a Ladder Mount (MT-4000, \$149) for attaching the dome permanently or temporarily to the RV roof-access ladder. It uses the same quick-release base as the tripod for easy removal. A Window Mount (MT-SM30, \$89) can also be used to temporarily mount the dome.

The Carryout G2+ is available with a white or black dome and retails for \$650; better prices can be found at Camping World and online. The attached handle makes it comfortable to transport the dome for positioning, and the antenna must not be dropped.

Care should be taken when storing the antenna so heavy items cannot collide with the flexible dome and to ensure that it is protected from shock. One of the best ways to handle that is to use a storage bag that will hold the dome, cables and tripod (broken down). Camping World offers a bag

for the Winegard Pathway X1 and Playmaker (catalog No. 82316) that is a good fit. Made of weather-resistant material, the bag, with zipper closure, sells for \$34.99. 📦

Winegard
800-288-8094, www.winegard.com/carryout

UP ON THE ROOF

The dome can be mounted on the roof of any RV using the proprietary kit that sells for \$50. Installation is simple, but other accessories on the roof must not restrict the dome's view of the sky. It's also important to use the proper sealant on the fasteners that penetrate the roof. Once mounted on the roof, portability is limited.



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Changing

VIP Enterprises' complete RV-graphic replacement breathes new life

The majority of RV owners take pride in the appearance of their rigs, and let's admit it, most of us want others to take notice. Prior to an outing, many owners dedicate a weekend or two for a complete wash and wax to make the RV shine, but no matter how hard they work at keeping the exterior pristine, Filon siding and vinyl graphics begin to fade and crack from years of environmental stress. Most vinyl graphics time out after six or seven years, and even with the best maintenance plan, the sun takes its toll. The Filon siding can be waxed or polished to attain a new look, but the vinyl cannot be brought back to life after fading and cracking begins.

Given the opportunity to replace the graphics and renew the exterior appearance of an otherwise fine RV is certainly a good investment, and that's where RV Stripes, Graphics and More by VIP Enterprises of San Bernardino, California, comes in. It offers a one-stop shop for bringing an RV exterior back to life. Since 1993, the company has been perfecting the art of refreshing RVs with custom graphics, murals, paint, detailing, interior remodeling or a full renovation.

Since our 2011 fifth-wheel has

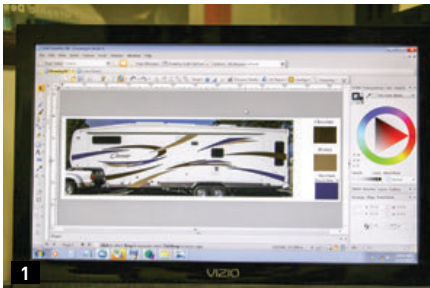
been used for full-time service and exposed continually to the elements, the vinyl graphics were looking somewhat dingy. Consulting with VIP Enterprises, we decided to redo the exterior and chose an updated color theme. The company applied its advanced computer skills to design and color-match new graphics for rejuvenating the fifth-wheel's exterior.

Once the design was finalized, it was time to strip off the old vinyl to make way for the new graphics. The task of removing and replacing the

entire RV's vinyl graphics seemed daunting, and, of course, it cannot be done without the proper tools, people power and know-how. If you have the time, you can do it yourself to save some money, but you will need a few tools and a lot of elbow grease. More than likely, removing the old graphics yourself will probably take the better part of a week to complete.

A word of warning, in case you decide to take on the task of removal yourself: For VIP to computer-generate and cut vinyl replacement graphics, it will need extensive photos of each individual stripe and all the logos. This can be done by the owner, but be advised to consult the company first to ensure the desired results.

Those who elect to remove the old vinyl at home should research the process on the internet. Do-it-yourselfers will need plenty of razor blades, a heat gun, solvent and perhaps an



1) A digital photo of the trailer's side wall was taken with a camera and downloaded to VIP Enterprises' special computer-graphics program. **2)** This is done to generate a pattern for the new vinyl graphics. **3)** Close-up detail on the screen allows the operator to create a precise pattern. At this point the customer can ask the designer to make changes to the pattern to suit his or her taste.

One's Stripes

into timeworn vinyl decals

electric grinder with a 3M specialty tool that is designed for removing stubborn vinyl pieces. One thing to keep in mind is how razor blades can easily damage the Filon siding; every small scratch or a gouge will show up under the new vinyl. After watching the techs at VIP work with all of these tools for removing the vinyl pieces, we knew we made the right decision to leave this job to the experts.

The technicians started with a razor blade and heat gun to remove some

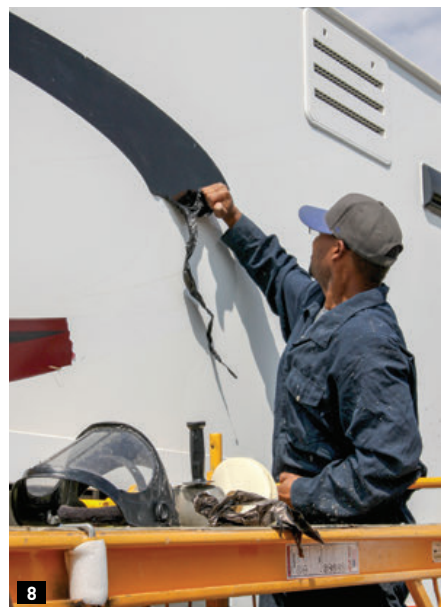
of the vinyl that wasn't horribly sun-cracked. With patience and dexterity, they slowly pulled the vinyl from the Filon siding. The badly cracked pieces were removed with the 3M vinyl-removal tool, which was hard work, again validating the decision not to do it ourselves.

With the vinyl peeled off, the process of removing the glue started with a special solvent and the use of razor blades. VIP's technique of

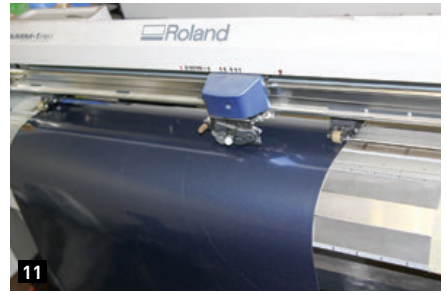
spraying the solvent onto the old glue without it running everywhere was flawless, and expert handling of the razor blades left the surface clean and ready for the next process.

Should the Filon siding be oxidized and faded, the VIP people can polish the surface to a brilliant shine. Here the technicians used their priority blend of wax and cleaners, along with a special machine, to bring the finish back to life, looking nearly new again.

4) The installer tests the new color patterns against the original graphics. **5)** A special tool from 3M is used to remove baked-on vinyl that will not come off with a heat gun or scraper tool. **6)** A razor blade is used to remove the old graphics. **7)** A heat gun softens the vinyl to make it possible to remove the old material. **8)** Darker-color vinyl is easier to remove than lighter counterparts. Here, the installer can remove big sections of vinyl by hand, even though it's the same age as the rest of the original material.



Changing One's Stripes



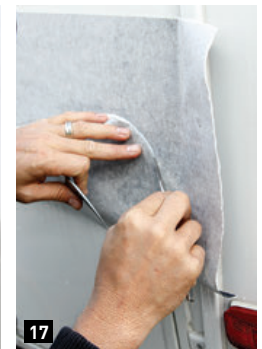
9 and 10) After all the old material is removed from the trailer, ghost stripes remain on the side walls. This allows the installer to follow the original pattern during installation of the new graphics. One option provided by VIP Enterprises is to buff out the side walls for a brand-new look. **11)** Once an entire roll of vinyl is loaded into the cutting machine, all the new pieces for individual colors are produced. This is a precise process that has no room for errors.

To print the replacement graphics, a technician with years of experience worked with the selected colors and photographs that were uploaded to the computer previously, sizing the vinyl to cover the original stripes and logos. Superimposing the images of the fifth-wheel, it was possible to preview the revised exterior scheme and make any adjustments to the design. This process took roughly two hours to complete and was actually very exciting to watch.

From here, the procedure was

highly exacting. A large roll of selected vinyl material is loaded into a cutting machine connected to the computer. Alignment is absolutely critical for the machine to cut each individual shape and size precisely. After triple-checking, the operator hits the enter button on the computer and watches the cutting machine like an eagle, making sure that it is feeding and cutting properly, and staying in alignment. One mistake will ruin an entire roll of vinyl. No pressure, right?

The next step has a curious name, “weeding and taping.” This is the process of adding a special paper that is laid over the top of the vinyl material for installation. Using a mixture of water and baby shampoo in a spray bottle, the vinyl pieces are positioned exactly where the removed graphics left shadows on all sides, including the front and rear of the RV. The installer must remove the backing and set the vinyl pieces precisely into their final resting places and make sure large air bubbles



12) The “weeding and taping” process is used to prep the new vinyl prior to installation. This process is critical and requires great patience. **13)** VIP stores all the information used to produce the new vinyl in its computer files and can provide exact graphics at a later time, if needed. **14)** To start the process, the new graphics are placed over the ghost outlines and held in place temporarily with masking tape. **15)** The new logo is put in place, and the outer layer is removed. **16)** The installer uses a mixture of water and baby shampoo to move the new vinyl into position without sticking. **17)** It takes exceptional patience to place the new vinyl, something VIP has perfected over the years.

do not form under the vinyl.

The installer's skill with the razor blade for cutting vinyl over and around obstacles was very impressive. The installation process took nearly two full days to complete. Of course, installation time will depend on the complexity of the vinyl graphics and the sheer size of the job.

The transformation was amazing. What was once a fifth-wheel that looked old before its time now boasted a showroom sparkle. It literally took years off the age of the trailer. VIP Enterprises uses high-quality materials backed by a five-year limited warranty that covers any defects in the vinyl. With a large selection of colors and styles to choose from, owners can use the existing design or create something more modern and completely change the exterior look. VIP can even paint on new graphics for a longer-lasting look.

A big benefit of this process is that VIP retains all of the RV's vinyl shapes, logos and colors in its computer, and can generate a replacement piece that can be mailed to you or a repair shop, providing the color is still available from its suppliers.

Striping and replacing all the graphics on the aforementioned fifth-wheel was \$3,400; buffing the Filon to a new look ran \$600. Cost is dependent on the size and complexity of the job. The company will provide an accurate estimate upon visual inspection of the RV. 📧

RV Stripes, Graphics and More by VIP Enterprises
909-376-0395, www.rvstripes.com



18) A special tool is used to fit the new vinyl into curves and moldings. This also takes many years of experience to do it right. **19)** Placing new vinyl graphics is not for the faint of heart. This process is long and detailed, but the results will add many years to the look of any RV.



Finished product: After five days, this seven-year-old fifth-wheel looks brand-new again. VIP Enterprises offers many services to inject new life into an RV.

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- Weighs 86.4 lbs.
- 21" L x 10-1/8" H

COMPARE TO WARN \$699.99 MODEL:96467

SAVE \$400

ITEM 64046/64045/63770 shown

22651255

LIMIT 3 - Coupon valid through 6/13/18

SUPER COUPON

7 FT. 4" x 9 FT. 6" ALL PURPOSE WEATHER RESISTANT TARP

Customer Rating **★★★★★**

COMPARE TO BLUE HAWK \$858 MODEL:868X10-Y

SAVE 65%

ITEM 69249/69115/69137/69129/69121/877 shown

22651571

LIMIT 8 - Coupon valid through 6/13/18

SUPER COUPON

6 FT. x 8 FT. ALUMINUM GREENHOUSE

Customer Rating **★★★★★**

COMPARE TO PALRAM \$599.99 MODEL:741353

SAVE \$400

ITEM 69714/63354/47712 shown

22653035

LIMIT 4 - Coupon valid through 6/13/18

PITTSBURGH ^{Automotive} **SUPER COUPON**

ATV/LAWN MOWER LIFT

- 300 lb. capacity
- Weighs 72.5 lbs.

COMPARE TO PRO LIFT \$179.99 MODEL:F-5568

SAVE \$100

ITEM 60395/62325/62493/61523 shown

22656636

LIMIT 7 - Coupon valid through 6/13/18

EARTHQUAKE ^{Automotive} **SUPER COUPON**

1/2" HEAVY DUTY COMPOSITE PRO AIR IMPACT WRENCH

Customer Rating **★★★★★**

- Weighs 5 lbs.

COMPARE TO CHICAGO PNEUMATIC \$249.99 MODEL:CP7749

SAVE \$160

ITEM 62835

22660064

LIMIT 3 - Coupon valid through 6/13/18

drillmaster ^{Automotive} **SUPER COUPON**

4-1/2" ANGLE GRINDER

Customer Rating **★★★★★**

COMPARE TO PERFORMAX \$2580 MODEL:2411-1

SAVE 61%

ITEM 69645/60625 shown

22666072

LIMIT 7 - Coupon valid through 6/13/18

Bauer ^{Automotive} **SUPER COUPON**

10 AMP DEEP CUT VARIABLE SPEED BAND SAW KIT

Customer Rating **★★★★★**

COMPARE TO DEWALT \$299 MODEL:DWV120

SAVE \$199

ITEM 63763/63444 shown

22678918

LIMIT 4 - Coupon valid through 6/13/18

HaulMaster ^{Automotive} **SUPER COUPON**

12 VOLT MAGNETIC TOWING LIGHT KIT

Customer Rating **★★★★★**

COMPARE TO OPTRONICS \$33.59 MODEL:T2121K

SAVE 70%

ITEM 63100

22679358

LIMIT 5 - Coupon valid through 6/13/18

SUPER COUPON

3 PIECE DECORATIVE SOLAR LED LIGHTS

Customer Rating **★★★★★**

COMPARE TO ITEM 60561/69462 shown

SAVE 33%

22680384

LIMIT 5 - Coupon valid through 6/13/18

PITTSBURGH ^{Automotive} **SUPER COUPON**

1 TON CAPACITY FOLDABLE SHOP CRANE

- Boom extends from 36-1/4" to 50-1/4"
- Crane height adjusts from 82" to 94"

Customer Rating **★★★★★**

COMPARE TO PERFORMAX \$2580 MODEL:2411-1

SAVE \$80

ITEM 69512/61858/69445 shown

22684414

LIMIT 5 - Coupon valid through 6/13/18

HARDY ^{Automotive} **SUPER COUPON**

MECHANIC'S GLOVES

Customer Rating **★★★★★**

COMPARE TO MECHANIX \$14.99 MODEL:6075800

SAVE 73%

ITEM 62434, 62426, 62433, 62432, 62429, 62428 shown

22685610

LIMIT 4 - Coupon valid through 6/13/18

SUPER COUPON

FULL-MOTION TV WALL MOUNT

- Fits most 37" to 80"

Customer Rating **★★★★★**

COMPARE TO ROCKETFISH \$149.99 MODEL:RF-HVMM170C

SAVE \$110

ITEM 64037/63155 shown

22689195

LIMIT 5 - Coupon valid through 6/13/18

PITTSBURGH ^{Automotive} **SUPER COUPON**

LIFETIME WARRANTY 130 PIECE TOOL KIT WITH CASE

Customer Rating **★★★★★**

- SAE AND METRIC

COMPARE TO HDX \$66.39 MODEL:HT37RDS

SAVE 54%

ITEM 63248/64080/68998/64263/63091 shown

22701695

LIMIT 4 - Coupon valid through 6/13/18

PREDATOR SUPER COUPON

8750 MAX. STARTING/7000 RUNNING WATTS
13 HP (420 CC) GAS GENERATOR

Customer Rating ★★★★★

ITEM 68530/63086/69671/63085 shown
ITEM 68525/63087/63088, CALIFORNIA ONLY
• GFCI outlets

SAVE \$2170
COMPARE TO HONDA \$2,700
MODEL:EM50S3XK2AT

NOW \$529.99
~~\$599.99~~

Wheel kit and battery sold separately.

LIMIT 4 - Coupon valid through 6/13/18*

PORTLAND SUPER COUPON

1750 PSI ELECTRIC PRESSURE WASHER

• 1.3 GPM
• Adjustable spray nozzle

NEW

NOW \$799.99
~~\$999.99~~

COMPARE TO BRIGGS & STRATTON \$179.33
MODEL:20800

SAVE \$99

Customer Rating ★★★★★

ITEM 63255/63254 shown

LIMIT 5 - Coupon valid through 6/13/18*

PORTLAND SUPER COUPON

7 AMP ELECTRIC POLE SAW 9.5" BAR

6 ft. to 8 ft. 10"

NOW \$599.99
~~\$799.99~~

Customer Rating ★★★★★

COMPARE TO \$99.98
WORX MODEL:W6309

SAVE \$39

Customer Rating ★★★★★

ITEM 68862/63190/62896 shown

LIMIT 3 - Coupon valid through 6/13/18*

SUPER COUPON

HEAVY DUTY FOLDABLE ALUMINUM SPORTS CHAIR

Customer Rating ★★★★★

NOW \$199.99
~~\$299.99~~

SAVE 60%

COMPARE TO \$49.99
COLEMAN MODEL:2000220293

ITEM 62314/63066 66383 shown

LIMIT 5 - Coupon valid through 6/13/18*

WARRIOR SUPER COUPON

29 PIECE TITANIUM DRILL BIT SET

Customer Rating ★★★★★

SAVE 83%
COMPARE TO DEWALT \$60
MODEL:DW1389

NOW \$99.99
~~\$179.99~~

ITEM 62281/61637 shown

LIMIT 6 - Coupon valid through 6/13/18*

PITTSBURGH SUPER COUPON

TORQUE WRENCHES

Customer Rating ★★★★★

Item 239 shown

• Accuracy within ±4%

DRIVE ITEM

1/4"	2696/61277/63881
3/8"	807/61276/63880
1/2"	62431/239/63882

YOUR CHOICE \$99.99
~~\$139.99~~

COMPARE TO HUSKY \$84.97
MODEL:H2RTWA

SAVE 88%

LIFETIME WARRANTY

ITEM 62281/61637 shown

LIMIT 6 - Coupon valid through 6/13/18*

COVER PRO SUPER COUPON

10 FT. x 17 FT. PORTABLE GARAGE

Customer Rating ★★★★★

SAVE \$100
COMPARE TO SHELTER LOGIC \$270
MODEL:75377

NOW \$169.99
~~\$199.99~~

ITEM 62859/63055 62860 shown

LIMIT 3 - Coupon valid through 6/13/18*

Apache Model 2800 SUPER COUPON

ULTRA-LIGHT, CRUSH PROOF WEATHER RESISTANT LOCKABLE CASE

• 13-3/4" L
11-1/2" W
5-7/8" H

Customer Rating ★★★★★

SAVE 71%
COMPARE TO \$81.99
PELICAN MODEL:1300

ITEM 63926

NOW \$229.99
~~\$299.99~~

Case contents and locks not included.

LIMIT 5 - Coupon valid through 6/13/18*

PITTSBURGH AUTOMOTIVE SUPER COUPON

42" OFF-ROAD/FARM JACK

• 3-1/2 ton capacity
• Multipurpose design for lifting, pulling and spreading
• Ideal for lifting off-road vehicles and field equipment
• Ratcheting action to speed through the toughest job

Customer Rating ★★★★★

SAVE 33%
~~\$59.99~~

NOW \$39.99

ITEM 60668/6530 shown

LIMIT 4 - Coupon valid through 6/13/18*

COBRA SUPER COUPON

8 CHANNEL SURVEILLANCE DVR WITH 4 HD CAMERAS AND MOBILE MONITORING CAPABILITIES

Customer Rating ★★★★★

• Night vision

NOW \$229.99
~~\$259.99~~

COMPARE TO NIGHT OWL \$349.99
MODEL:ND010P108U841P1

SAVE \$120

ITEM 63890

LIMIT 4 - Coupon valid through 6/13/18*

SUPER COUPON

10" PNEUMATIC TIRE

Customer Rating ★★★★★

NOW \$399
~~\$599~~

COMPARE TO FARM & RANCH \$10
MODEL:FR1055

ITEM 69385/62388/62409 62698/30900 shown

LIMIT 6 - Coupon valid through 6/13/18*

CENTRAL MACHINERY SUPER COUPON

8" 5 SPEED BENCHTOP DRILL PRESS

Customer Rating ★★★★★

NOW \$499.99
~~\$679.99~~

COMPARE TO BUFFALO BLACK \$102.99
MODEL:DP5UL

ITEM 62390/62520/60238 shown

LIMIT 5 - Coupon valid through 6/13/18*

WINDSOR DESIGN SUPER COUPON

60" HARDWOOD WORKBENCH WITH 4 DRAWERS

Customer Rating ★★★★★

Tools sold separately.

SAVE \$285
COMPARE TO GRIZZLY \$415
MODEL:H7723

NOW \$129.99
~~\$159.99~~

ITEM 93454/69054/63395/62603 shown

LIMIT 5 - Coupon valid through 6/13/18*

GREENWOOD SUPER COUPON

1-1/4 GALLON HOME AND GARDEN SPRAYER

Customer Rating ★★★★★

SAVE 51%
COMPARE TO ROUNDUP \$187.1
MODEL:19015

NOW \$89.99
~~\$129.99~~

ITEM 61280/63124/63145/95692 shown

LIMIT 4 - Coupon valid through 6/13/18*

CENTECH SUPER COUPON

2/10/50 AMP, 12 VOLT BATTERY CHARGER/ENGINE STARTER

Customer Rating ★★★★★

SAVE 57%
COMPARE TO SCHUMACHER ELECTRIC \$69.99
MODEL:SE-1250

NOW \$299.99
~~\$499.99~~

ITEM 60581 60653 shown

LIMIT 4 - Coupon valid through 6/13/18*

HaulMaster SUPER COUPON

1000 lb. capacity 18" x 12" MOVER'S DOLLY

Customer Rating ★★★★★

SAVE \$109.99
COMPARE TO BUFFALO TOOLS \$164.3
MODEL:HDFDOLLY

NOW \$79.99

ITEM 61899/63095/63096 63098/63097/93888 shown

LIMIT 5 - Coupon valid through 6/13/18*

HaulMaster SUPER COUPON

4 PIECE, 1" x 15 FT. RATCHETING TIE DOWNS

Customer Rating ★★★★★

SAVE 82%
COMPARE TO ATE TOOLS \$40.88
MODEL:38079

NOW \$6.99
~~\$12.99~~

ITEM 63057/63056/63094 90984/60405/63150/61524 shown

LIMIT 5 - Coupon valid through 6/13/18*

PORTLAND SUPER COUPON

14" ELECTRIC CHAIN SAW

Customer Rating ★★★★★

SAVE 50%
COMPARE TO CRAFTSMAN \$79.99
MODEL:GCS4001

NOW \$399.99
~~\$499.99~~

ITEM 61592/67255 shown

LIMIT 4 - Coupon valid through 6/13/18*

PITTSBURGH SUPER COUPON

9 PIECE FULLY POLISHED COMBINATION WRENCH SETS

Customer Rating ★★★★★

LIFETIME WARRANTY

Item 42304 shown

YOUR CHOICE \$59.99
~~\$89.99~~

COMPARE TO \$19.97
HUSKY MODEL:HCW10PCSAE

SAVE 70%

TYPE ITEM

SAE	69043/63282/42304
METRIC	42305/69044/63171

ITEM 62304 shown

LIMIT 4 - Coupon valid through 6/13/18*

THUNDERBOLT MAGNOLIA solar SUPER COUPON

100 WATT SOLAR PANEL KIT

Customer Rating ★★★★★

SAVE \$175
COMPARE TO SUNFORCE \$325.92
MODEL:50180

NOW \$149.99
~~\$189.99~~

ITEM 63585

RENEWABLE ENERGY ANYWHERE

LIMIT 4 - Coupon valid through 6/13/18*

800+ Stores Nationwide or HarborFreight.com

*Original coupon only. No use on prior purchases after 30 days from original purchase or without original receipt. Valid through 6/13/18.

At Harbor Freight Tools, the "Compare To" price means that the specified comparison, which is an item with the same or similar function, was advertised for sale at or above the "Compare To" price by another retailer within the past 90 days. Prices advertised by others may vary by location. No other meaning of "Compare To" should be implied. For more information, go to HarborFreight.com or see store associate.

GUIDE TO RV TRAVEL

Good Sam's annual RV-park directory sets a course for adventure — and rewards RVers with savings



Hot off the press, the 2018 guide is packed with RV-park listings, travel information and discounts.

The 2018 Good Sam RV Travel & Savings Guide not only provides information on 12,116 RV parks, campgrounds and services, it pays for itself many times over in discounts. The new edition features outdoor tips for adventurous RVers, updated RV-trip itineraries and a NASCAR track guide, plus more than 400,000 updates to North American RV parks, campgrounds, ratings and maps.

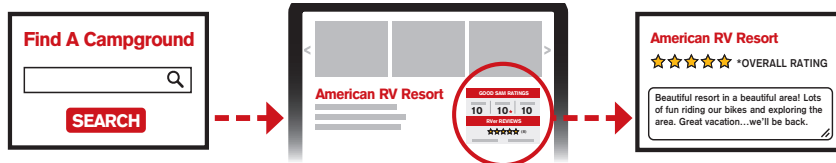
- ▶ **Save with coupons** worth \$1,000 in discounts at 130-plus Camping World SuperCenters.
- ▶ **Stay for less** with listings of 2,200-plus Good Sam Parks that offer 10 percent member discounts.
- ▶ **Explore more** with articles spotlighting family camping and snowbird destinations.
- ▶ **Meet the elite** RV parks with flawless 10/10*/10 scores based on Good Sam's trusted rating system.

▶ Good Sam Club members can buy the guide for \$6.95 — 65 percent off the \$19.95 non-member price — at Camping World SuperCenters and on the Camping World website at www.campingworld.com/2018guide.

Tried-and-True Reviews

The go-to place for RV-park feedback combines firsthand accounts and Good Sam's annual ratings

Looking for a place to stay? Take advantage of the thousands of RV Park Reviews posted on the Good Sam Club website in the past three years. Since Good Sam launched RV Park Reviews, park guests have posted hundreds of reviews each month, providing firsthand impressions of their visits. They've also rated the parks from one to five stars, and the average score appears on each reviewed park's information page, along with Good Sam's annual three-numbered rating.



▶ Beyond learning from the experiences of other RVers, you can share your own by going to www.goodsam.com/rvparkreviews and clicking on Get Started Reviewing. Use the Find a Campground search tool to look up the park you'd like to review. Once on the park's information page, go to the Reviews tab and start sharing.

NEW BENEFITS FOR 2018



When it comes to the RV lifestyle, no other organization comes close to providing the

services that the Good Sam Club does. For 2018, the club is excited to bring members the following new and expanded offerings, in addition to the many other benefits:

- ▶ **Up to 10 percent savings** every day at Camping World SuperCenters and Gander Outdoors retail locations, plus members-only specials and double-discount days
- ▶ **Service discounts** at Camping World SuperCenters
- ▶ **\$10 off** the posted hourly service rate at Camping World SuperCenters
- ▶ **Online members-only specials** at Camping World, Gander Outdoors and Overton's
- ▶ **10 percent savings** on Good Sam Product Protection
- ▶ **Good Sam Perks** discounts on dining, shopping and more
- ▶ **Exclusive benefits** on Good Sam Services

▶ Are you a current Good Sam Club member? Your existing active membership card is your key to these new offerings. You don't need the latest version of the card (shown above) to enjoy all the latest benefits.

Good Sam Perks

Good Sam Club members can now take advantage of online access to exclusive coupons on dining, shopping, travel, entertainment and more.

▶ To find offers near you, whether you're at home or on the road, go to www.goodsam.com/perks.



🔧 **START YOUR ENGINES!** Join us April 12 through 15 at Indianapolis Motor Speedway for the Good Sam Indy RV Super Show. Enjoy Hoosier hospitality with hundreds of RVs on display, outdoor gear, live entertainment and RV seminars. Good Sam members save 50 percent on up to two admission tickets. Visit www.goodsamindyrvsupershow.com for details.



SPEND YOUR WEEKENDS OUTDOORS...NOT ON YOUR ROOF

SuperFlex Roof Coating gives your RV's EPDM rubber roof iron-clad protection against UV, weather, temperature extremes and potential leaks. Fast and easy to apply, two-step SuperFlex Rubber Roof Primer + Coating by Alpha Systems saves you time and effort.

- Extends life of rubber roof
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Weekends are for camping—not wrestling with your rubber roof.



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BEST!

MAXXFAN[®] Deluxe
with Built In Rain Shield



Use your **MAXXFAN** or **MAXXFAN Plus** in All Weather Conditions with the **FANMATE** featuring **EZClip™** Hardware for **TOOL FREE INSTALLATION!**



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CW07642



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Dump Station to Go

Employing a portable tank eliminates the need to break camp while staying in parks without sewer hookups

DIFFICULTY

1 2 3 4 5

TIME TO COMPLETE

20 MINUTES
FOR LADDER RACK

TOOLS NEEDED ALLEN WRENCH (INCLUDED),
SMALL ADJUSTABLE WRENCH

Taking a rig to an RV park that has a dump station but no sewer hookups requires additional planning, especially for a family, as the gray and black tanks can fill up fast. Having to break camp every time the holding tanks need emptying is downright inconvenient, making the purchase of a portable waste tank money well spent.

Portable tanks come in a variety of sizes, with varying features, depending on the size and price point. The problem, in many cases, is where to store the tank in an RV. A 35-gallon tank is quite large and can displace needed stored items that tend to fill up compartments. However, using a portable tank that's smaller than the onboard holding tank entails an attentive transfer process to avoid an overflowing mess. A portable model that's equal in size or larger than the onboard tanks is preferred.

One of the best-designed portable tanks on the market is the Thetford SmartTote². Thetford started from ground level and developed the SmartTote², a portable tank that is light, strong and easy to use. The tank is made of a durable plastic that's relatively lightweight but can handle the stress of carrying heavy contents, being pulled around and then dumped.



1) After removing the SmartTote² LX from the packaging, the handle is unfolded, and the tank can be pulled easily. The handle extends for more leverage, if needed. It fits over the tow vehicle's 2 $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch hitch ball for slowly towing the tank to the dump station. **2)** The LX has a floating AutoStop level gauge/vent and a rinsing port toward the top. When getting ready to transfer waste from the RV or empty the contents at the dump station, open the gauge side to see when the tank is full and allow the tank to vent when dumping. Leave the rinse door (right) closed until it's time to flush the tank with clean water. **3)** The PermaStore cabinet houses a heavy-duty collapsible sewer hose with an ergonomic bayonet fitting and cap, and a 90-degree elbow for use with a sewer connection. The elbow is shallow, so it's best to use a sewer donut. **4)** The hose connects to the RV's sewage outlet for evacuating the tanks. While dumping, watch the AutoStop level gauge closely.

The SmartTote² is available in four two-wheel models in capacities from 12 to 35 gallons. The more elaborate four-wheel models come in 18-, 27- and 35-gallon sizes with an extendable towing handle, an AutoStop level gauge so the fill level can be determined, a vent for fast emptying, and a rinsing port. There is also a built-in hose with

connectors mounted inside a closable PermaStore compartment. The four-wheel SmartTote² LX we tested is the company's deluxe tank.

The LX comes with almost everything needed, but to dump the tank cleanly and safely requires a few more things. First, a donut for the sewer-hose elbow attachment helps ensure that the



JUST ROLL WITH IT » The SmartTote² LX portable waste tank comes ready to go right out of the box. For storage, the extendable handle folds underneath. The hose and fittings are secured neatly under cover in the PermaStore cabinet.

hose remains sealed to the sewer connection. Second is a rinsing hose dedicated to black and gray water; never use a potable-water hose for sewage purposes. Short hoses are available in black and gray colors to differentiate them from freshwater hoses. Lastly, rubber or latex gloves and safety goggles should be used to protect against sewage spills and splashes.

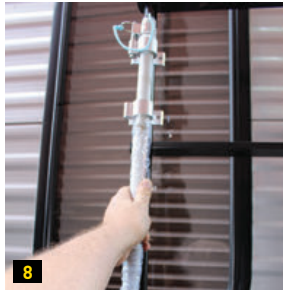
The tank requires no assembly and is ready to use out of the box. The included attachments make the process as clean and easy as possible.

Transporting a portable tank in an RV can be a challenge because of the size, and — let's face it — we don't want a sewage tank near anything we touch regularly. Thetford has come up with the Tote Storage System ladder mount that is designed to support an empty portable tank, no matter the size, on the RV's roof-access ladder.

The lightweight aluminum ladder mount has swiveling arms that are wrapped in a rubber sleeve on the



5) When the level rises, close the RV's termination valve. While keeping the end of the hose elevated above the tank, replace the cap, collapse the hose and secure the compartment. Close the AutoStop gauge hatch and proceed to the dump station. **6)** Once at the dump station, open the compartment and remove the hose, keeping it elevated; do not open the AutoStop gauge compartment yet. Remove the cap, attach the elbow and place the donut in the sewer connection. While keeping the center section of the hose elevated to help prevent flow, place the elbow in the sewer connection, then depress the center section of the hose to allow free flow of the contents. Open the AutoStop gauge hatch to vent. **7)** Once the tank has dumped, open the rinse door and fill the inside of the tank with the water hose, then tilt the tank up to drain the last bit out of the tank, and you're done.

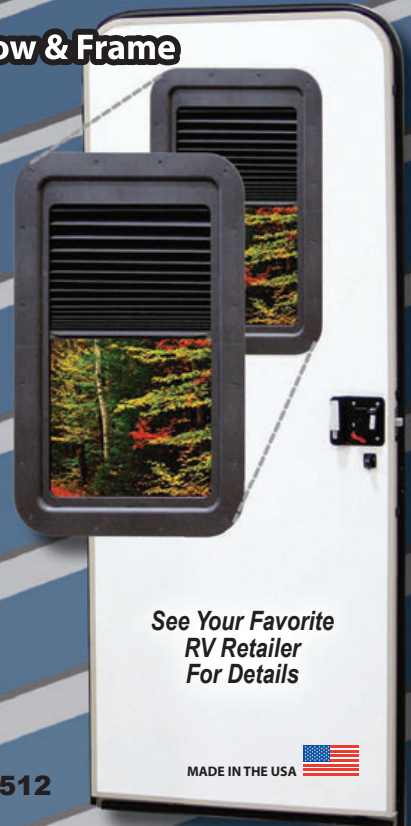


8) The Tote Storage System ladder mount has a left and right arm, which must be mounted in the proper position for unlocking and folding, and high enough so the tank doesn't block the taillights. **9)** The arms feature an aluminum bracket to lock the rotating arms in place.

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TINTED WINDOW
RECESSED PLEATED SHADE**



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Your Door
Window**

**with the new Slim
Shade Frame with
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AP Products

Part# 015-201512



10, 11, 12) The arms lock straight out for carrying the tank and to the outsides for climbing the ladder. When the tank isn't mounted, the arms remain unlocked, folded inward and strapped down. **13)** The tank is secured to the ladder with the included cinch-strap. It sits nicely on the bracket, with tabs on the tank (inset) that help secure it to the arms.

bottom to cradle the tank, which is held in place with a pull-strap. The mount permanently attaches to the ladder via swivel brackets that allow the arms to swing out of the way. It took about 20 minutes to install the mount on a travel trailer ladder.

SmartTote² LX tanks sell for \$225 to \$325 and come with a one-year warranty. The Tote Storage System ladder mount has an MSRP of \$74.99. 🚚

Thetford

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2595 2018 RV Buyers Guide - TL1803



Clip out and mail to: 2018 RV Buyers Guide, P.O. Box 9291, Oxnard, CA 93031



No-Slip Awning

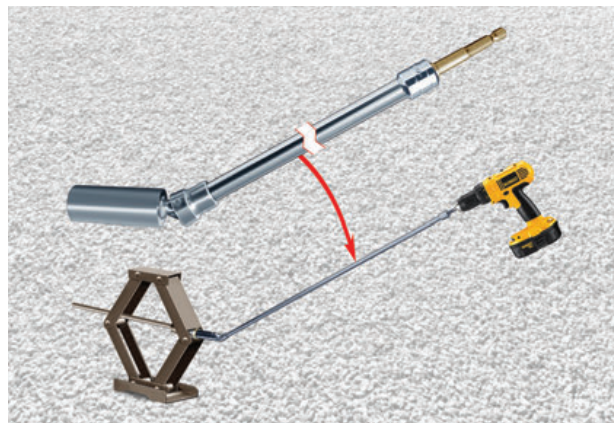
One time when we were camping, the side of our neighbor's awning collapsed because the pin slipped on the arm. I offered the owner a couple of spring clips to insert in the adjustment holes so it wouldn't happen again. Now I use spring clips on my RV's awning each time to guard against slipping.

Pete Riehl, Portland, Oregon

Stabilize While Standing

My wife always puts down the stabilizer scissor jacks when we park. It has gotten harder for her to bend down and use the electric drill socket, so I made an extension so she can stand up straight while extending and retracting the stabilizers. I bought a 30-inch $\frac{3}{8}$ -inch-drive socket extension, a $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch-deep well socket, a $\frac{3}{8}$ -inch flex universal swivel and a $\frac{3}{8}$ -inch electric drill adapter, and snapped them all together. All she has to do is put the $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch socket on the jack and use the drill to raise and lower the jack, using forward and reverse. Putting down the stabilizers is now an easy process she can do while standing.

Steve Witcher, Florissant, Colorado



QUICK FIX

More Mice Advice

In December 2017's RV Clinic, Jeff Johnston suggested a product called Mouse Free, and I wanted to add another suggestion to keep mice away. If a mouse can get its head through a hole, it can get its body through. Basically, if you can stick your finger through the hole, a mouse can get in.

Mice don't like steel wool...it pokes them in the nose. We stuff holes or cracks in our RV with steel wool. For storage, we also surround anything that touches the ground — wheels, jacks and stabilizers — with steel wool to keep the mice from climbing up on the trailer.

Garry Peterbaugh, Winnipeg, Manitoba 🐭

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

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LIFE



CW068993

Trailer Life™ 28" Scissor Jacks, Set of 2

- Longer 28" extension—4" wider than standard 24" scissor jacks
- Supports up to 6500 lbs.
- Oversize 6" x 10" foot
- Crank handle and speed socket
- Mfr. lifetime warranty

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- Top Wind 2000 lb.**
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- Smart Position Memory returns to set level position with the push of a button
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Lithium-ion batteries are fast becoming the new standard in RVs because they are lighter, stay charged longer and withstand charge/discharge cycles better than traditional lead-acid types. RVers who want to upgrade their battery banks from lead-acid batteries to the more efficient lithium batteries need only replace the conventional wall- or floor-mounted lead-acid converter/charger with a Progressive Dynamics' lithium-ion converter/charger of the same output-current rating. The new chargers are designed to provide the proper CC/CV (Constant Current/Constant Voltage) charge profile as recommended by the lithium battery manufacturers.

MSRP: \$211 to \$246
269-781-4241, www.progressivedyn.com/lithium-battery-chargers
Circle 150 on Reader Service Card



Start-Stop Battery Preserver

A vehicle equipped with an automatic start-stop engine can be expected to make more than 500,000 stop-start cycles in its lifetime, compared to 50,000 cycles for a traditional vehicle. This places an enormous strain on the battery. TecMate's new OptiMate 5 Start/Stop battery optimizer is said to deliver safe charging and maintenance for the 12-volt batteries found in tow vehicles equipped with the fuel-saving, emission-reducing start-stop technology. The battery optimizer delivers 4 amps for a rapid recharge and is programmed not to exceed 15 volts while charging. It can also charge and maintain deeply discharged batteries with as little as 2 volts remaining, according to TecMate.

MSRP: \$79.90
905-337 2095
www.tecmate.com/products/optimate5ss
Circle 151 on Reader Service Card



Voice-Activated Ride

Speak into the Bluetooth controller on the Level Ride Air Suspension, and the system wirelessly adjusts the rear ride height of most pickups, vans and SUVs equipped with aftermarket air springs. Height- and pressure-monitoring sensors retrofit to the tow vehicle's existing air springs to ensure side-to-side leveling on startup, regardless of terrain slope, according to the company. The system also allows remote software upgrades, diagnostics and troubleshooting through Wi-Fi. The kit includes a compressor-control unit, height and pressure sensors for two corners, a valet/override switch, and all required mounting hardware, wiring harnesses and related components.

MSRP: \$1,030
702-778-5829
www.levelrideairsuspension.com
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Self-Locking Fifth-Wheel Hitch

Reese's new M5 fifth-wheel hitch has a fully articulating head, a built-in V-notch that helps align the fifth-wheel's kingpin and a patent-pending Talon jaw system that snaps shut securely once the kingpin is in position. Beyond locking into place easily, the 20,000-pound-capacity hitch is designed to eliminate noise when taking curves or cornering. Other benefits include a tow/no-tow indicator and an easy-to-reach release handle. Tested to SAE J2638 standards and backed by a lifetime limited warranty, the M5 hitch (part number 30890) will be available this spring for GM pickups fitted with a factory fifth-wheel package.

MSRP: \$1,626.69. 877-509-0719, www.reeseprod.com
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*Information obtained from AAA of Colorado Plus RV plan at Colorado.aaa.com on 11/16/2017.

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PRESSURE WASHING AN RV

Q I have a 2017 CTS192RD Coleman travel trailer with exterior aluminum paneling running horizontally. Is it possible to get water behind the panels when power washing the sides? Should I stand on a ladder so the water would be at a downward angle, or is it OK to have some of the spray going up as I stand on the ground? I don't want to increase the chances of water getting behind the panels around the seams and creating dry rot.

Larry Young, Dayton, Nevada

A The use of a pressure washer to clean an RV is a dicey subject, Larry, and unless you are sure of what you're doing, it's probably best not to use one. Yes, you can force water into places where it would not normally go under average rain conditions or when washing with a garden hose, and once that moisture is inside a wall cavity, for example, it can take a long time to evaporate.

That's a surefire recipe for causing wood components to rot, and although it doesn't apply in your circumstance,

it can also lead to delamination. In addition, a misused pressure washer can also cause damage to vinyl graphics or paint, and it can dislodge material such as putty tape, and RTV-silicone or RTV-acrylic sealants around windows and compartment doors.

It's more work, but the use of an appropriate cleaning solution, a brush and a low-pressure water hose is the best way to go for cleaning an RV exterior.



MORE FORMALDEHYDE SMELL

Your response to J. Douglas' "Formaldehyde Smell" letter in the September 2017 RV Clinic made sense. Some years ago, we experienced the same overpowering smell in our Aliner LXE trailer.

After an extensive search, we found the culprit: a container of holding-tank deodorant had opened in storage, and some had spilled out. Unfortunately, the various contents in that storage area were restrained from shifting during towing by foam blocks, some of which were attacked by the spilled deodorant and were melting, causing caustic fumes. A thorough cleaning with dish detergent and an all-purpose spray cleaner stopped this harmful process.

The holding-tank deodorant we were using at that time contained formaldehyde. Since then, we have used only non-formaldehyde deodorants such as Thetford Campa-Chem.

I suggest a search for any leaking liquids, especially those containing formaldehyde, and ridding your RV

of all products that contain this harmful chemical.

Dave Michaels, Bedford, New Hampshire

Thank you for the follow-up comments, Dave. Sometimes it's the easy or obvious solutions that escape us, and, in this case, spilled formaldehyde-based toilet chemicals would certainly do the job of generating excess odors. It's always good to check for all possible causes of a problem.

GFCI SOLUTION

In reference to Don Hudnall's "1995 Wiring Diagram" letter in the January 2018 issue, I have a 32-foot 1995 Holiday Rambler Aluma-Lite trailer that has also experienced ground-fault issues. I found the problem was with the ground-fault circuit interrupter (GFCI) breaker itself. I was able to purchase a replacement GFCI breaker at Home Depot, which solved the problem.

Note: The 1995 Holiday Rambler

did not use GFCI outlets, as assumed in the response to Don's question, but used GFCI breakers instead.

Tom Moore, Tigard, Oregon

GFCI technology made its way into RVs early on, and its application has evolved along with the hardware. Tracking down a GFCI problem, especially in an earlier-model RV, should likewise include the breaker-box components. Thank you for the suggestion.

COLD INFLATION, WARM TIRE

Q Our 2017 Highland Ridge 293RLS fifth-wheel has 225/75R15 tires. The stated cold pressure setting (80 PSI) is the same as the maximum pressure shown on the side of the tires. Because tire pressure rises in use, the max pressure will be exceeded if the tires are inflated to the stated cold pressure setting. What is the correct cold pressure setting for these tires?

Kelly Howard, Friendswood, Texas

A This question comes up a lot, Kelly, and it's easy to understand how people might be confused by proper tire inflation. Eighty PSI is the correct cold

TECH EXPERT



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

pressure for your RV's tires. Pressure rises somewhat when the tire warms up in operation, but the tire manufacturers build in a safety factor to accommodate that higher warm-running pressure. Maintain that 80-PSI cold inflation, and you'll be fine.

TRANSMISSION TEMPERATURE

Q Regarding Bob Richardson's concerns in November 2017's "Manual Automatic Shift Down" letter, your reply mentioned transmission overheating. I have a 2000 Ford F-250 with the 7.3-liter diesel and automatic transmission. In 2013, it had a transmission failure, which, according to the Ford dealer, was the result of overheating. Because of this, I installed a transmission-oil temperature gauge.

I cannot find anyone, including our Ford dealer, who will provide any optimum or critical oil-temperature parameters. Perhaps with your network, you could find if there are temperatures that would be displayed on my gauge so I can monitor the transmission effectively.

While towing my 32-foot fifth-wheel at 60 MPH on typical Midwestern highways, the gauge barely moves off the low-side peg of 140 degrees Fahrenheit. The temperature escalates (naturally) when positioning at a campground. It would be a great benefit to know when a potentially damaging temperature is being reached.

Jim Merritt, Branson West, Missouri

A Transmission overheating was a more frequent occurrence many years ago, Jim, but today's vehicles are less prone to that problem. A transmission in any vehicle can overheat if abused or overloaded, if the engine has had its power excessively boosted by way of an aftermarket modification or if regular maintenance has been deferred. A transmission is a complicated piece of equipment, and it can simply fail, just as any other part can fail during regular use.

As a rule, an automatic transmission will operate at about 200 degrees Fahrenheit, or very similar to the engine temperature. Under heavy loads, for short

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times the temperature may spike as high as 275 degrees, measured in the transmission sump, without damaging components. The torque converter, where much of the heat-causing fluid friction takes place, can run even higher.

If your operating conditions cause the temperature to hover around that 275-degree mark for any significant amount of time, take steps to reduce that temperature. If climbing a long, steep grade, for example, slow down, shift to

a lower gear and ease back on the throttle. Pause at some point to allow the transmission to cool down, and then continue keeping an eye on the gauge.

Your truck has a 20,000-pound gross combined weight rating (GCWR) and is rated to tow a maximum of 10,000 pounds. You might want to stop by a certified public scale and check the weights for your setup when ready for the road, just to make sure overloading is not a factor in your case.

BALL-MOUNT RATTLE

This is a follow-up to “Hitch-Receiver Slop” in the February 2017 issue. After installing the ball mount into the receiver, I push and tap a cedar shim (used by carpenters to plumb doors) into the top space and break off the excess. I carry extra shims since I always remove the ball mount when unhitched for longer periods of time. I’ve been doing this for three years, and it works well.

Jim Foster, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma

That’s a great idea, Jim: simple, inexpensive and effective. This might help a lot of RVers solve that annoying bang and rattle from a too-loose ball mount. Thank you for the suggestion. The Roadmaster Quiet Hitch can also take care of the problem.

SOLAR-POWER PROBLEM

Regarding December 2017’s “Solar-Power Plug” letter, Sam Linkous diagnosed his own problem without recognizing it. The reverse protection diode may or may not be present unless they had existing connectors on the panels. The protection diode protects the panels but will not stop the solar panels from draining the batteries if the Coleman connections in the RV or the solar-panel connector are reversed.

I graduated in 1957 with a “radio” degree and made my living repairing the results of production over performance. The items have changed; the short-sighted attitude has not.

Geoffrey Pruett, Clackamas, Oregon

Any manufacturer of any quality-level product can experience a mistake in product assembly, and this could have also happened with Linkous’ trailer. Your suggestion about the miswired connector is dead on target.

The easy check is to attach a multimeter to the trailer battery and observe the voltage level, then plug in the solar panels, preferably with the panels in direct sunlight, while keeping an eye on the voltage. If it jumps up somewhat, the polarity is fine for the power coming from the solar panels, although that may not detect a failed protection diode. If



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the battery voltage drops when the solar panels are plugged in, it's time to check for proper wiring polarity at the plug. If in doubt, a trip to a qualified dealer with solar-charging experience is in order.

FIFTH-WHEEL-TRAILER MOTORCYCLE CARRIER

Q Please give me some reliable input on the subject of adding a motorcycle loader to the back of a fifth-wheel

trailer. Most loaders maintain they support up to 1,000 pounds. My motorcycle runs about 875 pounds. I've heard everything from certain manufacturers will install them at the factory to horror stories of damaged trailer frames, cracked lift equipment and motorcycles hanging half off busted equipment.

Jim Taylor, Clermont, Florida

A There are quite a few motorcycle carriers on the market, Jim, and

you'd need to consult with them about your motorcycle's weight and the load ratings. The failings you've heard about likely result from too much weight being added to a frame mount that's not well engineered. Some trailer manufacturers issue a blanket warning against modifying or adding anything to a trailer frame.

There's no reason a qualified frame and chassis shop can't fabricate a motorcycle carrier mount by following any instructions provided by the carrier manufacturer. This isn't rocket science; it just requires good engineering principles and solid fabrication skills. Some such carriers might have generic mounts available to fit a variety of trailer frames, too.

Equally important is keeping in mind how much weight this adds to your trailer. That 1,000 pounds, more or less, is a chunk. Be sure your trailer has enough cargo-carrying capacity, and the axles alone need to have enough payload capacity as well, since the weight out back is all added to the axles. Check the trailer's gross vehicle weight rating (GVWR) and gross axle weight rating (GAWR), and weigh the trailer when it's loaded and ready for the road before adding the motorcycle carrier. Adding too much weight to the back of a trailer can shift enough weight away from the hitch to cause the trailer to tow with instability. To ensure stable towing, a travel trailer needs about 11 percent of its overall weight on the hitch, minimum, and a fifth-wheel needs about 15 percent.

Be sure to use a scale that allows you to record just the axles alone as well as the overall trailer weight. If you don't have that 1,000 pounds of extra payload capacity available, you may want to rethink the entire idea. In the end, you'd be better off with a toy-hauler trailer because it's specifically designed to haul that weight out back.

Overloading the axles can result in tire failures and bearing, brake and suspension problems. If your numbers are good, that's terrific, but better to err on the side of safety, if in doubt.

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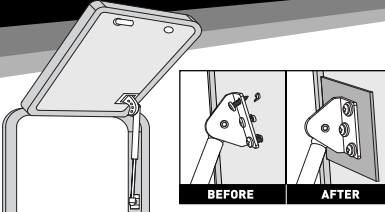


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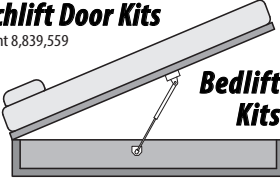
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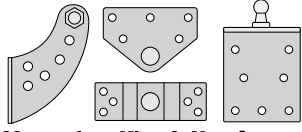


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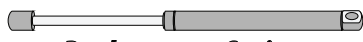
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(Continued from page 98)

and would like to remove the sofa and replace it with theater seating or something more comfortable than the existing jackknife sofa. Do you have any recommendations on what would fit and not interfere with the slide?

Roy Seitz, Chesapeake, Virginia

A We can't make specific recommendations about replacement chairs that will work for you, Roy. You didn't say how large the space is that you have available or what type of chairs you want, other than theater seating or something else. Do you have recliners or nonrecliners in mind, or do the chairs need to swivel or simply stay oriented directly ahead? Do you want a small end table between the seats, which is going to take more space?

Measure your space and start visiting furniture stores to see what's available in a size that would work for you. You can also visit RV dealers and check out the seating in new trailers to perhaps find something that you like, then contact the RV and/or furniture manufacturer about buying that type of chair(s). Lippert also sells replacement RV furniture, and La-Z-Boy has smaller recliners that are perfect for RV use. Good luck with the search!

FULL-TIMING RVs

Q I recently sold my home, bought a 2017 Cougar 26RBI with the Polar Package and hope to be somewhat of a full-timer. What features are required in a travel trailer to be considered full-time? Am I pushing the limits of my Cougar with two adults and a small dog living in it for three to four months at a time or longer?

Another question relates to the Polar Package. I was told that I couldn't run the furnace while driving. How do I keep the tanks and water system from freezing if I'm traveling from one below-freezing area to another? I usually don't drive more than 400 miles a day and seven to eight hours of travel time.

Rick Warnke, Jefferson, Wisconsin

A On the full-time-rated RV question, if a manufacturer markets an RV

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and states it's good for full-timers, it generally means the RV is built to extra-heavy-duty standards. A trailer that sees weekend family use and an occasional longer-duration trip goes through a lot less wear and tear than a full-timer's rig, although some people with children may take issue with that on certain levels.

A manufacturer that specifically includes a disclaimer that the rig is "Not intended for full-time use" understands that the product may not stand up to constant use. Door hinges and cabinet latches, drawer glides, plumbing fixtures and moving parts such as collapsing room dividers or slideout rooms may fail prematurely under such operating conditions.

Not surprisingly, the disclaimer also helps protect the manufacturer from excessive warranty claims due to what it sees as overuse. It would be good if the manufacturers all built their products to the highest-quality level possible so they'd last under full-time use, but the overwhelming majority of owners buy their rigs for recreational use. In your example, the trailer should do fine, as long as you take care of the equipment.

Regarding use of the furnace while driving, this relates more to propane use while driving rather than the furnace itself. Some people say never use propane while driving; others use it for operating a refrigerator, for example, and it works fine. A caveat is that in some rigs, the slideout rooms can cover or block some of the floor heat registers while in travel mode. In that case, airflow is restricted and can cause furnace overheating and a shutdown due to the furnace safety features.

If the heat vents are not blocked in travel mode, you can use the furnace, but adjust the thermostat at a lower setting, say in the 60-degree range, enough to avoid pipe freezing. ❄️

HAVE A 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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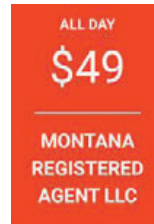
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Cliff-Hangers

Climbing the ladders in New Mexico's Bandelier National Monument

A priceless jewel of antiquity, Bandelier National Monument lies northwest of Santa Fe, New Mexico, in a vast expanse of volcanic rock where ancient pueblo dwellers built a large community 500 to 800 years ago. The Southwest is loaded with fascinating cliff dwellings, but the Bandelier ruins are particularly engaging because the National Park Service has installed rough-hewn log ladders to encourage visitors to climb up and peek into the rooms for a glimpse of what life was once like there.

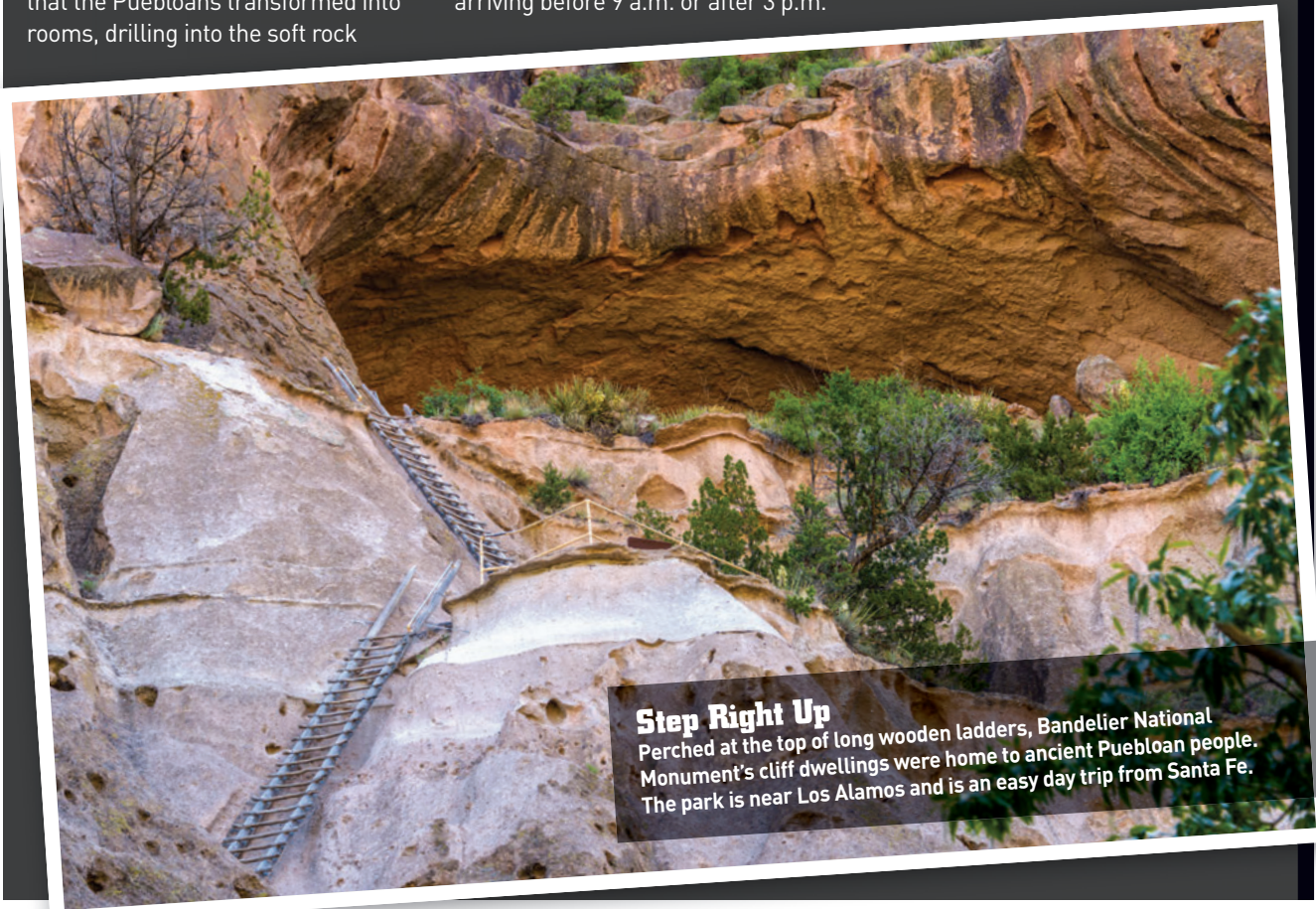
Eons ago, volcanic activity left the cliff faces with cave-like spaces that the Puebloans transformed into rooms, drilling into the soft rock

to support floor and roof beams. Mud-brick walls supported the log beams, and long rows of divots reveal where the two- and three-story homes once stood. A huge dwelling nicknamed Long House contained hundreds of rooms backed by the cliffs. Many of these were decorated with painted patterns, generally on the lower half of the walls.

Because parking is limited, tourists are required to take the free shuttle from the White Rock Visitor Center between 9 a.m. and 3 p.m. from mid-May to mid-October. However, those staying at the park's Juniper Family Campground or arriving before 9 a.m. or after 3 p.m.

may come by car or truck. We drove up just as the gate was opening and were the only people walking on the paved trail to the ruins. The sun hadn't yet crested the cliffs, and the huge latticework of stone rooms in the grass valley known as the Tyuonyi Ruins was still shrouded in shade.

A spur trail leads across a stream through a ponderosa-pine grove to a large cave known as Alcove House, set under an overhang high up in the cliffs. We were breathless as we climbed up the series of exceptionally long ladders, marveling at the ancient Puebloans' vertical lifestyle. As we descended and circled back on the trail, we saw families with young children zipping up and down the ladders, peering into and peeking out of the many holes and rooms in the rocks. What a precious opportunity Bandelier offers to step back in time and walk in the footprints of the ancients. 📷



Step Right Up

Perched at the top of long wooden ladders, Bandelier National Monument's cliff dwellings were home to ancient Puebloan people. The park is near Los Alamos and is an easy day trip from Santa Fe.

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