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TRAILERS & TECHNICAL

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Thoughtful features and a floorplan perfect for entertaining make this full-size fifth-wheel from Jayco a safe bet for family fun

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PHOTO BY RICH COX

Portable generators are efficient and quiet and can easily fit in most RV storage compartments. Page 96

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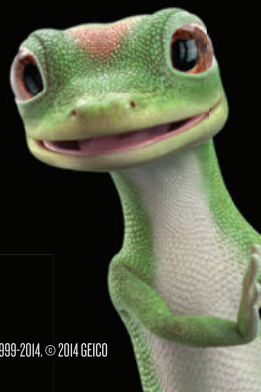
On the cover: Jayco Eagle Premier 361REQS fifth-wheel and 2014 Ford F-350 near California's Los Padres National Forest. Photo by Scott Hirko



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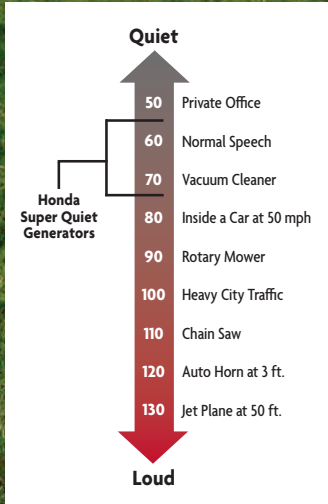
Quiet, compact, fuel-efficient Honda portable generators stand head and shoulders above other pint-sized power plants.

From a remote mountain lakeside to a parking lot full of sports fans, it's not uncommon to find RVers with TVs, radios, computers, small power tools, blenders, coffee makers, air conditioners and other electrical accessories—all powered by portable generators. For more than 35 years, outdoor enthusiasts have turned to Honda portable generators for

reliable, efficient, quiet operation to provide AC power when a power post isn't nearby.

Setting the Standard

A Honda portable generator is the best choice for a variety of outdoor power needs, and an especially good choice for RV use. Honda EU Series inverter portable generators provide clean, regulated AC output that lets today's electronics operate the way they were intended. All EU Series models are part of Honda's Super Quiet Series of portable generators, with totally enclosed bodies and oversized mufflers that offer ultra quiet operation so they won't disturb the peace and quiet of a rustic campsite or add to the din of a crowded tailgating area.



Quiet operation is essential in portable generators to prevent annoying your camping neighbors and to enhance your own outdoor experience. Honda's Super Quiet line of portable inverter generators feature enclosed bodies that significantly reduce noise while in operation.

Honda EU Series generators are equipped with Honda commercial grade four-stroke engines and feature overhead valves, a ball bearing-supported crankshaft for longer life and less vibration, a low oil alert that shuts down the engine to prevent damage, easy starts thanks to Honda's auto decompression technology, plus an electronic ignition for hotter spark and more reliable ignition every time you start it up.

Compact in size and fuel efficient, Honda portable generators are easy to bring along and give you maximum run time per gallon of regular unleaded gas. The EU2000, EU2000 Companion and EU3000 Handi are easily paralleled with a second unit for twice the power when you need it, such as running your RV roof air conditioner. They also allow you the freedom to use only one generator when power needs are less, such as for lighting, a coffee maker, small microwave or other appliances.

Generator Care

Honda generators are easy to maintain because they are designed to make it easy to check key functions, like oil level and air filter. A good rule of thumb with any generator is to check the oil daily, each time you fill the fuel tank. If your generator is operating in dusty environments, keep an eye on the air filter. A clogged air filter is a shortcut to overheating and a breakdown.

Choose the Right Model

Selecting the right size or power level in a portable generator is key to enjoying hassle-free operation. Honda's selection of compact, portable generators gives RVers and outdoor enthusiasts many options when selecting the model or models they will need to supply their needs. The portable generator you use with your RV can also come in handy at the job site or for home projects, supplying reliable AC power to run tools, lighting

and equipment such as paint sprayers, air compressors, table saws, heaters, fans and more.

Honda's EU2000 and EU3000 models provide plenty of power for appliances such as an electric fry pan, a fridge/freezer, a microwave, a toaster—even a small electric heater. The EU3000 and EU6500 models are also capable of powering an RV air conditioner in addition to other common household appliances. The EU3000 will power a 13,500 BTU RV air conditioner, the EU6500 a 15,000 BTU RV air conditioner, and are also good choices for emergency home power needs. Along with quiet operation and fuel efficiency, the EU3000 Handi and EU6500 are equipped with wheels and handles for easy mobility at home or away.

Before choosing a portable generator, total all the power needs of all the accessories you expect to use at the same time, including surge power needed to start up electric motors. Make sure the generator you choose is rated to produce enough power to cover your total AC need. Plus, managing power needs by turning off accessories not in active use frees up power output for higher-draw appliances.

Designed for quiet operation, fuel efficiency, portability, quality and value, Honda portable generators stand ready to meet a wide range of needs, from camping and tailgating to weather emergencies and job site duty. Wherever you power up your Honda portable generator, expect Honda's unparalleled performance and reliability.

Honda Power Equipment, a division of American Honda Motor Co., Inc., markets a complete range of outdoor power equipment, including outboard marine engines, general purpose engines, generators, lawnmowers, pumps, snowblowers, tillers and trimmers for commercial, rental and residential use. For consumer information about all Honda products, visit Honda.com. A full selection of Honda portable generators is available at Camping World SuperCenters. Select Honda EU Series generators are also available at CampingWorld.com.

From Restless to Ready

After storing your rig for winter, it's time to get it back on the road



If our rigs were animated, they would be pretty fidgety by the time May rolls around. In some cases, it's been way too long since they moved from their lowly storage spaces. Much like a bear emerging from hibernation, RVs need to be replenished and energized to be ready to put on the miles. If you're looking for uneventful travel — meaning no breakdowns or failures — a little care and feeding is in order.

So where do you start?

I start with the brakes and bearings. Obviously, brakes need to be in perfect working order to keep us safe on the road, and the necessary service procedures to get there are not that difficult. But wheel bearings are probably the weakest point on any trailer chassis. If a bearing fails, catastrophic damage can occur. If you follow the advice in the article on page 112, your chances of being sidelined by a failed bearing or brakes are diminished dramatically. While you're at it, take a close look at the spring hangers and equalizers. These components are prone to elongated bolt holes, which, if ignored, can lead to suspension collapse.

RVs have a number of self-containment systems that work in harmony to allow us to enjoy the comforts of home while on the road. Probably the least liked is the sanitation system. Many a campfire yarn is spun about black-water mishaps, and I have my share of stories to tell as well — it's part of the deal. Fortunately, taking care of the sanitation system and practicing proper etiquette (see page 80) will temper most of the embarrassing situations, which means you will likely have to find new material if you're the campground comedian.

It goes without saying that washing and waxing the exterior and an annual roof inspection will keep our rigs looking nice, but too many people neglect a simple procedure that can lead to unsightly and structural damage: air-conditioner gasket replacement. When washing the rig or during a rainstorm, take the time to remove the ceiling assembly and look for signs of moisture. If there's a leak, follow the instructions on page 108 and replace the gasket. It's not that hard to do and will save you a lot of hassle later on.

I love to tinker with my RV and enjoy following a strict maintenance schedule. The effort devoted to ensuring the systems are working right pays off favorably when it comes to the satisfaction of travel independence. It's a touchy-feely thing; I wouldn't want my RV to be restless. 🚚

— Bob Livingston, publisher

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MAY METEORS

Just in time for Memorial Day weekend, the traditional start of the RV travel season, astronomers predict that shooting stars will light up the night sky on May 24 in the most dramatic meteor shower of the decade.

TRAILER LIFE

FOLLOW THE ROAD TO ADVENTURE

Publisher Bob Livingston
Editorial Director Eileen Hubbard
Editor Valerie Law
Managing Editor Donya Carlson
Technical Editor Chris Hemer
Senior Art Director Rick Damien
Production Director Bob Dawson
Production Manager Brenda Hutchinson
Sales Administrator Katey Purgatorio

Consulting Editors Wes Caughlan, Ken Freund, Jeff Johnston
Contributors Jack Ballard, Jim Brightly, Kristopher Bunker, Jane Cassie, Dennis and Cheryl DeNoi, Lisa Densmore, Emily Fagan, Bill and Jenn Gehr, Bill Graves, Kevin Livingston, Pamela Selbert, Steve Statham, Patricia Strutz, Gary Wescott

Vice President National Sales Terry Thompson
Tel 847-229-6759 Fax 270-282-7356

RV Marketplace/Classifieds Kathy Schurman
516 Maple Knoll Way NW, St. Michael, MN 55376
Tel 763-497-2458 Fax 270-438-4757
kathy.schurman@goodsam.com

Sue Seidlitz (Southwest Region)
10556 Combie Road #6443, Auburn, CA 95602
Tel 530-268-3005 Fax 530-853-2090
sue.seidlitz@goodsam.com

Tacy Hendershot-Sargent (Southeast Region)
1010 SW Lighthouse Drive, Palm City, FL 34990
Tel 772-288-0387 Fax 772-288-0085
tacy.hendershot@goodsam.com

Lou Cicirelli (Northeast Region)
1400 NW 108th Avenue, #266, Plantation, FL 33322
Tel 954-297-9234
lou.cicirelli@goodsam.com

Scott Oakes (Northwest Region)
8417 SE 34th Place
Mercer Island, WA 98040
Tel 847-229-6758 Fax 270-282-7356
scott.oakes@goodsam.com

Crompton Holdings Scott Crompton (Detroit, MI)
2031 Kings Highway, Shreveport, LA 71103
Tel 334-546-7243 Fax 334-356-7740
scottcrompton@mac.com

Chairman Emeritus Art Rouse
Publisher Emeritus Bill Estes

GS MEDIA & EVENTS

President Mark Boggess
Senior Vice President/Group Publisher Bob Livingston
Vice President/Advertising Sales Terry Thompson

Trailer Life (ISSN #0041-0780) is published monthly by GS Media & Events (a division of Good Sam Enterprises, LLC), 2750 Park View Court, Suite 240, Oxnard, CA 93036. Periodicals postage paid at Oxnard, CA 93036, and additional mailing offices. The annual subscription rate is \$15.97 per year in the U.S. For Canadian & International subscriptions, add \$12 per year. U.S. funds only.

Postmaster Send address changes to *Trailer Life*, P.O. Box 5860, Harlan, IA 51593-1360.

Canadian Return Address GS Media & Events, 4960-2 Walker Road, Windsor, Ontario N9A 6J3. Publication Sales Agreement #40012332.

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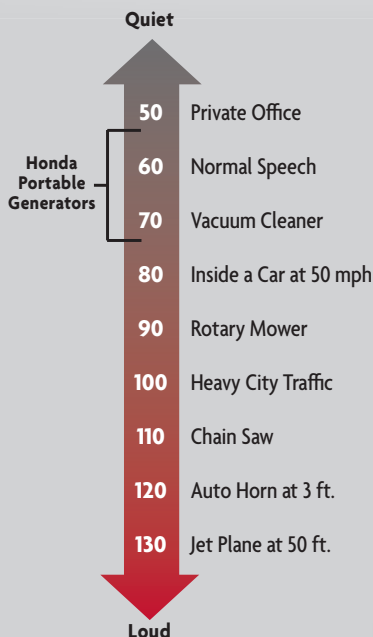
Honda EU Series generators are made for true portability, from the lightweight, easy-to-carry suitcase design to the compact design of the EU6500i with wheeled transport kit.

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EU2000i	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	
EU3000i	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■ (13,500 BTU)
EU6500i	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■ (15,000 BTU)

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Unconditional Surrender

America's Outback on Sarasota, Florida, in the March issue caught my attention because of the photo of the V-J Day Kiss statue. Before reading the story, I asked my wife if she remembered seeing it before. In fact, we have — however, we didn't see it in Sarasota. We saw another statue in San Diego, California, near the USS Midway Museum. Yep, a search of Google maps confirmed that it is still there. The world is a small place.

I enjoy reading the monthly travelog by Bill Graves in *Trailer Life*. Have a safe journey to your next destination, Bill! It's always fun to "travel" with you.

Greg Hauser, Eubank, Kentucky

I was especially interested in the Sarasota, Florida, article by Bill Graves about the V-J Day Kiss. I went to Sarasota last year on vacation for the first time and saw the *Unconditional Surrender* statue. I feel that it is the greatest statue. I've thought how amazing it would have been to be in Times Square at that time when the war was ending. The city needs to keep the statue.

Dorothy Ramsey

Greenville, South Carolina

Another Black-Water Solution

I enjoyed Kevin Livingston's article *Holding Tank Management* in the February issue. Instead of using a Sani-Con macerator, I have used a Sewer Solution for the last 12 years. It uses a stream of water (doesn't have to be much) to move waste through a ¾-inch hose. I have used it to dump black water as far as 70 feet away and higher than the RV dump-station opening. It also works well at my daughter's house when using the clean-out in the exterior kitchen wall.

Denny Medeiros, Sierra Vista, Arizona

Vans for Towing

My husband and I have been camping for many years — from tenting to

Up, Up and Away in Albuquerque

I thoroughly enjoyed Mary Zalmanek's *New Mexico's Enchanted Sunrise* in the March issue. We first visited the Balloon Fiesta as work-campers in October 2007. My wife, Gretchen, worked in the museum gift shop, and I drove a six-passenger golf cart from the museum parking area to the field. It was, as the Zalmaneks stated, an unforgettable experience.

In 2013, we went on a 90-day road trip that started with taking care of the lighthouse in Westport, Washington, for the month of August, and ended with us, again, working the duration of the fiesta in October. Who knows? I may even have driven the Zalmaneks to the launch field! As a shuttle driver working from 5 a.m. to noon for nine days, I got some of the best imaginable photos.

There were many RV clubs and affiliates that met at the fiesta, not just the Airstream folks. An important heads-up — if you're planning on going, the sooner you call an RV park in the area for a reservation, the better. The fiesta is always looking for volunteers too, if you can spend the nine days there.

And Albuquerque was a kick! We were dealing only with excited people. As I would round the museum in the cart on the way to the field, the "oohs" and "aahs" were to-die-for, especially from the kids when they saw the character balloons.

Bill and Gretchen Schmidt

Roseburg, Oregon



PHOTO BY MARY ZALMANEK

three pop-ups and two travel trailers. We currently have a 2013 travel trailer and a 2003 GMC Savana van. We always have our two Great Danes along with us, so a van works best. Our Savana has only 74,000 miles on it, but we are considering getting a new van due to the age of this one. We'd like to see some mention of vans for towing in your magazine.

We have been getting *Trailer Life* for about 10 years.

Shirl Settles, Springfield, Ohio

Toy Hauler Ramp Angles

We usually travel on our Honda Gold Wing motorcycle, but sometimes we like to load it in our Jayco Octane toy hauler, park somewhere and use

the Gold Wing to tour from there and use the toy hauler as a base. The problem is that, even with the beaver tail, the ramp is too steep for this vertically challenged rider to unload without a couple of strong hands to help hold up the bike from the back. It's too steep to hold the Wing with the front brake ... the tire just skids down the ramp. When the wheels are equidistant from the ramp/ground contact point, the increase to ground contact is 5½ inches. At home, my 6-foot 2-inch friend comes to my rescue, and he's on his tiptoes.

I wish you'd do articles on alternative toy haulers such as Forest River's Work and Play series. Also, for all toy haulers, you should

publish the ramp angle.

Dennis English, Coal Valley, Illinois

Going the Extra Mile

My wife and I were on our way home from Yosemite National Park in our brand-new truck and Wilderness trailer when the truck stopped running near Bakersfield, California. We called Good Sam Roadside Assistance, and it was arranged for our truck to be towed to a dealership and our trailer towed to Bakersfield River Run RV Park. We arrived there at 10 p.m., and there was a note on the office door letting us know which site was ours, just as promised.

On the second day, the truck was still not fixed, and I talked with the park manager, Ryan Uhles, to arrange to leave my trailer there and rent a car to drive home. Ryan contacted his father, Denny, who had business the next day in our hometown, and arranged to have him take us and our trailer home! The next day, our trailer was hooked up to Denny's truck, and three hours later we were back home. We picked up our truck a week later in Bakersfield.

I know where we will be camping the next time we're in Bakersfield! The family certainly went out of their way to accommodate us.

Walter Schob
Morro Bay, California

While on vacation traveling to Coeur d'Alene, Idaho, we had a tire blowout and a tire tread separation on our Lance trailer, which required us to purchase two new tires. After arriving at the RV park, we noticed that one of the spring bars was missing. We had to order the part from the hitch company and have it shipped to us by air freight. During our stay at the park, we found two water leaks, one from a water heater fitting, which flooded the bathroom floor, and the other due to a crack in the shower P-trap.

We contacted a mobile RV-repair service that made the necessary repairs. When we got home, we contacted Mesquite Ford and trailer

sales, where we'd purchased our Lance, to let them know about the difficulties we had encountered, with the hope that some of the costs might be covered by the warranty. Unfortunately, we were notified that the warranty had expired. About a week later, we received a call from Mesquite Ford in Nevada, and to our pleasant surprise, we were told that, since we had experienced so much

difficulty while on vacation, they were going to pay all the costs, regardless of the expired warranty. Within a week, we received a check for more than \$1,100.

We have been extremely pleased with our Lance trailer, and we cannot say enough about the courteous and professional treatment we have received from Mesquite Ford.

Jim and Terie Huston, St. George, Utah

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Trailer Life Mag Mobile App

We heard from a number of readers this spring after rolling out the latest version of our mobile app, Trailer Life Mag. The previous app didn't offer Android or Web-browser access, so we switched to a digital platform that accommodates more readers and gives us the ability to insert videos.

Trailer Life readers filled our inbox with questions about the new platform, including some digital subscribers who had problems accessing magazine issues on the app. The solution is to go to the Settings menu (the gear icon) and click on Restore. If that doesn't do the trick, delete the app and reinstall it.

Some print subscribers asked if they can read issues in the app without purchasing a digital subscription. We're working on a package that gives subscribers access to both print and

digital issues, but it's unlikely we'll offer free digital editions to print subscribers because both versions have production costs associated with them.

One subscriber asked if he can get print issues at home for part of the year and digital editions when he's traveling. We're working on that option too and hope to offer it by the time you read this.

A few digital subscribers asked why they can't download *Trailer Life* issues as PDFs. Their concern is that, like many traveling RVers who aren't always connected to the Internet, they want to read *Trailer Life* when they're off the grid. The new platform doesn't offer PDF downloads, but we're looking into the possibility of restoring that feature. In the meantime, the app does allow issues to be downloaded when you're online for offline reading later.

We also heard from Good Sam members who wanted to read digital editions of the four issues they get as



part of their membership. They can view the Good Sam issues of *Trailer Life* by clicking the Member Access button in the app, entering their Good Sam membership number and last name, clicking the X on the top right and opening the desired issue.

The free Trailer Life Mag app is available for Android, Apple and Kindle devices. Current and back issues cost \$1.99 each, and a one-year digital subscription is available. — Editors

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Hope Watermelon Festival

This city in southern Arkansas hosts an annual extravaganza of food and fun, arts and crafts, and family oriented activities

article by Pamela Selbert

Every year during the second weekend in August, Hope, Arkansas, is transformed into a watermelon world. On August 7 to 9, 2014, for the 38th consecutive time, flat-bed trailers will be parked under practically every shade tree along the town's streets and will be loaded with mountains of weighty melons for sale.

The hub of activity is Fair Park, where the three-day event draws some 40,000 visitors to this town of 10,000 (which, incidentally, is the birthplace of President Bill Clinton and former Arkansas governor and talk-show host Mike Huckabee).

The festival includes every watermelon-related activity you can think of: Politically Correct and General watermelon-eating contests, a seed-spitting contest, the Watermelon 5K Run/Walk, Watermelon Festival Car Show, Melon Mile Kids' Fun Run, and Melon Judging and Auction.

There's also a dog show (with about 100 dogs participating, judged for their tricks, obedience and appearance), a motorcycle show, an antique engines show, a money-in-the-haystack game, a fishing derby, a beautiful baby contest, and a fish fry and barbecue.

More than 200 vendors sell an array of arts and crafts (pencil art, caricatures, tie-dye dresses, rocking



Hope, Arkansas, celebrates its 38th annual Watermelon Festival for three days in August this year with nonstop watermelon-related activities.



chairs blazoned with razorback hogs and jewelry), and a wide variety of food. And, of course, watermelons are for sale everywhere — whole and by the slice. A large tent with tables and benches is devoted entirely to selling ice-cold quarter-melon slices.

The winner of the biggest watermelon contest — a shiny-green behemoth — occupies a perch of honor at the park's coliseum. Winning melons over the years have weighed as much as 268 pounds, says Chamber of Commerce Director Mark Keith. Local farmer Lloyd Bright has entered many of the winners, several of which, according to *Guinness World Records*, are world champions.

Musicians perform on five stages throughout the festival, which wraps up with an outdoor concert by a

big-name country entertainer. Last year was Tracy Lawrence; this year it will be David Nail.

Keith says the Hope area has long been renowned for its sweet, juicy watermelons, and the first festival was held in the 1920s. It ceased with the Great Depression, was revived in the 1930s, again ended, but was begun once more in 1977.

Some 200 RV sites with 30-amp electricity and water hookups are available at Fair Park and run \$15 per night. Two dumpsites are also on site. For information, call 870-777-7500.

Hope-Hempstead County Chamber of Commerce
870-777-3640, www.hopemelonfest.com

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We All Scream for Ice Cream

Utica, Ohio-based Velvet Ice Cream celebrates its 100th birthday on May 1, 2014, and will mark its milestone with specials, events and activities. Velvet's Ye Olde Mill, where more than 5 million gallons of ice cream is produced yearly, opens from May 1 through October 31, 2014 for the everything ice cream birthday bash. Ye Olde Mill houses an ice cream and milling museum, a restaurant, a playground, a picnic area and a catch-and-release fish pond on 20 acres of rolling hills and forested land. Visitors are welcome during the season for tours, tastings and events at the facility, which has been family owned and operated since being started by Joseph Dager.

The summer-long celebration will include the launch of several new flavors and a Velvet Ice Cream cookbook that features recipes and history. Every Sunday, visitors to Velvet's Ye Olde Mill will enjoy free entertainment:

Mother's Day kicks off with live entertainment and free carriage rides, and on National Ice Cream Day on July 20, visitors get buy-one-get-one-free ice cream cones. Utica's 40th annual Ice Cream Festival is May 24-26, 2014 with festivities for everyone in the family and includes a car and motorcycle show, antique gas engines, pony rides, kiddie tractor pulls, a magic show, and lots of contests including ice cream eating, an egg toss and balloon toss.

Check www.velveticecream.com for specials and coupons

Visit www.ohiocampers.com for privately owned and operated campgrounds

Nearby Good Sam Parks include Lazy River at Granville in Newark, 740-366-4385, www.lazyriveratgranville.com; and Autumn Lakes in Sunbury, 740-625-6600, www.autumnlakescampground.com



NEWSWIRE

CAMPGROUND



Laughlin 222-Space RV Park Coming

Nevada's Clark County Board of Commissioners unanimously approved a request from Mohave State Bank for a rezone of 22.1 acres to permit the development of a recreational vehicle park at the intersection of Needles Highway and Casino Drive, adjacent Laughlin Bay Marina. Each RV space will have full hookups and measure 30 by 65 feet. A clubhouse will have a laundry, bathroom and shower facilities. Included in the plans are a 6-foot-high decorative wall along Casino Drive and a 20-foot-wide street landscape area. The setting will include Raywood ash, blue palo verde and sweet bay trees. Each RV space will have a Mediterranean fan palm.

ANNIVERSARY



Progressive Dynamics Celebrates 50 Years

Progressive Dynamics is celebrating its 50th anniversary in 2014. Progressive was the first to develop a modern converter for the RV industry and created what it claims is the industry's smallest all-in-one 45- and 60-amp distribution panel/converter system. The company manufactures power centers, power conversion, interior lighting products and battery-management solutions for RV, specialty and marine industries. Progressive's Charge Wizard four-stage battery-management system constantly monitors voltage status and automatically manages the battery to solve battery recharging and maintenance issues.

WEBSITE



Outdoors RV Manufacturing

Outdoors RV Manufacturing (ORV), a growing towable manufacturer based in La Grande, Oregon, has launched a redesigned website, www.outdoorsrvmfg.com. The site's modern look, with enhanced visuals and navigational tools, displays larger-scale photos and floorplans, detailed feature lists and updated video content. The company says that its website emphasizes Outdoors RV's "built-tough" construction and features content collected from outdoor enthusiasts' input. Outdoors RV manufactures Wind River and Black Stone luxury travel trailers, Glacier Peak fifth-wheels, half-ton series trailers and bunk models. ORV is represented in the Pacific Northwest and western Canada.

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Star Light, Star Bright

Big Bear, California, hosts the first StarLight Festival, May 24 and 25, 2014. The free event is organized by the AstronomyOutreach network, an organization formed to educate the public about astronomy and space science. The celebration of these will be set in an atmosphere with music and art for an educational and fun experience. There will be hands-on activities, presentations by renowned astronauts, astronomers and scientists — including some from NASA and the Jet

Propulsion Laboratory — and lectures about current space programs.

You can view the sun through a safe-filtered telescope, build and control a robot, meet an astronaut and ask experts about the universe. Manufacturers will display the latest scientific equipment, and intergalactic-style art will be on exhibit. Attendees can enter a raffle drawing for a chance to tour the Big Bear Solar Observatory. The observatory has been closed to public tours since 2005.

Big Bear was chosen for this

inaugural event because of its high altitude and dark night skies that are unspoiled by city lights. Come join the celebration of science and astronomy. www.starlightfestival.com

CAMPGROUNDS

Holloway's Marina & RV Park, 909-866-5706, www.bigbearboating.com
RV camping for up to 40 feet, full hookups, laundry room, showers, barbecues, marina, boat rentals, horseshoe pits and basketball court.

Lighthouse Trailer Resort & Marina, 909-866-9464

www.bigbearlighthouseresort.com
Opens May 1 for 2014 season, next to Big Bear Solar Observatory, boat docks, playground, volleyball and horseshoe pits.

Serrano Campground in the San Bernardino Mountains, 877-444-6777, www.recreation.gov

Information on camping and Big Bear can be found at www.bigbear.com



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Plans to Launch Jayco Jay Smart

In the March issue of *Trailer Life*, Bob Ashley reported on the ultralight Jay Smart, a concept towable with European influences that was on display at the 2013 RVIA Show in Louisville, Kentucky. Jayco has since approved the launch, and the new line of towables is slated to be built in Middlebury, Indiana.

Four rear-bath floorplans are in the works, ranging from 19 to 26 feet. The streamlined, low-slung Jay Smart will reportedly weigh in at between 2,400 and 4,100 pounds. The travel trailers will have acrylic windows, LED indirect lighting along the ceiling and the optional Truma Mover electrically remote-controlled maneuvering system. With an elongated A-frame, a hitch weight of 150 pounds and grab handles, Jayco claims the Jay Smart's front end can be moved around by hand.

In other Jayco news, the company says it has entered into a Letter of Intent to acquire Open Range RV, manufacturer of fifth-wheels and travel trailers. Open Range, started in 2007, has reportedly been growing in excess of 20 percent annually, and management recognized that it needed to partner with a larger organization to increase growth. The company will operate as a wholly owned and separate subsidiary of Jayco. Jayco, 574-825-5861, www.jayco.com 📞



PHOTOS BY SHAWN SPENCE

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article and photos by **Lisa Densmore**

In 1967, Charles Kuralt zigzagged across the country in an RV for a television segment called "On the Road" on the *CBS Evening News*. "On the Road" featured extraordinary people and places in the United States. What started as a three-month experiment turned into a 25-year gig and an extremely popular part of the show.

During production, only a small crew accompanied Kuralt, who avoided traveling on interstate highways as much as possible in favor of scenic byways and local roads. "Interstates allow you to drive coast to coast without seeing anything," quipped Kuralt, in one of his oft-quoted statements about the show.

On one trip through the northern Rocky Mountains, Kuralt happened to travel over the Beartooth Highway (U.S. Route 212), the 68-mile-long mountain road from Red Lodge to Cooke City, Montana, that leads to the northeast entrance of Yellowstone National Park. He declared it "The most beautiful drive in America." After wearing out six motorhomes during his quarter century of exploring America's byways, Kuralt didn't change his mind and confirmed his opinion in his book *Dateline America*.

The Beartooth Highway typically is

open Memorial Day weekend through mid-October, but closures can happen anytime, particularly in June and after Labor Day due to snowstorms. Mornings are generally better for the drive, as thunderstorms are common on summer afternoons.

Be sure to take it slow. We plan a minimum of two and a half hours for the drive. The switchbacks are tight, and it might be snowing at higher elevations. The Beartooth Highway travels through or adjacent to Shoshone, Gallatin and Custer national forests and the Beartooth-Absaroka Wilderness. As a result, there are no traveler services between Red Lodge and Cooke City except for the Top of the World store near the Island Lake Campground.

During the summer, temperatures can range from the 70s to below freezing, and it can be wet and windy, so we make sure to have warm jackets, rain gear, hats and gloves handy. We also bring bug spray, as the mosquitoes can be thick if there's no breeze.

The Beartooth Highway, now formally called the Beartooth All-American Road (BAAR) based on its status as a National Scenic Byways All-American Road, is nothing short of spectacular.

HIGHWAY

Rarely is a road a destination, but the Beartooth Highway offers more than many vacation spots in terms of things to see and do. There are jaw-dropping views, wildlife, wildflowers and multiple mountain lakes and streams to ogle around every turn. You can hike, mountain bike, fish and bird-watch from a myriad of roadside pullouts and trailheads. It's a motorcyclist's nirvana for its banking S-turns.

There are numerous places to camp without the crowds in Yellowstone, but you can still gaze at geysers, given your close proximity to the park. You can meander down Broadway in Red Lodge and poke into its many charming restaurants and boutiques. Or get a taste of the cowboy lifestyle in nearby Cody, Wyoming, which also boasts the Buffalo Bill Historical Center and Museum, one of the foremost repositories of Western art and artifacts.

CLIMATE

The Beartooth Highway ascends almost 5,500 vertical feet between Red Lodge (elevation 5,500 feet) and the top of Beartooth Pass (elevation 10,947 feet), then drops down about 3,300 feet to Cooke City (elevation 7,600 feet). As

you leave the towering timber at the base of the roadway, gain and then lose altitude, you pass through three different ecosystems characterized by distinct flora and fauna.

Shrubs, particularly sagebrush, and a wide variety of subalpine grasses and sedges fill the meadows up to 8,000 feet above sea level. Though you're above dense forests, groves of white pine and Douglas fir speckle the hillsides, along with juniper and cinquefoil. Common wildflowers include arnica, columbine and Indian paintbrush.

Between 8,000 and 9,500 feet, the BAAR passes through mountain meadows filled with grasses and forbs. Small stands of Engelmann spruce, subalpine fir and lodgepole pine stabilize hillsides and give shelter to deer, elk and moose. During fall, the aspens glow golden yellow. Wildflowers include oarleaf buckwheat, Lewis monkeyflower and mountain harebell.

The meadows above 9,500 feet contain low-growing vegetation of the

alpine tundra. These rare plants are fragile underfoot, yet they withstand extremely cold temperatures, strong winds and a short growing season. The BAAR is one of the few paved roads in North America that traverse an alpine zone, and such an expansive one! The few trees that grow here are knee-high krummholz with branches growing only on their leeward side. In July, the alpine meadows become a wildflower garden colored by such low-growing beauties as alpine gentian and forget-me-not, rose crown, shooting star and elephant-head lousewort.

WILDLIFE

A number of animals might cross your path while traveling the Beartooth Highway, depending on the elevation. The route is one of the few roads in North America where you can spot sure-footed mountain goats defying gravity on their cliffside meanderings. Many species in Yellowstone National Park, such as elk, wolves and coyote, also reside here. Among the roadside rocks at higher elevations, a yellow-bellied marmot or a pika may spy on you before scurrying down a hole.

More than 115 species of birds



Beartooth Lake, a scenic pitstop on the Beartooth Highway. (Above left) A mountain bluebird adorns a seasonal stream. (Above right) The calls of a bugling bull elk contain a wide range of information, including letting females know they're straying too far or communicating to other bulls that they're too close to his harem.

THE BEARTOOTH HIGHWAY



All-American Road: Traveling up the Beartooth Highway from Cooke City toward Red Lodge.

spend their summers in the Beartooths. At any moment a golden eagle or peregrine falcon might swoop down from the sky, so keep your binoculars handy. American dippers and mountain bluebirds are common around mountain streams. Ruffed grouse live along the road at lower elevations. White-crowned sparrows nest at timberline, and horned larks raise their chicks on the tundra. American pipits, red crossbills, pine grosbeaks, ravens, finches and chickadees are also among the birds commonly spotted. The best wildlife viewing is typically just before sunrise, before traffic picks up. If you're one of the first to travel the BAAR, you'll have a better chance of seeing wildlife.

LANDMARKS

From Red Lodge, the BAAR heads southwest, climbing more than 5,000 vertical feet via a series of dramatic switchbacks. It passes over the Wyoming state line, cresting at Beartooth Pass, the highpoint on the journey. Each curve of the road reveals a new view of the Absaroka-Beartooth Wilderness, which contains some of the most rugged topography in the Lower 48. Twenty craggy peaks more than 12,000 feet high scratch the sky, including Granite Peak (12,799 feet), the highest in Montana.

One of the few man-made points of interest along the BAAR is Clay Butte Lookout. Built in 1942 by the

CAMPING CUES

Red Lodge and Cooke City have several private campgrounds, but the public ones strung along the highway in Gallatin, Shoshone and Custer national forests are the most convenient to the byway. Unlike the mega-campgrounds in Yellowstone National Park, the public sites along the BAAR are fairly small and quiet. Lower-elevation campgrounds open in late May, higher elevation ones in July. A few in Custer National Forest near Red Lodge take reservations, but most sites are first-come, first-served. There are no hookups at national forest campgrounds and there may be RV length restrictions.

CUSTER NATIONAL FOREST

(Montana): 406-446-2103 for campground information, www.recreation.gov for reservations

M-K Campground (12 miles south of Red Lodge): Maximum trailer length 22 feet; 10 sites

GALLATIN NATIONAL FOREST

(Montana): 406-848-7375 for campground information, www.fs.usda.gov/gallatin

Chief Joseph Campground (4 miles east of Cooke City): Access road not suitable for vehicles longer than 42 feet; 6 sites

Colter Campground (Silver Gate, Montana, 2 miles east of Cooke City): Vehicle length restricted due to narrow access road; 18 sites

Soda Butte Campground (1 mile east of Cooke City): 27 sites

SHOSHONE NATIONAL FOREST

(Wyoming): 307-527-6921 for campground information, www.fs.usda.gov/shoshone

Beartooth Lake Campground (31 miles south of Red Lodge): 20 sites

Crazy Creek Campground (11 miles east of Cooke City): 16 sites

Call 406-587-9054 for information on the following campgrounds:

Greenough Lake Campground (12 miles south of Red Lodge): 18 sites

Limber Pine Campground (12 miles south of Red Lodge): 13 sites

Parkside Campground (12 miles south of Red Lodge): 28 sites

Sheridan Campground (6 miles south of Red Lodge): 8 sites

Named for the alignment of the two mountains, Pilot and Index peaks resemble the sight on a mariner's sextant when viewed from the north.

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THE BEARTOOTH HIGHWAY

Civilian Conservation Corps, Clay Butte Lookout was removed from wildfire watching in the 1960s when light aircraft replaced manned lookouts. Since 1975, volunteers have staffed this popular stop along the BAAR, from which not only can you take in a view but also observe wildlife, the effects of wildfire and the geology of the Beartooth Plateau, which used to be under an ancient sea.

Need to stretch your legs? The moderate hikes to Native Lake (about 3.1 miles one way) or to the top of Beartooth Butte (3.5 miles one way) leave from the lookout. To get there from Red Lodge, drive 42.2 miles along the BAAR. Turn onto Forest Road 142 (gravel) and continue uphill for another 3 miles to the lookout.

One of the more recognizable landmarks is the Bear's Tooth, an 11,000-foot granite spire for which the road and mountain range are named. It is a direct translation from the Crow Indian phrase *Na Piet Say*. The Crow



(Above from left) Fishing for trout in one of the alpine tarns accessible from the Beartooth Highway. In September aspen groves turn golden along the route.

and Bannock Indians were likely the first humans to explore the Beartooth Plateau, an alpine wonderland speckled with tarn after tarn and colored with acres of wildflowers. Trappers, prospectors and pioneer settlers followed throughout the 1800s, though the actual route of the

Beartooth Highway was not formally blazed until 1872.

HISTORY

In August 1872, on a tip from a local hunter, General Phillip Sheridan led 120 men through the mountains over what is now the Beartooth Highway,

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rather than taking the better known but much longer route along the Clarks Fork of the Yellowstone River. Today the Chief Joseph Scenic Byway from Cody, Wyoming (Wyoming Highway 296), another superbly scenic route, follows the latter way. Many people make a big loop from Red Lodge over the Beartooth Highway and then back via the Chief Joseph Scenic Byway, which departs the BAAR 14 miles east of Cooke City.

As the Beartooth Highway descends toward the junction with the Chief Joseph Scenic Byway, it's impossible to take your eyes off Pilot and Index peaks in the northern Absaroka Range, 20 miles away across a broad valley. Pilot Peak, on the left, is the taller of the two. The names Pilot and Index refer to the alignment of the two mountains, which resembles the sight on a mariner's sextant when viewed from the north. Important navigational landmarks during the pioneer era, they mark the boundary of a

geothermally active plateau known as Colter's Hell.

John Colter was the famous guide who split from the Lewis and Clark Expedition and then became the first white man to travel up the Clarks Fork, among other places. Whether he used Pilot and Index peaks to navigate is unknown. Ditto whether he suffered tribulations on his namesake plateau. However, it is well-documented that the two peaks were a key landmark for the 1870 Washburn-Langford-Doane Expedition. Henry Washburn used the two peaks to find the rim of the Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone and the geyser basins. As a result of that expedition, Congress passed the Organic Act of 1872 creating Yellowstone National Park, America's first national park.

It was the founding of Yellowstone National Park that ultimately led to the construction of the Beartooth Highway. With the opening of the park, the mining towns of Cooke City and Red

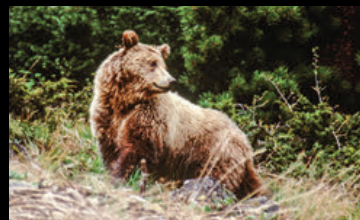


PHOTO BY JACK BALLARD

BE BEAR SAVVY!

According to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, about 600 grizzly bears inhabit Yellowstone National Park and the surrounding areas, including the Beartooth Highway corridor. The following precautions will help you avoid an encounter with an aggressive bruin:

- ✓ Lock food, garbage and toiletries outside your trailer when not in use.
- ✓ When cooking outside, keep your grilling and eating areas clean.
- ✓ Carry pepper spray at all times.
- ✓ Hike in groups of three or more and make noise on the trail by talking or singing.

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THE BEARTOOTH HIGHWAY

Lodge began to benefit from an influx of tourists, which in turn generated a need for better infrastructure to and from the park. At the same time, the invention of the Model T automobile in 1908 made cars affordable for the middle class and quickly became the preferred mode of transportation for visitors to the region. Car travel gave the impetus for the development of a roadway through the mountains.

To fund the road, Scott Leavitt, a former Montana congressman, sponsored the Park Approach Act, which President Herbert Hoover signed into law in January 1931. The intent was to create access roads into all of the national parks, though only one road was actually built under the act.

The Beartooth Highway was officially dedicated on June 14, 1936. Eight decades later, this dramatic drive continues to take visitors on an alpine journey unmatched in the Lower 48. This is one route you literally have to see for yourself! 🚗



FOR MORE INFORMATION

Cody, Wyoming, Chamber of Commerce: 307-587-2777, www.codychamber.org

Cooke City, Montana, Chamber of Commerce (road conditions on the Cooke City side of the Beartooth Highway): 406-838-2495, www.cookecitychamber.org

Friends of the Beartooth All-American Road: www.beartoothhighway.com

Red Lodge, Montana, Chamber of Commerce (road conditions on the Red Lodge side of the Beartooth Highway): 406-446-1718, www.redlodgechamber.org

Shoshone National Forest — Clarks Fork Ranger District (information on Clay Butte Lookout): 307-527-6921, www.fs.usda.gov/shoshone

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HIGH AND MIGHTY

Camping and climbing steep slopes and hiking through old-growth forest in a land of snow-clad mountain peaks and glaciers in Alberta and British Columbia, Canada

It's early September and time to restock our RV once again, dust off the hiking boots and head out of town for Alberta and British Columbia. We hitched up our fifth-wheel and set out along one highway that links two provinces, four Canadian national parks and tons of trails. Surrounded by mammoth mountains, unspoiled beauty and epic terrain, this trip is steeped in splendor, adventure and awe.

STOKED WITH REVELSTOKE

The last time we were in Revelstoke, people were shoveling snow tunnels to get into their homes. It was January 2011, a winter of record powder for Revelstoke Mountain Resort and a ski trip we'll never forget. In contrast, today sunshine spills over the four-square-block city center of shops and restaurants — and onto embracing peaks, one of which is our hiking destination,

Mount Revelstoke National Park. Hugging up to its base is the Trans-Canada Highway, the fast-track that has linked us here from Vancouver, British Columbia, in just six hours.

On www.campingrvbc.com, the Camping and RVing British Columbia Coalition's Website, we were able to scout out campgrounds ahead of time and, with our home-in-tow, book into the KOA, a 200-siter that's enveloped

by shady trees. With hookups, cable and a pool, it's hardly roughing it!

Minutes away is Meadows in the Sky Parkway, a 16-mile road that climbs a mile skyward. We leave our fifth-wheel behind, since trailers and motorcoaches are not allowed on this narrow mountain road. While zigzagging around swerves, curves and 16 hairpins, the road leaves the shrinking city below and gives way to a milieu of summits. To the west are the Monashees, northwest the Caribooes, east the Purcells and where we stand, the Selkirks. Collectively, they make up the Columbia Range — warmer, wetter, steeper and 60 to 90 million years older than the Rockies.

Soaking up some sun on the shores of Miller Lake in British Columbia's Mount Revelstoke National Park.



While treated to vistas, we cleave through varied geographical zones, transitioning from an old-growth rainforest to flowery alpine meadows. Trailheads are accessible en route, but we hold out for the ones on top and, after parking in the upper lot, ride the complementary shuttle to the summit. Even Kalli, our mountain hound, gets to hop on board.

Trodden paths fan out from this pinnacle like an intricate web and cater to all abilities — from easier rambles, like Fire Tower and Sky Trail, to the more tedious trek to Jade Lake. We decide on a middle-of-the-roader that leads to both Miller and Eva lakes.

Most of this route is a breeze — a descent through wooded groves and blooming meadows, leveling out to a traversing hillside that's dotted with mammoth-size boulders. Distant snowy summits frame the horizon, and wild critters provide front-row entertainment. Hoary marmots whistle louder than our camp kettle, protesting pikas squeal out with fury, and camouflaged grouse hoot from hidden homesteads.

The last couple of kilometers shift us into ascending gear, but we're rewarded in the end — first by Eva Lake's embracing valley, then by Miller's sun-splashed island jetty. The junction to Jade Lake is a short jaunt away, but the elevation is too steep for my knees. "I guess we should head back," I say to my husband, recalling that the park gates close at 5 p.m. "There's a lot of uphill hoofing to do."

Knowing the itinerary for this holiday by heart, Brent grins and responds, "Fear not, my dear, this is just a warm-up of what's to come."



Distant snowy summits frame the horizon on the trail to Miller and Eva lakes.



Hikers precede us on the Great Glacier Trail on the way to spectacular views. (Below right) Brent poses next to an old-timer.

GLACIER GAZING

After reading that Evelyn Berens was the first lady to reach the summit of Mount Sir Donald in 1901, I feel pretty confident that I can reach at least one of this park's 400 glaciers. We'd just driven the Trans-Canada Highway's 10 scenic miles (16 kilometers) from Revelstoke and are heading out on our first hike at Glacier National Park, an outdoor oasis that's aptly named. Flanking the trail are placards revealing its legendary roots.

From 1887 to 1925, Glacier House, a posh 90-room retreat, was operated here by the Canadian Pacific Railway. Wealthy mountaineers would come from worldwide to revel in the amenities and glacial remains, with stunning hiking just steps away. Berens is portrayed in this historical photo shoot. And though her Victorian lace-up boots were no contender to my Hi-Tec footgear, she had cushier accommodations. Not that I'm complaining! Once again, thanks to www.campingrvbc.com, we preplanned our campsite, and our roving home is nestled beneath the trees at nearby Illecillewaet Campground.

Ten of the park's 20 trails begin at this base camp and lead to spectacular ridges, vistas and glaciers. "Let's start with Great Glacier Trail," I suggest, when eyeing the options. "With a rise of only 1,050 feet (321 meters), even I should be able to get to this ice field."

Initially, the century-old route is a cinch. After bridging a roaring



creek, we're canopied by spruce and hemlock. Omnipresent peaks are soon visible — some with jagged tops, others with snowy remains. Beyond a minefield of mammoth boulders, the inevitable uphill begins, and within half-a-dozen switchbacks my heart rate is turbocharged. But the ascent is short and comes with visual rewards. Waterfalls cascade from rugged crests, shadows color crevassed mountainsides, and Illecillewaet Glacier shimmers as the backdrop.

Our trail is abruptly interrupted by a stream, however, and trekking beyond to the glacier can be achieved only with some fancy footwork. "There's just a bit of scrambling," Brent says with encouragement. "And it's only slippery when wet."

I'm somewhat skeptical about the glistening boulders that now replace my solid footpath. I watch two German hikers proceed and am pretty sure they have suction cups embedded in their hiking boots. And though they'll likely reach the glacier in short order, I'm quite content to see it from afar.

HIGH AND MIGHTY

AWE-INSPIRING YOHO

It's 10 a.m., and I'm chilling out in a camp chair. With my eyes at half-mast, I hear the roar of nearby rapids and smell bacon sizzling on someone else's grill.

We've just driven Rogers Pass, the jaw-dropping two-hour route that links Glacier National to the city of Golden, British Columbia. We're at Kicking Horse campsite in Yoho National Park, and I haven't a care in the world. Although there are no hookups for our fifth-wheel, we have all the other camping comforts: hot showers, piles of firewood, rainy-day shelters — and a setting that'll lure any mountaineer. Hovering above our home on wheels are those granite beauties we came here to climb: the Canadian Rockies. Just hearing the name gets my hiking boots excited.

Early the next morning, we head up Yoho Valley, a winding route that's sandwiched between striking slopes. We pass the Upper Spiral Tunnels, a century-old engineering feat that successfully reduced the grade for train travel. Based on the train whistles we hear, they have no problem chugging over this pass now. But on this stretch of valley road, trailers do. Bridging the lower to higher sections are Z-like switchbacks that bigger rigs are unable to master. Fortunately, our truck zips up the traverses without a glitch.

Iceline Trail is on the opposite side of the valley to Takakkaw, the second highest waterfall in western Canada, that spills 825 feet from Daly Glacier. On every one of the



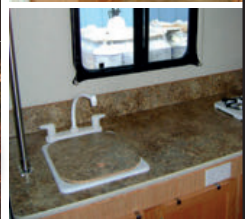
In the distance, Yoho National Park's Takakkaw Falls, Western Canada's second highest waterfall, cascades from Daly Glacier.



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steep S-curves, this popular tourist attraction pops into view, and its rocketlike roar can be heard when we're out of the old-growth thicket and into the subalpine zone.

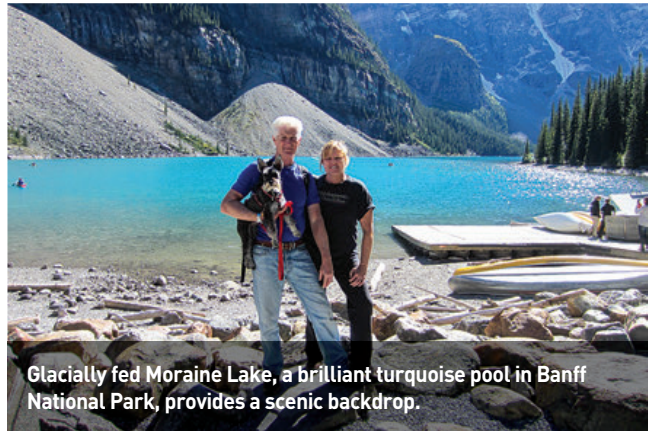
Trails weave over this upper terrain like gray, flowing ribbons. While we head for Iceline Summit, others backpack to Celeste Lake, some farther, to Little Yoho. Under blue skies, the more we rise, the better it gets — over slabs of rubble that had crumbled from mountain faces, up granite steps and across streams that flow freely from melting snowy mantles. Eventually, we reach the Iceline, a subalpine plateau where the rugged turf meets the glorious glaciers.

Our final ascent is a pyramid-shaped mound of shale. And from this scenic platform, we have a panorama of surrounding glaciers. Yoho, Daly, Emerald — big, brilliant and breathtakingly beautiful. "Want to do a longer loop back along the Yoho Valley Trail?" Brent suggests.

I think about my camp chair, soothing fire and waiting book. "Afraid not," I respond. "Let's take the quickest route down, then kick back at Kicking Horse."

STEEPS OF LAKE LOUISE

The majestic Rockies lovingly embrace Lake Louise, Alberta. Steeped in height and beauty, the peaks tower above the quaint village, cocoon our cozy campground and set the scenic stage for hikes in Banff National Park. After a 16-mile drive from Yoho National Park, we unhitch our



Glacially fed Moraine Lake, a brilliant turquoise pool in Banff National Park, provides a scenic backdrop.

home, lace up our hiking boots and hit the trail.

We come to an abrupt halt at the Eiffel Lake trailhead. Plastered next to bold text is a mug shot of a mean-looking grizzly. I glance at the holster can of bear spray that's attached to Brent's belt loop and hope he can use it like a six-shooter, if the need arises.

"It says, by law, we have to hike in groups of four or more," I read aloud. "Do you think the four extra paws we've brought along will suffice?" Although our schnauzer is a great hiking hound, she clearly doesn't meet these requirements. Fortunately, a couple from nearby Invermere does. And after leaving the aqua-green Moraine Lake behind, we

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chat while ascending 1,000 feet.

There's a fork at the summit of these switchbacks, and while our newfound hiking buddies head to Sentinel Pass, we tag along with others going to Eiffel Lake. Within minutes we are out of the trees, traversing a sunny slope that overlooks the Valley of Ten Peaks. Tiny Moraine Lake is now far below, and rising from its silty shores are 10,000-foot-high mounds that loom over the predominant Wenkchemna Glacier. Some have steep crevices doused with avalanched snowfields. Many are striated and etched after eons of weathering.

The trail continues for heartier hikers, but after lunching on a rocky face that offers a panorama of Eiffel Lake, we decide to retrace our steps. While sauntering back over the view-boasting slope, our group diminishes. Some have fallen back, and others move ahead. By the time we reach the switchback junction, there are just the three of us again, counting our canine.

Surrounded by natural beauty at Alberta's Lake Louise Campground in the Rocky Mountains of Banff National Park.

"Do you want to join our group?" a fit-looking German asks. "We're headed to Sentinel Pass." Although my legs have endured more natural step classes this trip than I thought possible, it's our last day at Lake Louise. And this popular perch is less than 2 miles away. How hard can it be?

Sunlight glints off the golden stands that border Larch Valley Trail and the 10 mammoth peaks that we'd recently zoomed in on now beautify the backdrop. We gradually ascend to a lake-dotted meadow. Soaring to the heavens, just beyond, is an uphill climb that will truly test my previous words. Razor-sharp switchbacks etch the steep pitch, and from this lower viewpoint we can make out an ant-size human chain.

I clutch my trusty poles and proceed



with the pack. Chanting the mind-calming mantra "Don't look down," I eventually summit this highest hiking pass in the Rockies.

From the wind-blown 12,000-foot apex, I'm breathless. And whether it's from the thin air or wowing vista, there are two things I am sure of. Thanks to the steady stream of hikers on this trail, my husband's six-shooter skills won't be necessary. And after climbing these four Canadian Rockies giants — a sum of 93 miles and 40,000 feet of up-and-down elevation — I can't wait to do it all over again.

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IF YOU GO

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For more than 125 years, Banff National Park has provided visitors with a combination of unspoiled wilderness, modern amenities and opportunities for active exploration. With such a breathtaking landscape, it's no surprise that this UNESCO World Heritage Site has been nominated time and again as a must-see destination for travelers from around the world. www.banfflakelouise.com

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► Kootenay Rockies Tourism

The Kootenay Rockies are a pristine region of rivers, lakes, waterfalls, beaches, mineral hot springs, alpine meadows and snowcapped mountains. Four of British Columbia's seven national parks are located here. www.kootenayrockies.com

► Parks Canada

With a mission to protect and present the country's natural and cultural heritage, Parks Canada ensures that ecological integrity is maintained for current and future generations. www.pc.gc.ca

► Parks Canada Discovery Pass

Entry passes are required by all day visitors and overnights in Canada's national parks. For those visiting the parks for a week or longer, the annual Discovery Pass offers an excellent value. It can be purchased at www.pc.gc.ca/eng/ar-sr/lpac-ppri/ced-ndp.aspx or at any of the campground kiosks in the parks.

► Camping and RVing British Columbia Coalition (CRVBCC)

The provincial agency and its helpful Website make it easier for visitors to search, plan, book and enjoy their British Columbia camping experience. Members include the BC Lodging and Campground Association, BC Parks, the BC Society of Park Facility Operators, the Freshwater Fisheries Society of BC, the Northern BC Tourism Association, Parks Canada, Recreation Sites and Trails BC, the RV Dealers Association of BC, the RV Rental Association of Canada and Tourism British Columbia. www.campingrvbc.com

► Travel Alberta

Travel Alberta's user-friendly Website and other visitor resources help travelers discover things to do and places to see year-round in the resplendent Alberta Rockies, from summer hiking to winter skiing and snowboarding. The Website includes guides to Alberta campgrounds and parks, both provincial and national, plus links for national park campsite reservations. www.travelalberta.com

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We are all familiar with the potential damage faulty power and voltage surges will do to sensitive electronics in inverters, satellite antennas, entertainment systems, computers, microwaves, and other appliances. Miswired power pedestals can result in reverse polarity or an open neutral condition on the coach. Both are a safety/fire hazard and will cause severe damage. It is important that these electronics as well as your investment are protected. Wouldn't it be reassuring to know that Surge Guard RV power protection is there just in case there is a power problem?

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The Surge Guard product family provides a full line of electrical safety products for RVs. Several models of 30 amp and 50 amp hardwires and portables protect RVs from power surges, high- or low-voltage conditions, open neutrals or mis-wired

pedestals, all of which can cause serious damage to RVs. Surge Guard 30 amp portable, Model 44750, uses core ground fault circuit interrupter technology. And the new Surge Guard surge protectors, 30 amp, Model 44260, and 50 amp, Model 44270, analyze circuits and identify faulty park power plus offer surge protection. All three of these products are perfect for pop-ups and travel trailers.

Portables with LCD Display

The Surge Guard 30 amp and 50 amp portables with LCD display (English) offer higher joules of power surge protection than the previous models. The 30 amp Model 34730 now has 2450 Joules. The 50 amp Model 34750 now has 3850 Joules.

These portable models protect your RV from faulty park power by automatically shutting off power when an open neutral or low (<102V) and high (>132V) voltage is present. The 50 amp model also shuts off if a reverse polarity is present. Both units continuously monitor for voltage and amp draw (RMS), reverse polarity (mis-wired pedestal, elevated ground voltage). A 128 second reset delay protects the air conditioner compressor. Plus, they reset automatically when good power returns.

The Surge Guard portable protection products are compact and easy to use. They plug in between the power pedestal and the line cord to provide protection. They are designed for all travel trailers, 5th wheels and motorhomes with 30 and 50 amp service.

The entire line of Surge Guard portable models and voltage regulators are equipped with Easy-T-Pull™ handles on both the load and line sides. No more frustration with trying to plug/unplug from the power.

Theft Protection

To help eliminate the possibility of theft of the portable Surge Guards and voltage regulators, Camping World also offers the

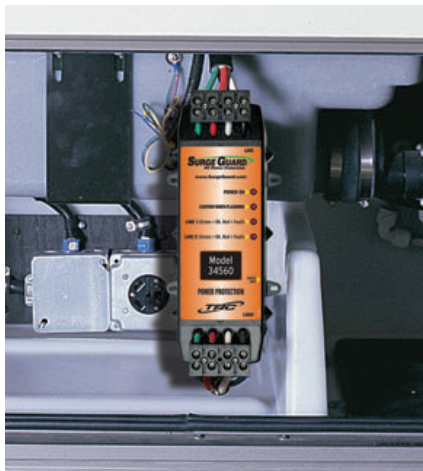


Theft protection for portable Surge Guards.

Convenient Hardwire Surge Guards

Now with Optional Remote LCD Display and higher Joules, Surge Guard 30 amp Model 34520 and the 50 amp Model 34560 offer full electrical protection and are designed for all travel trailers, 5th wheels and motorhomes with 30 and 50 amp service. These models shut off power when an open neutral or low ($<102V$) and high ($>132V$) voltage is present. The 50 amp model also shuts off if a reverse polarity is present. Both units incorporate a caution indicator light for mis-wired pedestal, reverse polarity, and elevated ground voltage. A 128 second reset delay protects the air conditioner compressor.

The Optional Remote Power Monitor LCD Display Model 40298 plugs into the remote port on the above hardware units; (not compatible with models that do not have a telecom jack). They offer plug-and-play convenience with a joystick for easy screen navigation. Sixteen detailed fault screens keep you informed of your RV's power status.



Hardwired Surge Guard units install inside your RV's electrical bay to protect your appliances and electronics against faulty park power.

Surge Guard's Automatic Transfer Switch, Model 40250-RVC is RVC compatible with total electrical protection from faulty park power. It transfers to either shore power or generator power automatically when energized after a 30-second delay in generator mode.

Voltage Regulators, 30 amp Model 10176 and 50 amp Model 10175 provide a reliable source of power when experiencing low RV park input voltage. They do not protect against faults and surges. Both models automatically and continually monitor line voltage conditions and boost voltage, helping prevent low voltage damage to the RV's appliances and electronic devices.

Protect your investment. Protect what you value! Whatever your need in RV electrical protection, you'll find a complete selection of Surge Guard bumper-to-bumper power protection products at Camping World and other RV dealers nationwide.

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SANIBEL ISLAND ESCAPE



This Florida treasure is known for its wildlife refuges and abundant seashells scattered over miles of white-sand beaches

What is the most unique feature of Florida's Sanibel Island? Geography buffs might note its east-west orientation in a region where most islands are situated on a north-south axis. Beachcombers are sure to point out Sanibel's reputation as one of the finest shell-hunting destinations in North America. Nature lovers are proud to announce that more than half of the island's acreage is devoted to wildlife refuges. Students of modern American history are happy to describe Sanibel's forward-thinking Land Use Plan of 1974 that put the brakes on

overdevelopment and retained the island's unique small-town feel in a region where high-rise buildings and rampant real estate development have run amok over many coastal communities. Excellent fishing and kayaking, intriguing museums and historical destinations round out Sanibel Island's unique appeal to travelers of all interests. Need further evidence? In 2010 Sanibel Island (and its neighbor Captiva Island) cracked *Barron's* list of the top 10 places in the United States to own a second home.

My introduction to Sanibel Island

came in early May, about the time the major tourist season was winding down on this idyllic Florida island. Like other Northerners who live in climates where spring doesn't really seem to happen in any meaningful way until after Memorial Day, it's great to motor onto Sanibel when it's yucky at home yet on the shoulder season of visitation in south Florida. The peak tourist season runs from January until April, a great time to visit, but normally requires more planning and advance reservations.

For a Montana farm boy and his sweetheart who was raised in upstate

(Above) Cold season in the North is a perfect time to escape to Florida's sunny Sanibel Island.
(Right) Shelling on Lighthouse Beach is a world-renowned activity for visitors of all ages.



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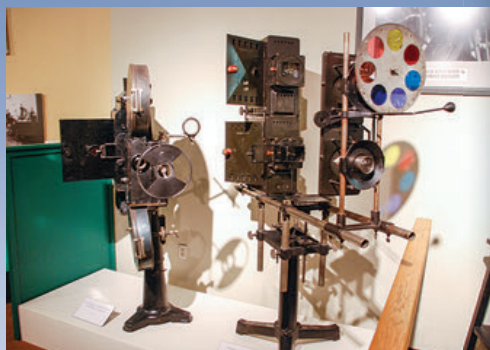
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(Above from left) The Bailey-Matthews Shell Museum has the best collection of seashells of any museum in the nation. Thomas Edison's early motion picture apparatus is on display at the Edison & Ford Winter Estates. The site boasts an outstanding array of palm and other tropical trees.

New York, there's nothing we find so relaxing and fascinating when visiting the southern shores of our nation than wandering the beach. We set off on Lighthouse Beach on the southeastern side of the island, not far from the causeway that links Sanibel and Captiva islands with the mainland of Florida at Fort Myers. The beach is named for a landmark lighthouse first constructed in 1884.

Although it was midday and numerous beachcombers had hiked the sand before us, by the time we padded a half mile down the beach, both of

my hands were loaded with seashells — mostly the flat, fan-shaped shells from scallops. The colors are fascinating. The shells are adorned in hues from nearly white to mottled orange to some streaked with maroon and plum tones. Lisa refused to pack the shells I discovered after my hands were full. Her fingers clasped her camera, and her bikini had no pockets.

A host of shorebirds darted about in the surf, while an osprey wheeled overhead. Before arriving, we had read of Sanibel's reputation as a reliable birdwatching hotspot. Within an hour we

recorded more than a dozen different species on Lighthouse Beach, including a silly reddish egret gamboling about in a tidal pool and a stately great egret with flowing snow-white plumage that strutted along the surf like a celebrity.

After dinner we decided to take another stroll to enjoy the tangy breeze that ruffled the surf. An ebbing tide had seemingly doubled the amount of sand on the beach, also revealing a host

A WATERBORNE TOUR OF THE AREA MADE THE "CATCHING" PART OF THE FISHING TRIP A SECONDARY CONCERN



The month of May is prime fishing time for tarpon and other game fish.

of the seagoing creatures that leave behind their shells after departing to the great ocean paradise in the sky. We discovered a number of living sand dollars, along with a colorful starfish. Scores of fighting conchs and lettered olives inched along in the moist sand, propelled by the muscular "foot" that extends from their shells. A friendly local informed us that the crown conch we happened upon was a rare find, more common to silty areas than this sandy beach. It's illegal to collect shells with living creatures inside, so we left our treasures on the beach. Photographing living crustaceans is just as fun as collecting their shells.

A day of shell searching on one of Sanibel's several beaches segues naturally to one of the island's other attractions, which we visited the next morning. The Bailey-Matthews Shell Museum has the most comprehensive collection of seashells of any museum in the Western Hemisphere. After finding shells of our own on Lighthouse Beach, we were initially attracted to the museum's exhibit of shells common to southwest Florida. But our attention was quickly lured to other intriguing exhibits.

I was drawn to a collection of mammoth shell specimens from around the world, some of them notably larger than a basketball. There was an artful array of scallop shells on one wall, arranged by the kaleidoscope of colors found on the 430 species of scallops around the world. Another display chronicles the history and lifestyle of the ancient Calusa people who once inhabited the island and southwest Florida coast. The Calusa utilized shells for a variety of purposes including tools, fishing tackle and cookware.

It's a world-class museum, but the educational mission of the Bailey-Matthews Shell Museum is equally impressive. It publishes a shell science journal, hosts researchers from around the world and is a popular destination for field trips for local schoolchildren.

The displays at the shell museum memorialize creatures whose "skeletons" have been left behind after they die. Just down the road is one of Sanibel Island's other attractions, this

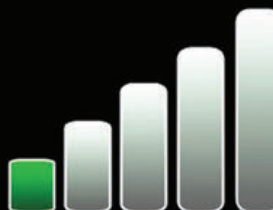
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SANIBEL ISLAND ESCAPE

one devoted to living things. The J.N. "Ding" Darling National Wildlife Refuge was created in 1976. Sprawling over 6,000 acres, the refuge encompasses an extended mass of mangrove forest. During the spring and fall migrations, thousands of birds stop over at the refuge on their winged treks to nesting or wintering grounds in the United States and the Caribbean.

We were too late to catch the spring migration, but dozens of resident

species of birds make the refuge a birder's paradise year-round. An auto tour loop that winds a bit more than 4 miles through the refuge is the handiest way to experience this unique ecosystem and its wildlife. We puttered down the paved roadway and were soon joined by a cattle egret, a white bird with long legs and buff highlights on its plumage. The egret chased our car, much like a mutt who runs after passing vehicles on a country driveway. It was a



The eclectic community of Matlacha features intriguing shops, both inside and out.

comical scene, but puzzling as well.

"What's that crazy bird up to?" Lisa asked with a giggle.

I explained to her that cattle egrets often follow large domestic animals, such as cattle and horses, in a pasture. As these big mammals walk around, they stir up insects from the grass, which are caught by the egrets. This fellow had apparently mistaken our vehicle for an overgrown white milk cow in hopes that it would flush out a late-afternoon snack.

Farther down the road, we spied a little blue heron standing motionless at the edge of the water near the road. This one was a juvenile. Adult little blue herons have bluish-gray plumage, but the youngsters begin life with white feathers that become mottled with blue as they age. As we watched, the speckled "teenager" poked its bill quickly into the water and emerged with a small fish that was eaten as heartily as a human adolescent chomping on a cheeseburger.

Along one of the refuge's boardwalks that snakes out into the trees, we discovered a host of tiny crabs clinging to the bark of the mangroves. A reddish egret and several white ibises were poking about near the platform at the end of the boardwalk. By the time we completed the looping auto tour, we recorded nearly 20 different bird species, including a pair of nesting ospreys and a clownish brown pelican. Manatees swim the

waters of the refuge, but we failed to lay eyes on one of these huge aquatic mammals. Perhaps we'll sight a "sea cow" on a return trip to the refuge.

Day three of our Southern escape involved an ambitious itinerary — spend the early morning fishing, cruise back across the causeway from Sanibel Island to Fort Myers to visit a museum, then motor on to nearby Pine Island.

Dawn found us on a motorized fishing skiff with Captain Steve Bailey, a local fishing guide with three decades of experience. Back home in Montana, fly-fishing under an overcast sky often brings exceptional results. Steve didn't like the scattered cloud cover that lent texture and color to the sunrise. He wasn't crazy about the breeze, either.

"Hot, sunny days that are dead-calm usually give us the best fishing," he informed us with a wry smile. "But we'll give it a shot."

As it turned out, a waterborne tour of the area aboard Steve's boat made the "catching" part of the fishing trip a secondary concern. We moved from spot to spot, as he relayed the local history and biological information about the redfish and snook we could spot lounging off the small mangrove islands but whose mouths were disinclined to take my fly.

An hour into the excursion, we spotted an osprey winging toward its nest with a sizable fish in its talons. Suddenly a huge, dark form plummeted after the fish hawk. A bald eagle had targeted the osprey's meal. The smaller bird banked to evade its larger pursuer, but the eagle perfectly anticipated its maneuver and grabbed the fish from the osprey's talons. Lisa and I were dumbstruck, but Steve relayed that fish-pilfering eagles often steal an osprey's hard-earned catch. I finally caught a small snook of my own, but the eagle-osprey encounter remained the highlight of the morning.

After a memorable lunch at a local crab shack, we parked outside the Edison & Ford Winter Estates. A 20-plus-acre complex of laboratory, experimental gardens and riverfront estate, this museum preserves the winter homes of inventors Thomas

Edison and Henry Ford, who were close friends. A tour of the grounds revealed a plethora of rare and unusual trees and shrubs cultivated by the inventor. Inside the laboratory portion of the museum, we viewed early generators, storage batteries and vintage motion picture cameras, all invented by Edison. Often in the company of Ford, Harry Firestone, U.S. presidents and other leading citizens of the day, Edison enjoyed his Florida estate and extended

camping trips in the eastern forests. Lisa was drawn to the early motion picture displays, but I was intrigued by an ancient Model T pickup that Ford designed specifically for his camping excursions. We viewed just a fraction of the museum in our allotted hours, vowing a return trip to take in the entire collection at a later date.

The day ended on Pine Island, accessible by bridge from Fort Myers. We motored through Matlacha, a

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SANIBEL ISLAND ESCAPE



Campgrounds in the Fort Myers area (San Carlos RV Resort pictured here) make an ideal home base for a Sanibel escape.

historic fishing town rapidly transitioning to an eclectic artist colony. Brightly painted shops displayed local artwork and crafts, but we resisted the temptation to stop and stay on Pine Island Drive. At the end of the island, we exited our vehicle at the Calusa Heritage Trail. The trail winds through the Randell Research Center, an archaeological site among huge mounds of shells, relics of the bygone Calusa Indian civilization.

As the sun dipped on the western

horizon, we were seated in the airy dining room at the Tarpon Lodge, just across the road from the Calusa trail. It's been recommended as one of the finest eating establishments in the area and does not disappoint. We feasted on fresh grouper, a tasty local fish, and delicious scallops. The sun was setting as dessert arrived, and we talked about what we'd seen and all that remains to be explored. Our Sanibel escape, it seems, was about to become an annual tradition. 🚐

ISLAND INTEL

Bailey-Matthews Shell Museum

239-395-2233, www.shellmuseum.org

Calusa Heritage Trail

239-283-2062
www.flmnh.ufl.edu/rrc/calusatrail.htm

Camping

Sanibel Island offers very limited camping and isn't the easiest place to navigate with a sizable trailer. I recommend perching in the Fort Myers area and making the short drive to Sanibel or Pine Island. We liked San Carlos RV Resort and Marina in Fort Myers Beach.
800-525-7275, www.sancarlosrv.com

Edison and Ford Winter Estates

239-334-7419
www.edisonfordwinterestates.org

Fishing

Angling for resident species of fish is possible year-round. Tarpon, a large,

popular game fish, migrate through the area from mid-April to mid-June. Captain Steve Bailey offers fly-fishing and light-tackle angling.
239-489-1379, www.captstevebailey.com

Fishing from a kayak is another fun option. Josh Harvel, another local guide, specializes in kayak fishing.
239-233-0655
www.swflkayakcharters.com

General Information

The Lee County Visitor and Convention Bureau provides an excellent portal to beach information, attractions, events and other information.
800-237-6444, www.leevcb.com

J.N. "Ding" Darling National Wildlife Refuge

239-472-1100, www.fws.gov/dingdarling

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SOUTHERN HOSPITALITY IN NATCHITOCHES

THE OLDEST CITY IN LOUISIANA SHOWCASES HISTORIC LANDMARKS,
SOUTHERN PLANTATIONS, QUAIN T SHOPS AND LONG-RUNNING FESTIVALS

article by Patricia Strutz

When many of us think of Louisiana, Cajun and Creole cooking come to mind — mouthwatering cuisine such as crawfish, filé gumbo and smoked andouille sausage. Southern delicacies like these are in great supply in the west-central Louisiana city of Natchitoches (pronounced *Nack-a-tish*).

Beyond gastronomic pleasures, the region offers plenty to do. Don't be surprised to experience a sense of déjà vu as you drive through — this

scenic area has been showcased in several movies and novels. The oldest permanent settlement in the Louisiana Purchase, Natchitoches has a rich history that's celebrated with a living history museum, cotton-era plantation tours and the oldest general store in the state. You can traverse winding roads and trails in Kisatchie National Forest, breathing in the smell of longleaf pines, or plan your visit around the holiday season to enjoy the Festival of Lights, a tradition for more than 80 years.

A LITTLE HISTORY AND GEOGRAPHY

In 1714, a trading post was set up by French-Canadian explorer Louis Juchereau de St. Denis. He traded goods with the original inhabitants, the Natchitoches Indians. Settlers soon followed to plant crops in this ideal farming climate, bringing African slaves with them.

The Cane River flowed east to the Red River and provided an easy shipping route to New Orleans. Expelled from Nova Scotia, French Acadians — later

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SOUTHERN HOSPITALITY IN NATCHITOCHES

called Cajuns — also headed here. They were fishermen and rice farmers.

In 1803, Napoleon sold his territory to the United States. As the Red River began to shift, the area became isolated from the shipping route. By 1870, the Red River completely bypassed Natchitoches. The Cane River was dammed in the 1920s, creating the oxbow-shaped lake that exists today.

Cane River Lake meanders directly through downtown and ends up 32 miles southeast in the city of Alexandria. The banks are lined with cotton-era plantations and pecan orchards. If you watched John Wayne in the movie *The Horse Soldiers*, you've seen this riverine environment.

Downtown Natchitoches is bordered by Sibley Lake to the northwest, industry to the southwest and residential neighborhoods to the east. Kisatchie National Forest lies to the south and east of town.

WHAT TO DO

Once you get your bearings, cross Front Street to enter the 33-block historic downtown district. Magnolia trees and live oaks draped in Spanish moss line the redbrick streets. Shops and art galleries with wrought-iron spiral staircases beckon.

If you saw the movie *Steel Magnolias*, this area will look familiar. A must-stop is Kaffie-Frederick General Mercantile at 758 Front Street. Established in 1863, it's a hardware store extraordinaire. Cast-iron skillets, vintage toys and marbles, corn ponies, bacon presses, lye soap — the items will



(Above top) The year-end Festival of Lights, an annual extravaganza of Christmas lights, waterfront parades and festivities, marks its 87th year in 2014. (Above) Costumed docents reenact battles at Fort St. Jean Baptiste State Historic Site. (Below) Boaters back into 36-mile-long Cane River Lake, anticipating a good day of bass fishing.

PHOTO COURTESY LOUISIANA STATE PARKS



SOUTHERN HOSPITALITY IN NATCHITOCHES

catapult the shopper back a century or two. In fact, the original cash registers are still used. From October through January, the upper level houses a Christmas department. Don't miss the cypress-knee Santa Clauses. The above-ground root system of the area's plentiful cypress trees are handcrafted into lamps and holiday decorations.

History buffs will want to visit Fort St. Jean Baptiste State Historic Site at 155 Rue Jefferson. In 1716, Sieur Charles Claude Dutisné and company were sent to build an outpost to prevent Spanish forces from advancing into French Louisiana. Fort St. Jean Baptiste served as a military outpost until England defeated France in 1762. The original site is believed to have stood where the Old American Cemetery is today. Costumed docents in this reconstructed fort allow visitors to experience the area's colonial history.

In the mood for a scenic drive? The trailer-accessible Longleaf Trail Scenic Byway guides motorists



Cast for bass and crappie on the shores of Sibley Lake at Nakatosh Campground 2, one of a pair of RV parks within minutes of downtown Natchitoches.

PHOTO COURTESY VITAL POWER PRODUCTION

through the pristine pinery of Kisatchie National Forest. The paved two-lane route travels 17 miles along a high ridge through the Kisatchie Hills. Longleaf pines, chinquapin and holly trees are thickly bunched on the sides of mesas and buttes. You'll cross Kisatchie Bayou, a picturesque stream

surrounded by large sandbars. This is a popular spot to go swimming and canoeing. Several hiking trails lead to spectacular panoramic views; you'll also walk past stands of tall bamboo.

Longleaf Vista Recreation Area offers a 1½-mile interpretive trail, a visitor center and a picnic area. Keep

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an eye out for old turpentine extraction tools (a large camp was set up here), as well as arrowheads. This area is within the range of the Late Prehistoric Caddo Indians. Directions can be found at www.fs.usda.gov.

No trip to this part of the South would be complete without a visit to historic plantation homes. If you've read Lalita Tademy's book *Cane River*, you can see some of the plantations she mentions 8 to 23 miles from Natchitoches along highways 119 and 484, both of which roughly parallel the Cane River. Oakland, Magnolia and Melrose

Magnolia Plantation, owned by the same family for more than 250 years, is now open for public tours.

plantations open their doors for public tours. The first two are maintained by the National Park Service.

Oakland is considered the most complete Creole plantation in the South. It showcases a raised house and nearly 20 outbuildings. Perhaps most unusual are the *pigeonniers*; special buildings used to breed pigeons. Both the eggs and birds were harvested.

Magnolia Plantation has remained



in the LeCompte-Hertzog family for more than 250 years. The family still owns the main house and cultivates the fields. The park system provides tours of the outbuildings and a rare glimpse into the slave culture on a large plantation.

Privately owned Melrose Plantation was built in 1742. Owner Thomas Pierre

WHERE TO EAT



Back in the 1930s, African-American men with peddling carts offered a creation called meat pies. Crescent-shaped pastries filled with seasoned beef and pork were hand-crimped and fried to a golden brown. Lasyone's Meat Pie Restaurant (622 Second Street) has garnered worldwide fame for offering Natchitoches' signature dish. The restaurant also serves other traditional soul food like country-style milk gravy and biscuits, grits, fried okra and turnip greens.

◀ Don't leave town without trying a meat pie at Lasyone's.

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Métoyer entered into a relationship with slave Marie Thérèse Coincoin. Métoyer later freed Marie and all 10 of their children. These descendants created a lasting legacy at Melrose by adding distinctive buildings to the complex.

The African House, circa 1800, resembles a straw-thatched hut found in the Congo. One of America's most celebrated primitive artists, Clementine Hunter spent time here as a cook and, later, solely working on her craft. Many of her paintings remain, including a colorful mural painted on the upstairs walls of the African House. Details on the plantations and sites found along Cane River National Heritage Area can be found at www.canerivernha.org.

If you visit at the end of the year, be sure to see the annual Festival of Lights, a popular event that has ushered in the holidays in Natchitoches since 1927. For six weeks, more than 300,000 lights adorn 100 religious and secular set pieces along the downtown riverbank. The excitement of street



Miles of scenic roads wind through 604,000-acre Kisatchie National Forest. Cool off at one of the many shallow rapids or look for native carnivorous plants (right) that trap prey in their deep cavities.



PHOTOS BY JIM CALDWELL



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and barge parades, live entertainment, weekly fireworks and authentic Creole cuisine permeates the air. Clad in red and green velvet costumes, Miss Merry Christmas and the Christmas Belles make community appearances. Streetcar tours and horse-drawn carriage rides take place throughout the day and evening. You'll hear the singing tree, view the decorations and smell funnel cakes, meat pies, pralines and boudin balls that local vendors hawk on the street.

As part of the festival, the Natchitoches Historic Foundation spearheads a Christmas by Candlelight tour of homes. Held the second and third weeks of December, the tour features both historic and contemporary homes. One example is the Prudhomme-Rouquier House, circa 1790. Lavishly decorated for the holidays, it offers a glimpse of unique *bousillage* construction—walls made of mud from the riverbottoms, mixed with deer hair and Spanish moss. Hand-hewn and -pegged cypress beams and a three-story staircase are also features of this Creole structure.

To view a complete listing of Festival of Lights events and find RV parking areas, visit www.christmasfestival.com.

Natchitoches is my mother's hometown, and even though I grew up in Wisconsin, this Yankee has visited relatives here many times. I invite you to sample the unrivaled cuisine, the local conviviality and the natural beauty of this area. Step back to a slower time, sip a sweet iced tea and enjoy some genuine Southern hospitality. 🚐

WHERE TO STAY

Kisatchie National Forest

Several federal campgrounds are located 16 miles south of Natchitoches in the National Forest. Most sites accommodate trailers but are rather primitive with limited facilities. They're near the Longleaf Trail Scenic Byway and hiking, biking, horseback-riding and off-highway-vehicle trails. 877-444-6777, www.fs.usda.gov/kisatchie

Nakatosh Campgrounds

Not far from downtown, the two Nakatosh Campgrounds have all the conveniences. With 41 full-hookup RV sites, including 22 pull-throughs, Campground 1 offers pine forest views and a pair of small ponds where you can fish for bass from shore (don't forget bug spray). The adjacent restaurant serves up tasty fried chicken, catfish and boudin round-the-clock. Campground 2 has 19 RV sites, 14 with full hookups and five pull-throughs, all with Sibley Lake views. After launching your boat at the landing 1½ miles away, you can fish for bass, crappie and catfish, then tie up on the campground's banks. Walk to Mariner's Restaurant, which serves crawfish, gulf oysters, gumbo, meat pies and pecan pie. 318-352-0911, www.nakatoshcampgrounds.com

For More Information:

Natchitoches Area Convention and Visitors Bureau
318-352-8072, www.natchitoches.net



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THE OTHER ALABAMA

In the shadow of Mount Whitney, a range of Southern-sounding hills rises up on the eastern slope of California's Sierra Nevada

article and photos by **Jim Brightly**

Just west of Lone Pine, California, and U.S. Route 395, a string of rocky outcroppings known as the Alabama Hills offers the adventurous RVer a landscape that's almost otherworldly. Here you'll witness big boulders piled upon bigger boulders, balancing acts rarely seen, and thousands of caves and cubbyholes.

You'll find recognizable terrain from hundreds of movies, thousands of commercials and innumerable television shows. Movie productions from *Gunga Din* to *Gladiator* have called the Alabama Hills and the surrounding Owens Valley home. Even Tarzan left Culver City to film a couple of movies here.

Driving along Movie Road — an accessible two-lane dirt strip that parallels U.S. 395 — inspires déjà vu as you get a look at the shooting locations of so many motion pictures. Even first-timers to the area swear they've been here before, as every bend in the road brings another familiar scene.

To find Movie Road, go west of Lone Pine on Whitney Portal Road. Turn north at the movie monument plaque. This is public Bureau of Land Management property, so choose a flat

spot, roll out the awning and lean back to enjoy the snowcapped Sierra Nevada to the west, the White Mountains across the Owens Valley and the rocks of the Alabama Hills. Unleash your inner child and imagine the rocks and boulders as goblins, horses, fortresses or anything else under the sun.

For those who prefer bona fide campsites, you'll find several public and private campgrounds near the Alabama Hills (see "Lone Pine Camping").

Continue west up Whitney Portal Road to the trailhead for hikes on Mount Whitney, the highest peak in the Lower 48. The full hike is an endeavor for those who are extremely fit, and you'll need a permit to make the trek from May 1 to November 1. During permit season, the trail is limited to less than 200 hikers on any given day.

Back on U.S. 395, be sure to visit the Lone Pine Film History Museum to explore the costumes, cars, props, posters and other movie memorabilia on display. This collection tells the story of filming in the region from the early days of silent movie comedian Fatty Arbuckle to modern blockbuster movies such as *Iron Man*.



One of the best things about boondocking in the Alabama Hills is it's free on nearly 30,000 acres of public BLM land west of Lone Pine.



The Alabama Hills and Sierra Nevada behind them provide a panoramic camp setting and dual filming locations for blockbuster movies.



U.S. 395, the highway that doubles as Lone Pine's Main Street, is interesting in itself and a worthy drive. The route connects to the U.S. borders with Mexico and British Columbia and flows through three states along the eastern slopes of various mountain ranges.

Following 395 north a few miles out of Lone Pine, you'll find Manzanar National Historic Site. Take a moment to walk around the internment camp and reflect upon the many Japanese-Americans housed here during World War II. It's a beautiful location, despite the troubling history.

The Owens River that runs through the valley was ravaged in the 1930s when the Los Angeles water department built the first aqueduct to haul water from the Sierra to thirsty Los Angeles, events that inspired the movie

Chinatown. Department employees dynamited beaver dams, decimated lakes and almost turned the Owens Valley into a dust bowl.

Fortunately, the federal government stepped in several decades ago, but the Owens Valley has never quite regained its former glory. Yet even with the current drought, it's still wet enough to support a healthy mosquito population, so bring plenty of insect repellent.

If you visit during spring, make the drive north to Bishop to see the wildflowers. Every year Bishop hosts its popular Mule Days Celebration on Memorial Day weekend, with events running from May 20 through 25 this year. The 45th annual festival takes place at the Tri-County Fairgrounds and features more than 700 mules competing in 181 events. 🐎

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For More Information

Lone Pine Chamber of Commerce
760-876-4444, lonepinechamber.org



Jayco Eagle Premier 361REQS

Thoughtful features and a floorplan perfect for entertaining make this full-size fifth-wheel a safe bet for family fun

Stereotypes, as inaccurate or unfair as they may often be, are sometimes founded in truth. Sports cars are driven by young men, cowboy hats are worn by cowboys and fifth-wheels are for older, retired couples. But every so often, we're reminded of fallacies inherent in stereotyping and find ourselves surprised by reality. Old ladies sometimes do drive Porsches. The guy in the Village People also wore a cowboy hat. And sometimes, as is the case with the Jayco Eagle Premier, fifth-wheels are designed for family use.

When you think about it, family oriented fivers just makes sense. They have the walk-around space and residential features familiar to the younger members of your household, and the giant basement storage typical of these rigs can easily accommodate the trappings of four or more. Replace the leather and tile with cloth and vinyl, and you've got an attractive, durable and affordable package that can hold up to the rigors of family use.

The Jayco Eagle Premier is available in a total of nine floorplans, all of

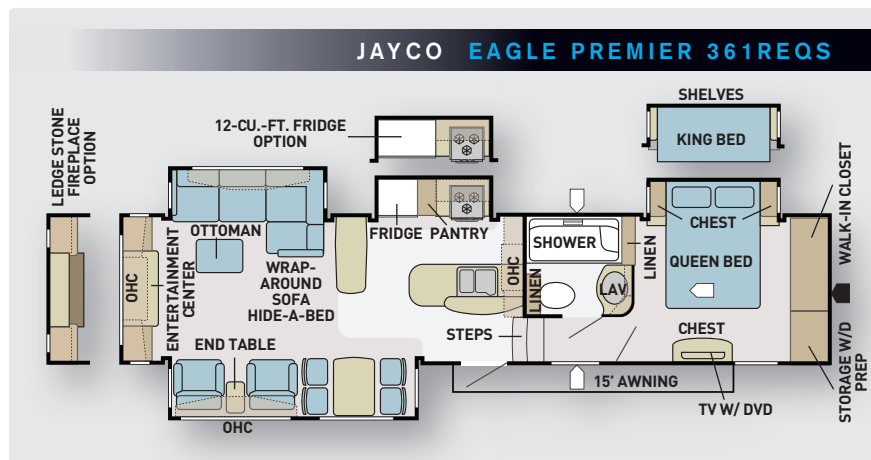
which can sleep at least three and as many as 10. The test unit you see here is the Jayco 361REQS, which combines high-end styling and thoughtful features with sleeping for up to four adult-sized people. As such, it's no snack-size rig; measuring 40 feet 9 inches, it's best suited for RV parks rather than public campgrounds, which tend to be a little more cramped. With this in mind, we made reservations at the Pechanga RV Resort, located in the Southern California wine country of Temecula, approximately 67 miles north of San Diego.

Pechanga is a well-manicured, clean park that offers 168 sites (including 25 deluxe pull-throughs) with full hookups, cable and Wi-Fi, plus two spas and a heated pool. It's also walking distance to Pechanga Casino and golf course. The park assigned us a pull-through site, after which we deployed the automatic four-point leveling system (a \$2,329 option) four slideouts and not one but two power patio awnings (the second one, which deploys from the curbside slideout, is a \$679 option). Once set up, we received numerous comments from



passersby on how nice the rig looked, with its high-gloss exterior walls, tinted, frameless Thermopane windows and aluminum wheels.

The 361REQS floorplan is great at mealtime or for entertaining as many as 10 guests. The island kitchen has some of the most useful space we've seen in a while, particularly on a fifth-wheel at this price point. That's because, in addition to the island itself, with its Stonecast sink and residential brushed-nickel fixtures, there is a banquette at either end. The one on the forward wall is great for food





The Jayco Eagle Premier served as the first test of our new long-term tow vehicle, a 2014 Ford F-350 dually with the 6.7-liter Power Stroke diesel engine and Ford accessory fifth-wheel hitch. The truck towed the Jayco fifth-wheel effortlessly while managing 10.1 mpg. We'll report on its performance with other tests throughout the year.

you've already prepped, while the one nearest to the living area is a perfect place to put food that's ready to serve. It's directly inline with the four-place freestanding dinette and has pendant lights located directly above so you can highlight your culinary masterpieces. However, we found it counterintuitive that the power outlet and pendant light switch were located on the living area side of the banquette; we think having it on the kitchen side would be a lot more convenient.

The LG-brand solid-surface countertops, while thin (presumably to save

weight and cost) look good, and there's plenty of storage space down low for large pots and pans as well as cabinet space above for dishes, bowls and the like. The only thing we wished for was a dedicated space for a trash can under the sink, but this is a small complaint. The test trailer also had an optional 12-cubic-foot refrigerator (\$1,993) and a large, residential-style overhead microwave, which we appreciated given the recent popularity of Barbie-sized units. There's also a three-burner cooktop and a standard oven.

Generally speaking, we prefer living

areas where the couch or recliners are directly across from the television, but Jayco did a great job compensating for the fact that its entertainment center is on the back wall. First, the couch is L-shaped, which makes it easy to turn toward the 40-inch LCD flatscreen television without overtaxing your neck, and it includes an ottoman with internal storage. The opposing fabric recliners are not only very comfortable, but swivel for easy viewing. And, depending on which side of the room you're on, the TV mount detaches from the wall and swivels as well, so you've always got

a good viewing angle. Add to this the optional Ledge Stone electric fireplace (\$714), and you've got a living area that's about as cozy as anyone could want. There are also cabinets on either side of the fireplace, the streetside of which contains the components for the Multi-Media Premium Sound System with AM/FM/CD/DVD/MP3 player. Flip a switch, and you can activate the dual exterior marine-grade speakers in the patio area. In addition, the cabinet is prewired for another component (such as a Blu-ray player) and offers handy storage directly underneath for DVDs or Blu-ray discs.

About the only flaw in the living area of the test unit was the fold-out couch, which hadn't been assembled properly at the factory and dropped some hardware when it was deployed. It also wasn't very comfortable to sleep on because it wasn't flat, and the foot of the bed was actually higher than the head, requiring our guest to sleep on it backward.

There were other bugaboos. While we appreciated the effort Jayco extended in placing many of the house light switches, tank monitor, water heater/pump controls, etc. in a centralized location by the steps, the print for the switches was so small that it was impossible for us to read at night without glasses, and there's no light nearby to make reading easier. And while it's com-

SPECIFICATIONS

JAYCO EAGLE PREMIER 361REQS

Exterior Length	40' 9"
Exterior Width	8'
Exterior Height	13'
Interior Width	7' 8"
Interior Height	9' (living area) 6' 7" (bedroom)
Construction	2- by 3-inch wood floor joists, 5/8-inch tongue-and-groove plywood deck; vacuum bonded, laminated walls; 5-inch arched, stamped steel roof trusses with 1/4-inch plywood decking, seamless rubber roof.
Freshwater Cap.	75 gal.
Gray-Water Cap.	85 gal.
Black-Water Cap.	50 gal.
LP-Gas Cap.	14 gal.
Water-Heater Cap.	10 gal.
Refrigerator	12 cu. ft.
Furnace	35,000 Btu

Air Conditioner (2)	13,500 Btu
Converter	90 amp
Battery (2)	Group 24 12-volt
Tires	ST235/80R16
Suspension	MOR/ryde CRE
Weight (water and propane full, no supplies)	12,480 lbs.
Hitch Weight	2,180 lbs.
Axle Weight	10,300 lbs.
GVWR	14,995 lbs
GAWR (2)	7,000 lbs.
Cargo Carrying Cap.	2,515 lbs.
Base MSRP	\$59,971
As-Tested MSRP	\$76,819
Basic Warranty	2 years

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mon in the RV industry to place an interior light switch near the bottom of the entry door, we thought it odd that it was placed on the right side of the doorway, so you have to open the door completely to get your hand on the switch. Once activated, it illuminates the lights above the kitchen, which brings up another oddity: There's no switch in that location for the overhead lights in the kitchen. If you're preparing dinner and you need more

light, you either have to walk around the island to the central control panel to switch them on or bend over and turn on the one at the bottom of the entry door. We suggest that the switch be moved to the left side of the doorway and that the switch activates a light less-oft used, like the one just to the right of the entry door in the hallway, for example. Then, place a light switch for the kitchen overhead lights in the kitchen.

(Below from left) The 361REQS's floorplan is ideal for entertaining or cozy family fun, with fabric recliners that swivel to face the optional Ledge Stone electric fireplace and 40-inch LCD television. The kitchen features a four-door refrigerator, a full-size microwave and plenty of countertop space. The bedroom of the test unit was dominated by the available king-size bed.





Pechanga RV Resort offers 113 back-in and 25 pull-through sites on well-manicured grounds. It's just a short walk from the resort to the casino.

Working your way up to the bedroom and bath area, you'll find that Jayco did things differently from the typical fifth-wheel and was successful for the most part. The bathroom has a residential-size shower that should feel very familiar if you have a tub/shower arrangement at your home. It's rectangular, offers a molded seat at one end and has a sliding glass door. The lavatory and mirrored medicine cabinet are roomy enough, and there are two linen

closets, although one is located behind the toilet and can't be accessed with the lid or seat up. It's also quite shallow, so you'll need to fold your towels into thirds.

The bedroom is about what you would expect to find in a fifth-wheel of this size, with a standard queen-size bed, a chest of drawers and a forward closet. The test unit, however, was outfitted with the optional king bed (\$71), which we wouldn't recommend unless

you really need the space. It essentially eliminates nightstands on either side of the mattress, leaving spaces so narrow they can barely accommodate a small glass of water. There is, however, adequate walk-around room, and the mattress was firm but comfortable.

The forward closet is not cedar-lined (another cost-saving measure), but it has enough room for all the clothes you're likely to take along.

To the right of the closet is a large, deep cabinet that either contains shelves or is washer/dryer prepped. The test unit was equipped with the former, yet still had overlapping doors for a washer/dryer setup, which meant shutting the doors one at a time in the correct order every time we opened the cabinet. The chest of drawers at the foot of the bed was a good place to put items like socks and underwear, but not much else, as the drawers were only 9 inches deep. Ditto the linen closet to the left of the bedroom door. Overall, however, the space works well enough once you get used to it, and the 32-inch LCD flatscreen is placed at a perfect viewing angle for watching TV in bed.



Outside, access to storage and utilities is excellent. The front pass-through storage is roomy, well lit and nicely finished, and features TV/cable prep for an outdoor entertainment system, if desired. The compartment can also be heated via a vent in the bedroom duct that passes over the area, which is a nice touch. Jayco created a second compartment accessed from the front of the rig that is perfect for storing items like tools, chemicals and other small cargo. The doors also work on gas struts, which is something we'd like to see more of in the RV industry.

On the street side of the compartment are the optional four-point-leveling-system controls and Jayco's well-conceived Uni-Dock utility center. This area contains the winterizing valves, city-water hookup, exterior shower and dump valves, and also thoughtful features like a light, soap dispenser and a paper towel holder to make dumping the tanks a more sanitary process. There are other less noticeable exterior features as well, such as dual propane cylinders on a pull-out tray, a dual battery compartment with disconnect, a heated and enclosed underbelly, and enclosed slideout mechanisms.

Another common stereotype is that fifth-wheels are heavy and expensive. The Jayco Eagle Premier is neither. Weighing in at less than 13,000 pounds ready to tow, it's amazingly light for a 40-footer, and with a base MSRP of less than \$60,000, it is a great value. 🚐



The bath features a roomy residential-style shower with a glass door, double medicine cabinets and adequate cabinet space.

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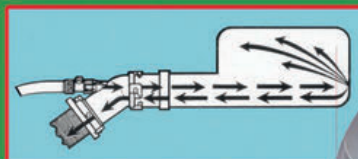


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WALK-THROUGH: FOREST RIVER WINDJAMMER 3008W

V is for Vacation!

Forest River utilizes a familiar aerodynamic shape for the Rockwood Windjammer 3008W, resulting in increased living area and improved towing performance

Ever watch a motorized boat speed across a lake? The seemingly commonplace action can be quite graceful, with the elegant front V-shape effortlessly slicing through its aquatic environs, defying wind and friction while gliding hither and yon. Okay, that imagery may be a bit much for what's essentially a large chunk of floating fiberglass and metal, but the engineers at Forest River's Rockwood division must have had a somewhat similar shore-bound epiphany while the aptly named Windjammer was in its planning stages. Namely, "If the standard marine-based V-shape works with boats on the water, why not with travel trailers on land?" It's not a new concept, but it is one that does garner some consideration. Plus, the simple act of jutting out the front of the trailer can lead to a couple more feet of usable floor space inside.

Various Windjammer floorplans utilize that extra square footage for a variety of amenities including a sofa

bed, shelf units and even some bunks. One of the things that drew us to the 3008W featured here is the decision to transform that front area into a galley, a choice that seems to be one of the more innovative uses of space in these floorplans.

But perhaps we're getting ahead of ourselves. The Windjammer is, after all, much more than a V-nose box on wheels. It's a pretty fun — and functional — family trailer as well.

The 3008W is a dual-entry trailer that can sleep four rather comfortably, and a few more with the right options in place or some space concessions made. The first sleeping area can be accessed via the rear entry, which opens directly into the master bedroom. The suitelike retreat features a mirrored wardrobe above a bank of drawers, plus a handy end table at the rear, while a streetside slide opens up the bed area and allows for the all-too-rare walk-around bed. The comfortable residential Serta mattress

upgrade is part of Convenience Package D (\$2,685), which also includes upgrades to the oven, microwave, water heater and air conditioner.

There are tiny nightstands on each side of the bed, and although they are small, they are much appreciated by bespectacled RVers such as myself. A TV is also available.

Heading toward the front of the trailer, next up is the bathroom. The area takes up the entire width of the trailer, so space isn't really an issue ... except in the garden shower. The stall is surprisingly cramped, given the workable space available, though the rounded shape does offer some needed breathing room. The lavatory, sink, medicine cabinet and linen "closet" are all on the opposite wall and feel more like they belong in the space than the shower.

Opening a solid door leads to the large living area. The entertainment center, immediately on the left street-side, comprises the wall between the room and the lavatory, and the 32-inch TV is easily viewed from the 67-inch sofa bed and freestanding table and chair upgrade (\$365) located in the streetside slide. I should point out that opting for the freestanding table will cost a couple of sleeping positions, so if you're traveling with more than four (as we do), you should plan accordingly. Otherwise, bring sleeping bags.

The curbside recliners can be



The Windjammer's marine-type V-nose shape reduces drag and wind resistance, but perhaps the most realized benefit is the extra square footage.

upgraded to Ultraleather (\$1,175), a pricey option that could be skipped to save a few bucks, especially with little ones that are hard on nice furniture. They did, however, offer a great place to relax and read, but viewing the TV, especially from the left seat, required a moderate amount of stretching and repositioning.

The second door is likely where the majority of traffic will enter. The door opens to the cool sushi-bar-type countertop off the galley, which the kids always find interesting but adults may want to avoid while visitors pop in and out of the door.

As stated before, the draw for us is the use of the V-nose area as the galley. The fully appointed area is indeed a nice feature, though we found it difficult to inhabit the area with more than one cook at a time, which was a hassle until we got the hang of things. We're more of a grilling-entrée group anyhow, so the optional exterior grill (\$145) would be a no-brainer to avoid congested meal-prep time.

The galley layout doesn't feature a pantry, but that deficiency was more than made up for by the extensive number of cabinets. The dual-basin sink is situated so as to offer a great view out the front window while still retaining conve-

(Above right) Floor space for relaxing or entertaining truly benefits from the location of the galley in the V-nose; opting for the freestanding table adds to the floorplan's versatility. (Right) The master bedroom offers a large mirrored wardrobe, a comfortable upgraded mattress and small nightstands sized just right for eyeglasses or the TV remote.



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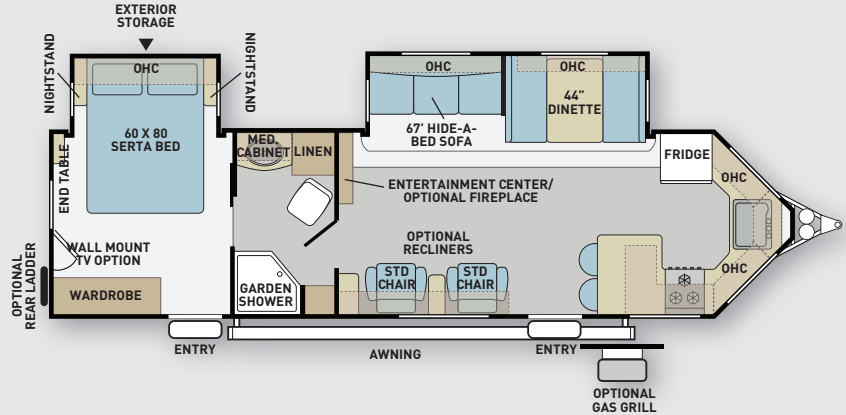
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nient access to the refrigerator and storage shelf above.

And it's out that front window — and the side windows and rear windows — that you're likely to encounter inquisitive campers who'd like to know more about the unique looking trailer. The fiberglass exterior with the high-gloss finish only adds to the overall look, as do the aluminum wheels, windows with tinted safety glass and power awning with rain dump — all part of the above-mentioned Convenience Package D. The Windjammer was also outfitted with a power A-frame jack (\$140), four power stabilizer jacks (\$510) and a rear ladder (\$80), all add-ons worth the extra cash.

Whether you realize any savings in fuel costs when towing the Windjammer becomes almost irrelevant after spending time in camp with the trailer. The layout is fun, the use of space innovative and the living is high-class. Plus, you're sure to make some new friends in camp, as the 3008W definitely causes second looks from your neighbors. 🚐



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LITTLE GYPSY TRAILER

A father-and-son team built this home away from home as a reminder of family, dedication and service to their country

As full-time RVers, my wife, Cheryl, and I enjoy meeting interesting people and seeing unique rigs as we travel around the country in our classic 1983 Apollo Sceptre motorhome. Because I am a retired Marine, we have access to military bases, which we frequent to make use of their campgrounds. We stayed at the Charleston Naval Weapons Station so we could tour the fascinating sites of this historic area. As we pulled into our campsite, we saw the most unique travel trailer that we had ever seen.

Within a few hours, the proud owner returned home from a long day of military training, still dressed in his naval uniform. When we approached him about his unusual RV, he was more than happy to show us around and

reveal the story behind his handmade Little Gypsy Trailer. This custom RV was designed and crafted by a father and his son in preparation of the son's reporting for active duty in the U.S. Navy.

There is no greater gift than that of parents giving their sons or daughters to their nation to serve in the armed forces. That is what Paul and Paula Graham did on December 9, 2010, when their son, Rob, was sworn into a Naval Officer Commissioning program. Rob would be following in the footsteps of his grandfather and namesake, World War II veteran Lieutenant Robert H. Varland, USNR.

Paul wanted to send his son off to the Navy in style and even made sure that he always had a little piece of home with him. Paul is a contractor who spe-

U.S. Navy Lieutenant Junior Grade Rob Graham with his handmade trailer and fellow RVers and retired Navy men Max McDuffie (left) and Charles "Doc" L. Corrigan (right).

cializes in everything from remodeling room additions to transforming an old barn into a bed-and-breakfast. When he learned that his son's journey to become a nuclear submarine officer would require Rob to be transferred from base to base for several years of extensive training and that he'd be living in various barracks and other temporary quarters, he decided to build him a house on wheels to provide stability and accommodate his housing needs.

Rob, now 25 years old, is a Lieutenant Junior Grade in the Navy. He grew up on a farm in Glen Mills, Pennsylvania, where he honed many of the skills and personal traits he would need to succeed. By designing and constructing Rob's new home, the father-and-son team spent quality time together before their lives were forever changed. They used an old family farm trailer for the



Construction:

Rob, his father, Paul, and his brother, Timothy, pose amid the Little Gypsy Trailer's exposed framework, subfloor and basement. (Far right) Paul hard at work applying the metal roof.





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[†]Requires two parallel Honda EU2000i generators. *Warranty applies to all Honda GX Series Engines and GX Series-powered Honda Power Equipment, 100cc or larger, purchased or put into rental service since January 1, 2009. Exceptions apply. See full warranty details at honda.com. Does not apply to EU1000 models. Please read the owner's manual before operating your Honda Power Equipment and never use in a closed or partly enclosed area where you could be exposed to poisonous carbon monoxide. Connection of a generator to house power requires a transfer device to avoid possible injury to power company personnel. Consult a qualified electrician. ©2014 American Honda Motor Co., Inc.

Honda Generators, Circle 123 on Reader Service Card



LITTLE GYPSY TRAILER



(Left to right) The Little Gypsy Trailer's galley features a refrigerator, a modern stove and a microwave/convection oven. Looking through this unique RV, you can see the personalized details in the woodwork, sleeping loft and open shower. The all-important Command Center study area is complete with dual flatscreens — one is a computer monitor and the other is a TV.

project's foundation. The dual-axle, 16-foot flat-bed utility trailer was the perfect platform and also has countless fond memories, many of which included hard work and long hours.

Their one-of-a-kind trailer would have to be fully self-contained and able to function like any professionally manufactured RV in a traditional campground setting. It would need a suitable study area to accommodate the hours of homework and study required of a Navy officer in training, a comfortable bed for a good night's sleep, an adequate kitchen for hearty meals and a full bath. Since Paul's skills come from the housing industry versus the RV world, their Little Gypsy wagon would ultimately resemble a cabin more than a trailer.

They started out by servicing, prepping and painting the old farm trailer and then constructed the little home's foundation, which would also serve as a storage area and house the various holding tanks, plumbing and wiring. They framed the walls and constructed the curved metal roof. With six months into this project, the once-utility trailer was taking shape as a future home.

The real work occurred on the inside, which is full of fine details. As impressive as the exterior was to us, it is the attention to detail and their choice to incorporate as many personal features and touches as possible inside that sets this trailer apart from manufactured RVs. As Rob proudly points out

during the many tours he gives to eager visitors, much of the wood used on the walls, cabinets, trim and exposed support beams was accumulated materials from his father's past projects and construction jobs. The rock maple, for instance, came from old-growth lumber they had personally cut and milled from a former client's land.

The interior design took into account that they were dealing with a confined space, so every effort was made to create openness when building walls for the bathroom and closets. To increase the living areas, the bed was placed in an amidships loft area created by the two-tiered roofline. The focal point of the interior is the large curved bay window in the kitchen, which grabs your attention the moment you step inside. The trailer is open and airy and has the feel of a warm, elegant cabin with all of the comfort features of a traditional home. Quality and attention to detail are found throughout. The various woods — walnut, cedar, rock maple, lauan and birch — were all coordinated to accentuate every precious foot of the interior and elegantly reflect the lighting.

The kitchen has a four-burner gas stove with an ultramodern hood, a microwave/convection oven, a stainless-steel refrigerator and galley sink,

copper-and-tile backsplash and trim, wood countertops, and handmade cabinet doors and drawers. The bathroom houses a full-size shower, a porcelain sink and toilet, and rich wood trim. To increase the feeling of openness, Rob opted not to put doors on the bathroom or shower.

Rob estimates that his personal officer quarters on wheels weighs about 5,500 pounds and cost \$8,000 in additional materials. Taking advantage of Home Depot's and Lowe's 10 percent military discounts helped to reduce the costs. However, Rob said that it was the adventure of building a dream alongside his father that was priceless. All Rob has to do is step inside, and he is surrounded by reminders of home and fond memories of the trailer's construction.

Cheryl and I had the opportunity to cook dinner for Rob and get to know him personally. He told us of the many military veterans who have helped and supported him on his journey to command his own nuclear submarine someday and how grateful he is to have this opportunity that his Little Gypsy Trailer created. We hope this story of family and service to our country inspires you to take the time to get to know your many wonderful temporary neighbors as you travel about our great nation. 🚐

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SIMPLY EXHAUSTING



Replacing a Ram Cummins exhaust manifold to repair eroded freeze plugs can lead to other problems; BD Diesel Performance has a solution

Most of the trucks commonly used for towing fifth-wheels and travel trailers come from Chrysler, GM and Ford, and one of the most sought-after platforms is still the 2003 to 2007 5.9-liter Cummins common rail fuel-injected turbo diesel-equipped Ram. Of course, like all trucks used for towing applications, there are some inherent problems that pop up over time, leaving potential weak spots calling for future repairs.

One particular weak area for the 2005 Ram 2500 is the erosion of cylinder head freeze plugs, most likely due to deposits left

behind from water containing high levels of minerals. To easily access all of the freeze plugs, the exhaust manifold must be removed. Doing this on a 5.9-liter Cummins typically results in the factory exhaust manifold springing and cracking, a consequence of numerous heat cycles leading to severe warping. Luckily for owners of this series of Ram trucks — as well as all popular diesels — aftermarket supplier BD Diesel Performance has a selection of upgrade parts ranging from engine supplements for towing to full-blown race applications.

BD exhaust manifolds (bottom image) are made of high-grade metal and utilize expansion joints and heavy webbing to prevent the cracking that's prevalent with stock manifolds (top image).



For this project, BD's replacement exhaust manifold is just what the mechanic ordered.

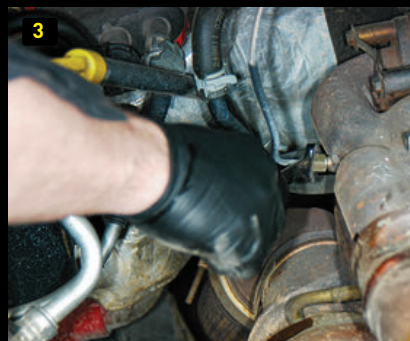
To fix the above-mentioned truck, BD's ductile cast-iron stock-replacement exhaust manifold was installed in place of the original part. Aside from using high-grade metal, BD's manifolds incorporate expansion joints and heavy webbing to prevent the cracking typically associated with the factory counterpart. The exhaust runners are designed to maintain velocity to drive the turbine wheel. There are also small performance gains to be realized by matching the runner size to the exhaust ports on the head. This is important because if runner size exceeds the size of the exhaust ports on the head, velocity to drive the turbo is lost. According to BD, if velocity is lost due to the expansion and temperature changes in the exhaust manifold, turbocharger response is affected. BD's manifolds also come prepped with two 1/8-inch

(1) Over time, cylinder head freeze plugs erode because of deposits from minerals in the water and antifreeze mix. Replacing them requires removal of the exhaust manifold. **(2)** The air box is removed to gain access to the exhaust manifold. From this point, the manifold bolts are fairly easy to reach.

NPT ports and plugs, ready to accept all major exhaust gas temperature (EGT) probes. A stainless-steel exhaust manifold is also available from BD, and it's made to maintain even higher velocity and temperature.

Before deciding to tackle the installation of a new exhaust manifold, there

are a few things to consider. The shop or driveway space, associated tools and whether or not a lift is available all make a big difference in how to approach the removal and installation. We had access to a lift, so there were a few steps in the instructions that were skipped or done a little differently, such



(3) The sensor is removed from the exhaust manifold before starting the process. **(4)** The coolant support bracket is measured 1 1/2 inches from the manifold and marked. **(5)** The bracket is cut at this point; this will carve an hour off the installation time. **(6)** The bolts and spacers from the manifold are removed and saved for later use.



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Simply Exhausting



(7) The turbo is disconnected from the exhaust manifold; access to the other side of the flange was from underneath the vehicle, which saved time. (8) The exhaust manifold is cleared from the cylinder head so the freeze plugs (9) can be serviced.

as not needing to remove the turbo or the attached oil lines. If you don't have the option of using a lift, it's no big deal, but you'll need to follow BD's instructions closely; they're quite good.

The first step is to remove the air box to gain access to other engine parts; it's just easier that way. The directions call for disconnecting the compressor outlet boot and the V-band clamp that connects the turbo elbow casting to the exhaust downpipe. If it's easy to reach the turbo flange bolts from the bottom of the truck, then removing the V-band clamp, turbo oil

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10



(10) Sealant is spread on the new freeze plug before installing in the cylinder head.

lines, compressor boot or the turbo isn't necessary; otherwise the manifold and turbo will have to be taken out as an assembly. At this point we were able to leave the aforementioned turbo fully connected to all piping and oil lines.

From here, begin measuring about 1½ inches toward the manifold from

the coolant tube and mark a line on its support bracket. Later in the install, the bracket will be cut at that point, utilizing a cutoff wheel. Doing this will save about an hour's worth of installation time and eliminate the need to drain the coolant. Next, the OEM heat shield, bolts and spacers can be taken

(11) An old ratchet socket is used to pound the new freeze plug into position, creating a pressed fit.

11



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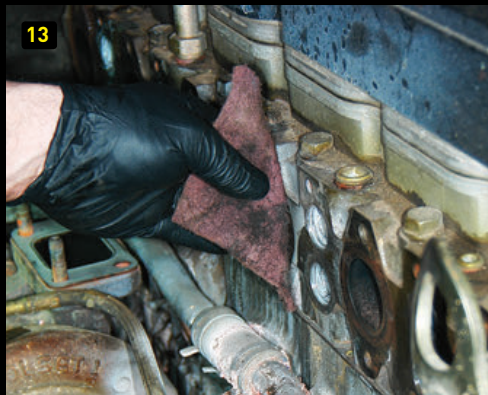
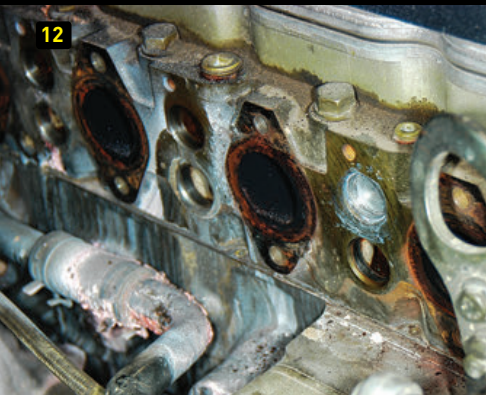
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(12) New freeze plugs are in the cylinder head, which is ready for cleanup. (13) Scotch-Brite pads are used to remove all the soot and carbon buildup on the head gasket surfaces. (14) The new turbo gasket is placed on the flange; replacement studs (part of the kit) are inserted in the turbo flange.

off. Make sure to keep the bolts and spacers close by since they'll be needed for the new manifold. At this point take the time to clean all soot and carbon buildup on the gasket surfaces; Scotch-Brite pads work best.

The next step — working in the truck or on the bench — involves the removal and discarding of the factory studs from the OEM manifold, which will be replaced with the

supplied studs (different length). Now is also the time to place a new turbo gasket in between the two flanges.

Reassembly basically just reverses the removal procedure. After getting the new BD manifold in place using a few of the original bolts and spacers to hold it in position, a new gasket (included with the kit) is placed between the cylinder head and manifold at each port. When it's time to

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(15) A few original bolts and spacers are used to hold the new exhaust manifold in place for bolting to the cylinder head. The manifold bolts must be torqued to 35 ft-lbs, and the V-band clamp, oil lines and turbo piping reinstalled if they were removed for the installation. (16) A new gasket is placed between the cylinder head and exhaust manifold at each port. (17) A hole is drilled through the OEM coolant pipe tab so the brackets can be secured.

start the bolts for cylinder No. 5, it's important to switch out the lower bolt with the supplied stainless-steel counterpart. This is necessary to reattach the coolant tube using the new bolt-on-style bracket. Once all the remaining manifold bolts have been properly torqued (35 ft-lbs), the V-band clamp, oil lines and turbo piping can be put back to their original

position with the OEM hardware, if removed. All that's really left at this point is air-box reassembly, if it was removed, and to reinstall any EGT sensors and plugs.

There's a big difference between the stock exhaust manifold and the BD version, including the comfort of knowing that future teardowns won't render a critical



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(18) The coolant tube is reattached using the new bolt-on-style bracket. (19) Before reinstalling the air-box assembly, any EGT sensors and plugs that were removed are put back in place.

component useless. The U.S. price (BD is a Canadian company) for the iron exhaust manifold is \$522.50. Figure on about four hours to complete the installation.

If for any reason it's deemed necessary to remove and replace your diesel engine's exhaust manifold, it makes no sense to replace the part with what BD claims is an inferior component from the factory. A one-stop shop for all that is diesel, BD offers a comprehensive inventory of popular tow vehicle parts for Ram, Ford and GM trucks, many providing performance gains. It even offers steering and suspension products. BD also has extensive knowledge and backs up its products with top-notch technical assistance. 🚚

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Keep It Clean

Sanitation system maintenance and etiquette take the frustration out of this necessary evil

One evening when we were huddled around a campfire with a group of seasoned RVers, we laughed in surprise when they joked that you aren't really a true RVer until you have a black-tank story to tell. Although we do have ours (I won't tell it here!), I think that anyone who hands over hard-earned cash to buy even the smallest trailer has happily joined the ranks of "real" RVers and will enjoy all the thrills that RVing offers. However, as soon as you own a unit with a sink, you do have to be concerned about holding tanks.

Waste-Water Tanks

The black and gray holding tanks need a little TLC. For starters, these tanks are emptied differently depending on whether you are at an RV park or a designated RV dump station. If you are using sewer hookups for your RV while camping, keep the gray-tank valve open all the time so it can drain as needed, but keep the black-tank valve closed. While most people do it this way, some will argue that keeping the gray valve closed until the tank is almost full allows for better evacuation. This debate will probably go on forever.

When the black tank is full, open the valve to empty the tank, and then close it again. This technique ensures

that there is always plenty of liquid in the black tank so the solids don't build up and aggravate the risk of clogging. Never leave the black-tank valve open while hooked up.

If you're dry camping and don't have sewer hookups, you will need to dump the tanks at an RV dump station after you leave. RV dumps can be found at National Forest campgrounds, state and regional campgrounds, National Park campgrounds, rest areas on the interstates and at many truck stops and gas stations. You can check out site locations at www.sanidumps.com.

The words "holding tank" make it sound like these tanks are big cube-shaped boxes. However, many are wide,



Sewer hose is attached to the trailer at an RV dump station in preparation for emptying the tanks.



(Above from left) Typical installation of holding tanks in the chassis of a fifth-wheel trailer. How's this for a scenic dump station? This one at Deer Creek State Park in Utah has the prettiest view we've seen!

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Keep It Clean

flat and not very tall. Each tank may span the width of the trailer and sit between two joists under the flooring. This shape has several implications. If the trailer is off level away from the RV dump station, as is often the case, it will be difficult for the tank to drain. Putting a few leveling boards under the trailer tires on the passenger side to tip the trailer toward the RV dump station helps a lot.

Also, most trailer toilets are gravity driven, meaning that the solids drop straight down to the bottom of the tank under the toilet. It doesn't take long for these solids to build up in a pyramid under the toilet, a problem that manifests itself when using too little water during flushing. The potential blockage can be sticky and difficult to dislodge, leading to problems when flushing the toilet and dumping the tank. Always use a good holding tank treatment, which will break down solid material and toilet tissue, facilitating the dumping process.



(Above from left) Always wear rubber gloves when handling dump hoses and emptying holding tanks. Periodically clean and lubricate the holding-tank valve handles and cables to keep them operating smoothly.

What Can Go into a Wastewater Tank?

What comes out of the waste tanks depends entirely on what goes into them, and this applies to more than just the holding-tank chemicals. The gray tank is largely just soapy water from the shower, bathroom and kitchen sinks, but it is easy to forget that the

kitchen sink can also be the source of a lot of other gooey food-service related stuff. At home, it's easy to run the water a little longer and scrape old food remnants into the disposal or down the drain. In an RV, it's best to wipe the dishes and pots and pans before washing in the sink. I know this means using paper towels or a used dinner

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(Above) A clear plastic elbow is attached to the pipe on the trailer to which a sewer hose can be connected so the user can see what is being flushed. **(Right)** The sewer hose runs from the RV to the dump-station.

napkin, which is not so green, but those little broccoli bits soon become a smelly sludge in the gray tank. Also, refrain from pouring oil from foods down the drain. We put an RV specific cleaner/conditioner in our RV's gray tank every other time we dump and have never had an odor problem.

Obviously, feminine products can't go into an RV black tank, but toilet paper is another consideration. It's best to use single-ply paper for easy breakdown in an RV holding tank, and specialty toilet paper sold in RV supply stores is designed

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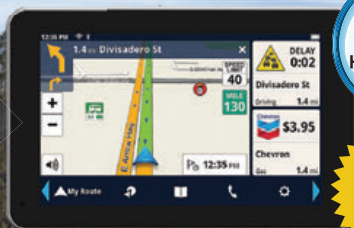
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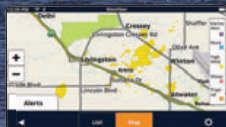


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Keep It Clean

to break down easily. If the tank does get a clog, the age-old remedy is to put a bag of ice cubes down the toilet and drive around to jiggle the clog loose. An easier alternative is to fill the tank with water, add a quart of an enzyme/bacteria-based holding tank product and let it stand for 24 hours before dumping.

RV Dump Station Procedures

Dumping the holding tanks is not a difficult procedure, but it is worthwhile to follow a few simple guidelines. First, wear rubber gloves whenever handling sewer hoses and dumping holding tanks. We keep a large box of disposable rubber gloves on hand for this purpose.

We attach a clear plastic elbow to the sewer hose so we can observe the contents being flushed. If you have a black-tank freshwater flush system, keep it running the whole time it's being emptied to flush the sides and floor of the tank as much as possible.



(Above left and right) To ensure that all solids directly below the toilet are dislodged, pour some fast-running water directly into the black tank via the toilet. Run a hose through a nearby window or pour two buckets of water down the toilet, holding the flush valve open as you pour.

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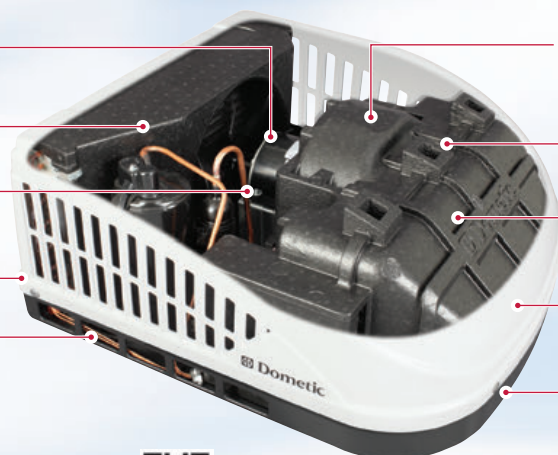
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Flush systems aren't perfect, however, and after draining the black tank, there may still be solids stuck to the bottom of the tank, especially below the toilet. Nevertheless, consider installing a black-tank flush system if your rig doesn't have one of these devices.

There are two methods to dislodge these solids, if the flush system fails to completely evacuate the contents in the tank. One is to bring a water hose through the bathroom window and run water down the toilet (holding the valve open) directly into the black tank. The other is to dump a bucket of water down the toilet. We find it takes two 4-gallon buckets of water before we no longer see any black-tank remnants draining out of the tank. Once the black tank is empty, close the valve and pour holding tank chemical into the toilet along with a gallon or two of water.

Open the gray-tank valve next (make sure the black valve is closed). The soapy water from the gray tank washes out the inside of the sewer hose. Once the gray tank is empty, rinse the sewer hose and fittings with freshwater before putting it away. If you're doing this at a campsite, spray the freshwater spigot with a mixture of bleach and water after you're done to kill any potential germs left by the dumping process. Just in case the RVer before you didn't extend the same courtesy, make it a habit to spray the faucet before hooking up a freshwater hose to connect to the RV. And always clean up any spills, in a campsite or at the dump station.



As a courtesy to the next person, hose down the RV dump station area when you are finished.

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Keep It Clean



(Above) Use a coat hanger or other thin metal object to clean the inside groove of the toilet valve seal.

Other Maintenance Procedures

Every few months, exercise the dump valves to keep them working smoothly. For the black-tank valve, pour conditioner (available at RV supply stores) down the toilet. As this water drains out, open and close the tank valve a few times to clean it. The proper chemicals have a valve- and seal-lubricating component, which ensures greater longevity. The same can be done on the gray-tank valve using the soapy water that is being drained when emptying the gray tank. After the tanks are empty, pull one handle at a time and lubricate the rod in the valve body with a pure silicone spray product. If the dump-tank handles are attached to cables, periodically lubricate the cables with silicone spray to keep the cables sliding smoothly inside the housing.

If a dump valve needs to be replaced (they can develop cracks if they become sticky and have to be forced open and closed), drain and flush the tank well and remove the faulty valve by unscrewing the bolts that hold it in place. Purchase a new valve at an RV supply store, lubricate it well with a plumbing silicone grease and bolt it back in place. This is one of those projects that sounds easy but can become challenging if the trailer design doesn't allow easy access to the valve.

Up on the roof, check the plumbing vents every few months. These usually have a mushroom-style cover. Just make sure they are clear of debris and

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(Above from left) An old toothbrush is a great tool for scrubbing the vanity sink stopper. Tape an old toothbrush to a long stick (we use a tent stake) to scrub deep down inside the vanity sink drain.

that no birds or bugs have set up house-keeping inside.

Periodically check the fittings in the sewer pipes below the sink and shower drains. These can wiggle loose while underway, so make sure they are tight. If any plumbing pipes develop a crack and begin to leak, JB Weld is a great two-part mix product (similar to a two-part epoxy but with a seal filler and a hardener) to fix the crack. We repaired a leaky weld on a hot-water tank with JB Weld and the repair has worked flawlessly for years.

If the crack is so big that is not repairable, you can cut the bad section out of the pipe and replace it with a rubber boot, available at home-supply stores. Use a hose clamp to secure the rubber boot to the pipe.

In the bathroom, lube the toilet-flush valve by turning off the water pump (or closing the city water faucet) and spraying the dome in the bottom of the toilet with pure silicone spray. With the toilet-flush lever depressed (to hold the flush valve open), spray the lubricant on the sides of the valve and in the groove where the valve seals to the toilet bowl. Then open and close the valve a few times to ensure the silicone reaches all the nooks and crannies.

Sometimes the groove that the toilet seal fits into develops a buildup of mineral deposits (in areas where there is hard water) or becomes clogged with paper and other solids that get lodged inside. Use a coat hanger or other thin metal object (file off any rough edges) to clean out the groove and then lubricate

it with plumber's silicone grease. If the toilet is not holding water after flushing, the seal will likely need to be replaced, if cleaning doesn't fix the problem.

Tank monitors are notorious for being inaccurate. Older monitors have sensors installed inside the tank, and more accurate models have sensors attached to the outside of the tank. Typically the sensors in the tank fail when there is a buildup of deposits on the tank's inside; outside sensors may also be affected by any buildup, though it's not as common. The best prevention is to keep the walls of the tank clean by using an aforementioned freshwater flush system (on the black tank) and/or holding-tank cleaning product.

Lastly, if the kitchen or lavatory sink develops an unpleasant smell, the P-trap under the sink might be partially blocked or contaminated with black slimy gunk. These plumbing components can be unscrewed, inspected and cleaned using an old toothbrush (tape it to something to make it longer) and spray disinfectant. The shower drain might be more difficult to access — try using a Zip-It drain-cleaning tool, available at most hardware stores. This handy tool can also be used to clean sink drains.

Hopefully, by following these tips and having consideration for your neighbor (for example, refrain from dumping while the people next door are enjoying an outside dinner), the experience of dealing with sanitation systems will keep the holding tank stories at bay. 🐾

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Cool Places

Whether you take the party inside or out, here are a few tips and products designed to keep you cooler when the summer sun is at its hottest

Given the two-fisted cruelty of this past winter in many parts of North America, it's hard to imagine we might ever need to struggle with "staying cool" again. But summer — especially summer spent in an RV — can quickly remind us that cold air may not be such a bad thing after all.

Fortunately, there are a number of strategies and products you can employ to keep the sun at bay. For organizational purposes, we'll divide these into two major categories: passive methods, which largely include products that deflect heat without imposing an energy burden (think window shades and tints) and active methods, like fans and air-conditioning units. Find the right balance between the two, and it will be possible to reach, at the very least, a truce with even the hottest summer days.

Shady Dealings

At the most basic level, some of the most effective tactics you can employ for staying cool require no hardware or cash expenditures. For example, when planning an RV trip and contacting RV parks and campsites along your route, ask if a shaded or partially shaded spot is available and try to keep the refrigerator side of your rig out of the sun if possible. Waterfront spots, either along a river, lake or the ocean, also provide their own natural cooling benefits.

When the sun is beating down on your rig, you may need to sacrifice your view of the outside world in order to enjoy cooler comforts, particularly if your RV's air-conditioning system is underpowered for the size of your trailer. If your trailer doesn't already have blackout shades, companies like MCD offer them in a variety of sizes to fit virtually any RV window. They are pretty effective at keeping out light and heat, plus the darkness they provide will help you sleep better at night.

Every RV has roof vents — and when it's warm outside, most of us like to keep them open. But when it's really hot, these vents create a point of entry for the sun's rays — so covering them with vent cushions, or even Styrofoam or folded towels, can help the air-conditioning system work more effectively. Small and inexpensive solar vent covers can also be installed to deflect heat.

It's not hard to find businesses that will install permanent window tints,



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Cool Places

and these will go a long way toward cutting interior temps. But there are times you may prefer a clearer view or even want that extra warmth through the glass. To have it both ways, you can install portable tints that can be quickly cut to fit. KwikShade makes just such a portable tint that is sold in bulk rolls or by the yard. It adheres to the glass by static electricity and can be put on, taken down, reused or even washed.

Once you've sunproofed the interior, you'll want to extend the shade to the outside of the RV. Most

Solar Vent Cover

Sometimes even simple solutions like this 16-by-16-inch Solar Vent Cover from Camping World can make a difference in deflecting the sun's rays.

MSRP \$8.99

RVs already have patio awnings, but these can be enhanced with side-screens that encase the patio area in shade. Carefree of Colorado and Dometic make screens that can be used on the front or sides of an awning, allowing cross breezes through while blocking the sun's rays.



Mister for Awning

The MistyMate Cool Camper 6 portable misting system comes with 10 feet of lead line and 6 feet of mist line, and is easy to attach to popular awnings.

MSRP \$69.99

Play Misty for Me

Blocking sunlight is the first step, but sometimes you need to be more proactive if you want to stay cool on sultry days. Misters, once an exotic luxury, are now available in a variety of portable and affordable configurations. Soleus Air's HumidiBreeze misting fan is a portable mister that can be placed anywhere you have access to a 120-volt AC outlet. This compact mister holds a gallon of water, and the company says it can lower temperatures up to 20 degrees Fahrenheit.

Extend the mist over larger outdoor areas with a misting system designed for use with awnings and canopies. MistyMate's Cool Camper 6 mister includes a portable two-gallon tank plus 10 feet of lead line and 6 feet of

mist line. It uses clip-on attachments to secure the line to the awning. The system requires no electrical power; it's pressurized using a pump handle on the tank.

You can also find misting systems that are designed for a more permanent installation. The Mist-er-Comfort RV misting system works using a city water hookup or by tapping into an RV's water-filtration system, exterior shower or washer/dryer water supply. The company's kit comes with three misting heads, but more can be ordered individually for larger applications. Use filtered or soft water only.



Portable Mister

The Soleus Air HumidiBreeze portable misting system can be placed anywhere you need it for cool comfort.

MSRP \$254.99



Under-Cabinet Fan

The Vornado Under Cabinet Circulator fan is a compact solution to circulating air in an RV. It swivels 360 degrees and folds up out of the way when not in use.

MSRP \$49.99

Air Time

Perhaps the most time-honored method of keeping cool is to circulate the air around you. There are easy and inexpensive methods for doing this, starting with rounding up the old box fans cluttering your garage and strategically placing them around the RV.

But the motorhome and trailer markets are served by a variety of manufacturers that offer specialized fans designed to work specifically within the tight confines of a recreational vehicle.

One such product is the Vornado V103 Under Cabinet Circulator fan. This compact fan pivots 360 degrees and folds up out



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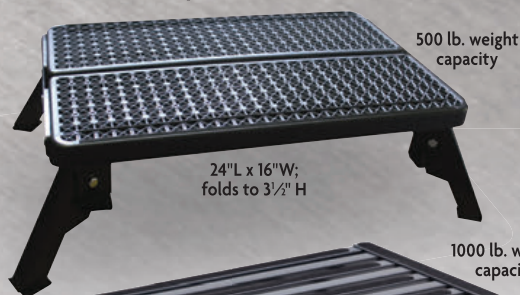


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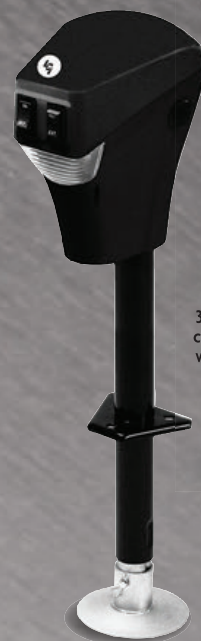
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folds to 3 1/2" H



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folds to 2 3/4" H

▲ Adjustable Leg Platform Step

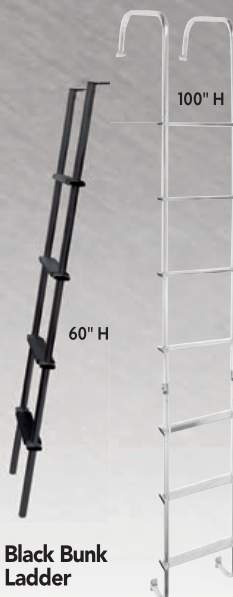
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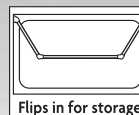
◀ 3500 lb. Electric
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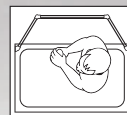


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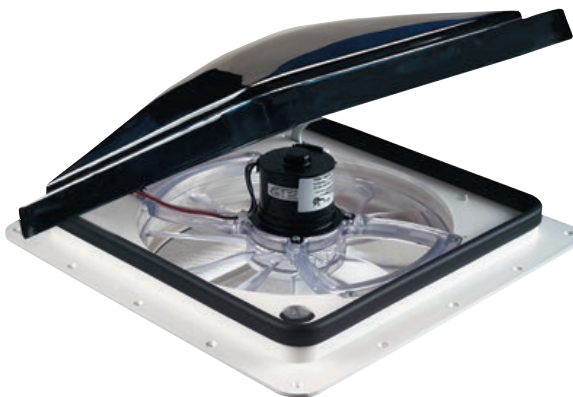
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Cool Places

of the way for storage. It comes with a two-speed control, and Vornado says the V103 fan will push air 25 feet.

Another solution is to install a fan in a ceiling vent. Fan-Tastic Vent makes ceiling vent fans with thermostat control, which will shut the fan off or turn it on once the specified temperature is reached. These three-speed, 12-volt DC fans fit standard 14-by-14-inch openings and have a reversible airflow switch. The top model even comes with a remote and offers 14 speeds.

It's also useful to focus on cooling specific areas of your RV. A common irritation in many RVs is the refrigerator that struggles to keep food and drink sufficiently cold. An evaporator fins fan mounted in the refrigerator is an inexpensive fix that will keep temperatures much colder and more evenly distributed. RV Cooling Unit Warehouse sells new and remanufactured cooling units for refrigerators and offers evaporator fans that can



Ceiling Fan

The Deluxe Fan-Tastic Vent ceiling vent fan with thermostat fits in standard 14-by-14-inch openings. Reversible operation allows drawing outside air in or pushing stale air out.

MSRP \$229.99

be easily installed to boost refrigerator performance. The evaporator fans improve cooling to the point that the refrigerator's thermostat does not have to be set to the coldest settings.

Then, of course, there's the big gun when it comes to cooling — air conditioning. Most modern RVs are fitted with a roof air conditioner from the factory. People don't usually go to the trouble of piloting an RV around the great outdoors just to sit around in air conditioning all day, but there are times when nothing else will do.

If you already have an RV with air conditioning, make sure that the filter stays clean, since this can affect the unit's performance. You may also want to examine some of the newer roof air-conditioner offerings, as many of them are more energy efficient and quieter than older models. If you're installing an air conditioner in an older trailer, there are several roof-mounted variations available from Coleman, Dometic, Gree and others. These generally run in the \$600 to \$800 range, although it's not hard to spend

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Cool Places



more, especially if you add a heat pump to the package. Installation is usually straightforward, as they are designed to fit in the openings of standard roof vents. You'll want to spend the time to plan out all the variables when it comes to adding air conditioning. Most roof-mounted air-conditioning units will add at least 90 to 100 pounds to your RV, and you'll have to consider power-generation capabilities. Taking along a new generator (or generators) to power the air conditioner will exact its own weight and space penalties. Still, for those

Air-Conditioning Unit

Modern low-profile air conditioners like the Penguin II High Capacity RV unit are a great retrofit for older RVs.

MSRP \$945.99

August days in a desert campsite, you probably won't be too stressed about the power requirements for that new air-conditioning system.

And, hey, if all of these don't get the job done, never underestimate the awesome cooling power of a kiddie pool you can splash around in. ☺

Sources

Camping World
888-857-6631
www.campingworld.com

Carefree
www.carefreeofcolorado.com

Coleman RV Air Conditioners
www.coleman-rv-air-conditioners.com

Fan-Tastic Vent
800-521-0298
www.fantasticvent.com

KwikShade
www.kwikshade.com

Mist-er-Comfort
888-647-8370
www.mist-er-comfort.com

MistyMate
www.mistymate.com

RV Cooling Unit Warehouse
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www.rvcoolingunit.com

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by Chris Hemer

PORTABLE POWER

Bringing a generator along extends energy options when hookups are not available

Part of the appeal of the RV lifestyle is having all the comforts of home wherever you go — and that includes electrical appliances such as a TV and stereo, air conditioning and other conveniences. When we visit RV parks and campgrounds, usually the electricity we need is supplied by 30- or 50-amp shorepower — but when dry camping, most of us turn to a portable

generator. When sized between 1,000 and 2,000 watts, they're small and light enough for most folks to handle on their own — and with "clean" inverter power, they can even run sensitive items like computers. For bigger power demands, 3,000-watt generators are still manageable, as most are equipped with two grab handles (so a friend can help lift) and wheels for easy transport.



PHOTO BY RICH COX



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Portable Power

Today's crop of portable generators is also very efficient and quiet — many can run for nine hours or more in an economy mode and have a sound rating of just 49 decibels (dB), which is even quieter than a human voice during normal conversation. When you consider that these generators can fit easily in most RV storage compartments and can even be taken with you in your tow vehicle for off-site power needs, a portable generator just makes good sense.

To help you find the right one, we've compiled this guide to some of the most popular portable inverter generators on the market, as well as a few new offerings. Power on!



BRIGGS AND STRATTON P2000 PowerSmart Series 2,000-Watt Inverter Generator

Dimensions	21"L x 14"W x 17"H
Weight	56 pounds

Fuel Capacity	1 gallon
Output	2,000 watts maximum, 1,600 watts rated
Run Time (claimed)	Up to 6.5 hours @ 25 percent load
Decibel Rating (claimed)	59.4 dB

Features The P2000 features a PowerSmart mode to reduce fuel consumption by generating only the power that's needed. The P2000 includes two 20-amp 120-volt AC outlets, a 12-volt DC outlet and a parallel connector port to connect two of these units for more power.

Warranty	Two-year limited
Emissions Compliance	49 state
MSRP	\$699



P3000 PowerSmart Series 3,000-Watt Inverter Generator

Dimensions	26"L x 14"W x 21"H
Weight	84 pounds
Fuel Capacity	1.5 gallons
Output	3,000 watts maximum, 2,600 watts rated
Run Time (claimed)	Up to 10 hours @ 25 percent load
Decibel Rating (claimed)	58 dBA

Features The P3000 features an integrated fuel gauge, plus an LCD screen called the "StatStation" that displays the amount of power being used, total unit hours, and a handy maintenance reminder window for oil, air filter and spark plug changes. The P3000 is equipped with four 20 amp 120-volt AC outlets, one 120-volt AC 30-amp locking outlet, a 12-volt DC, 5-amp outlet, parallel connector port and a USB port for charging portable electronics. This unit also features a two-person carry handle, rear wheels, and a telescoping, luggage-style handle for easy toting.

Warranty	Two-year limited
Emissions compliance	49 state
MSRP	\$1,299

Briggs and Stratton
800-444-7774
www.briggsandstratton.com



CHAMPION 73540i 2,000-Watt Inverter Generator with USB

Dimensions	19.3"L x 13.2"W x 16.3"H
Weight	55.1 pounds
Fuel Capacity	1 gallon
Output	2,000 watts maximum, 1,700 watts rated
Run Time (claimed)	Up to 9.5 hours @ 25 percent load
Decibel Rating (claimed)	53 dB

Features The 73540i 2,000-watt generator is equipped with a low-oil shutoff sensor and is designed for long life and easy maintenance. The unit has two 120-volt AC outlets, a 12-volt DC automotive-style outlet, a dual-port (2.1-amp/1-amp) USB adapter, a parallel connection port and a 12-volt DC battery-charging cable. An available kit (Part No. 73500i) allows two units to be connected in parallel (sold separately).

Warranty	Two-year limited
Emissions Compliance	50 state
MSRP	\$990



73536i 2,000-Watt Inverter Generator

Dimensions	19.3"L x 13.2"W x 16.3"H
Weight	57 pounds
Fuel Capacity	1 gallon

Output	2,000 watts maximum, 1,700 watts rated
Run Time (claimed)	Up to 9.5 hours @ 25 percent load

Decibel Rating (claimed)	53 dB
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Features The 73536i is similar to the 73540i but does not have a USB port. An available kit (Part No. 73500i) allows two units to be connected in parallel (sold separately).

Warranty	Two-year limited
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Emissions Compliance	50 state
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MSRP	\$990
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75531i 3,100-Watt Inverter Generator

Dimensions	24.4"L x 14.3"W x 18.3"H
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Weight	83.8 pounds
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Fuel Capacity	1.59 gallons
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Output	3,100 watts maximum, 2,800 watts rated
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Run Time (claimed)	Up to 8 hours @ 25 percent load
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Decibel Rating (claimed)	58 dBA
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Features The Champion 7531i 3,100-watt generator is equipped with a low oil shut-off sensor, as well as an economy mode to help save fuel. This model features two 120-volt AC outlets, a 30-amp outlet, a 12-volt DC outlet and a 12-volt DC charging cable, plus a built in handle and wheel kit.

Warranty	Two-year limited
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Emissions compliance	50 state
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MSRP	\$1,500
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Champion Power Equipment

877-338-0999

www.championpowerequipment.com



HONDA

EU1000iA2 1,000-Watt Inverter Generator

Dimensions	17.7"L x 9.4"W x 15"H
-------------------	-----------------------

Weight	29 pounds
---------------	-----------

Fuel Capacity	0.6 gallon
----------------------	------------

Output	1,000 watts maximum, 900 watts rated
---------------	---

Run Time (claimed)	8.3 hours @ 25 percent load
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Decibel Rating (claimed)	53 dB
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Features Honda's smallest inverter generator still has big features, such as low-oil alert, Eco-Throttle load-dependent operation, electronic ignition, simultaneous AC/DC use and parallel operation ports. This generator is equipped with two 15-amp, 120-volt AC outlets and a 12-volt DC outlet.

Warranty	Two years
-----------------	-----------

Emissions compliance	50 state
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MSRP	\$949.95
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EU2000i/EU2000i Companion 2,000-Watt Inverter Generators

Dimensions	20.1"L x 11.4"W x 16.7"H
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Weight	46.3 pounds
Fuel Capacity	1.1 gallons (.95 gallon for Companion model)
Output	2,000 watts maximum, 1,600 watts rated
Run Time (claimed)	9.6 hours @ 25 percent load
Decibel Rating (claimed)	53 dB

Features Easily the most popular portable generator among RVers, the EU2000i and EU2000i Companion offer the same features as the smaller EU1000iA, except that the EU2000i Companion features an RV-specific 30-amp, 120-volt AC locking plug (requires optional adapter) and a single 20-amp, 120-volt outlet.

Warranty	Three years
Emissions Compliance	50 state
MSRP	\$1,149.95 / \$1,279.95



EU3000iS 3,000-Watt Inverter Generator

Dimensions	25.8"L x 18.9"W x 22.4"H
Weight	134 pounds
Fuel Capacity	3.4 gallons
Output	3,000 watts maximum, 2,800 watts rated
Run Time (claimed)	20 hours @ 25 percent load
Decibel Rating (claimed)	49 dB

Features The EU3000iS has all the hallmark features of Honda inverter generators, including low oil alert, Eco-Throttle load dependent operation, electronic ignition, simultaneous AC/

DC use and parallel operation ports, but adds electronic starting. It is equipped with two 20-amp 120-volt AC outlets, one 30-amp 120-volt AC locking plug and one 12-volt DC outlet. A wheel kit is available for easier transport.

Warranty	Three years
Emissions compliance	50 state
MSRP	\$2,329.95



EU3000i Handi 3,000-Watt Inverter Generator

Dimensions	24.5"L x 14.9"W x 19.3"H
Weight	78 pounds
Fuel Capacity	1.56 gallons
Output	3,000 watts maximum, 2,600 watts rated
Run Time (claimed)	7.7 hours @ 25 percent load
Decibel Rating (claimed)	57 dB

Features If you want the power of a 3,000-watt portable generator but not necessarily the bulk and weight, the EU3000i Handi may be perfect for you. Weighing in at just 78 pounds, it's the lightest 3,000-watt generator Honda has ever made — and it comes equipped with wheels and a folding handle for easy transport. Otherwise, it offers the same features as the EU3000iS.

Warranty	Three years
Emissions compliance	50 state
MSRP	\$2,599.95

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POWERHOUSE PRODUCTS

1000Wi 1,000-Watt Inverter Generator

Dimensions	20"L x 17.25"H x 10.75"W
Weight	32.95 pounds
Fuel Capacity	.78 gallon
Output	1,000 watts maximum, 900 watts rated
Run Time (claimed)	6.9 hours @ 25 percent load

Decibel Rating (claimed)	64 dB
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Features Providing for those with basic power needs, the 1000Wi includes a low-oil shutoff and a fuel-economy switch for variable speed or 100 percent full power. It's equipped with one 20-amp, 120-volt AC outlet and 12-volt DC outlet.

Warranty	One year
Emissions Compliance	50 state
MSRP	\$449.95



2000Wi 2,000-Watt Inverter Generator

Dimensions	21.3"L x 19.1"H x 11.3"W
Weight	62 pounds
Fuel Capacity	1.4 gallons

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Output	2,000 watts maximum, 1,900 watts rated
Run Time (claimed)	8.2 hours @ 25 percent load
Decibel Rating (claimed)	56 dB
Features	Same as the 1000Wi, but with quieter operation and two 20-amp, 120-volt AC outlets.
Warranty	One year
Emissions Compliance	50 state
MSRP	\$624.95



PH2100PRi 2,100-Watt Inverter Generator

Dimensions	22"L x 19"H x 11"W
Weight	73 pounds
Fuel Capacity	1.3 gallons
Output	2,100 watts maximum, 2,000 watts rated
Run Time (claimed)	7.9 hours @ 25 percent load
Decibel Rating (claimed)	56 dB
Features	Same as the 2000Wi, but with the addition of an automatic choke and a remote electric start that works up to 75 feet away. It can also be used in parallel with a second unit via an available kit, sold separately.
Warranty	Two years
Emissions Compliance	50 state
MSRP	\$782.95

PH2700PRi 2,700-Watt Inverter Generator

Dimensions	22.8"L x 17"H x 13"W
Weight	80 pounds



Fuel Capacity	1.4 gallons
Output	2,700 watts maximum, 2,600 watts rated
Run Time (claimed)	7.2 hours @ 25 percent load
Decibel Rating (claimed)	58 dB
Features	Same as the PH2100PRi, but also has the added convenience of a built-in carry handle and wheels. It also offers an optional parallel kit to connect a second unit, sold separately.
Warranty	Two years
Emissions Compliance	50 state
MSRP	\$1229.95



PH3100Ri 3,100 Watt Inverter Generator

Dimensions	23.6"L x 20.5"H x 17.8"W
Weight	129 pounds
Fuel Capacity	4.4 gallons
Output	3,100 watts maximum, 3,000 watts rated
Run Time (claimed)	13.1 hours @ 25 percent load
Decibel Rating (claimed)	56 dB

Features The PH3100Ri includes handy features like a built-in hour meter to track the total run time, factory-installed swivel wheels and a pull handle for maximum maneuverability. It also has an internal circuit breaker, fuel gauge, remote start and automatic low oil shutdown and emergency stop control. It comes equipped with two 20-amp, 120-volt AC outlets and one 30-amp twist lock receptacle.

Warranty	Two years
Emissions compliance	50 state
MSRP	\$1,449.95

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YAMAHA

EF1000iS 1,000-Watt Inverter Generator

Dimensions	17.7"L x 9.4"W x 14.9"
Weight	27.9 pounds
Fuel Capacity	.66 gallon
Output	1,000 watts maximum, 900 watts rated
Run Time (claimed)	12 hours @ 25 percent load
Decibel Rating (claimed)	47-57 dB

Features The EF1000iS packs a lot of technology and thoughtful features into a small package. The load-sensing Smart Throttle rpm control saves fuel and reduces noise by automatically adjusting engine speed to match the load. Pulse Width Modulation means voltage stability is within ± 1 percent, and frequency stability is

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Portable Power

±0.1 hertz, according to Yamaha. The Auto Warm-Up feature automatically increases engine speed for four to six minutes to ensure smooth power delivery during cold startups, and the Oil Watch Warning System helps prevent engine damage from low oil. Other features include a wide-mouth fuel filler that reduces spilling and backflow during refueling and a gasoline petcock that allows you to shut off the gas and run the carburetor dry prior to storage to prevent stale gas problems. The EF1000iS is equipped with two 120-volt AC outlets and 12-volt DC output, with battery-charging cables included.

Warranty	Three-year limited
Emissions Compliance	50 state
MSRP	\$879

EF2000iS 2,000-Watt Inverter Generator

Dimensions	19.3"L x 11.0"W x 17.9"H
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Weight	44.1 pounds
Fuel Capacity	1.1 gallons
Output	2,000 watts maximum, 1,600 watts rated
Run Time (claimed)	10.5 hours @ 25 percent load
Decibel Rating (claimed)	51.5-61 dB

Features The same as the smaller EF1000iS, but with a fuel gauge, an auto decompression system for easier starting and a parallel function that allows connection of two generators.

Warranty	Three-year limited
Emissions Compliance	50 state
MSRP	\$1,099



EF2400iSHC 2,400-Watt Inverter Generator

Dimensions	20.8"L x 16.5"W x 18.2"H
Weight	75 pounds
Fuel Capacity	1.6 gallons
Output	2,400 watts maximum, 2,000 watts rated
Run Time (claimed)	8.6 hours @ 25 percent load
Decibel Rating (claimed)	53-60 dB

Features Same features as the EF2000iS, but with the added benefit of High Current output designed specifically to increase motor starting capability and improve air conditioner starting. Yamaha claims this model

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EF2800i 2,800-Watt Inverter Generator

Dimensions	19.2"L x 15.6"W x 16.7"H
Weight	68 pounds
Fuel Capacity	2.6 gallons
Output	2,800 watts maximum, 2,500 watts rated

Run Time (claimed)	15 hours @ 25 percent load
Decibel Rating (claimed)	65-68 dB

Features The EF2800i is the lightest generator in its class, according to Yamaha. Its open-frame design not only sheds pounds but provides a large gasoline capacity. Like its smaller siblings, the EF2800i features Smart Throttle and Oil Watch, plus a Ground Fault Circuit Interrupter (GFCI) that helps reduce the risk of shock. It's equipped with two 20-amp, 120-volt AC outlets, one 30-amp AC outlet and 12-volt DC output.

Warranty	Three-year limited
Emissions Compliance	50 state
MSRP	\$1,699

EF3000iS 3,000-Watt Inverter Generator

Dimensions	26.8"L x 17.5"W x 21.9"H
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Weight	136 pounds
Fuel Capacity	3.4 gallons
Output	3,000 watts maximum, 2,800 watts rated
Run Time (claimed)	19 hours @ 25 percent load
Decibel Rating (claimed)	53-60 dBA

Features The EF3000iS offers the same engineering features as the smaller units in the family, plus automatic decompression, and built-in wheels/parking brake. Noise Block, an acoustically designed sound reduction system of sound-absorbing materials is used in key areas, plus it features a newly designed muffler



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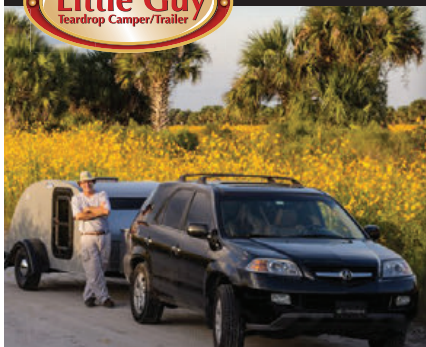
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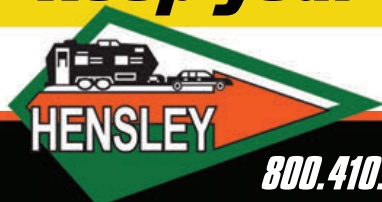
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Portable Power

and molded fan. The EF3000iS offers two 20-amp, 120-volt AC outlets, a 30-amp AC outlet and 12-volt DC output.

Warranty	Three-year limited
Emissions compliance	50 state
MSRP	\$1,899

EF3000iSEB 3,000-Watt Inverter Generator



Dimensions	26.8"L x 17.5"W x 21.9"H
Weight	154.3 pounds
Fuel Capacity	3.4 gallons
Output	3,000 watts maximum (+500 watts boost), 2,800 watts rated
Run Time (claimed)	19 hours @ 25 percent load
Decibel Rating (claimed)	53-60 dBA

Features This unit offers the same benefits as the EF3000iS, but with one important difference: The "B" on EF3000iSEB means it features Yamaha Boost Technology, which provides additional power when you need it to start a roof air-conditioning unit or other power-hungry appliance. The Boost Control Unit in the generator automatically senses when you need additional boost and uses power from the internal 12-volt battery to produce additional amperage. With the additional 10-second boost, the power is comparable to a conventional 3,500-watt generator, according to Yamaha.

Warranty	Three-year limited
Emissions compliance	50 state
MSRP	\$2,469

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ROOF AIR LEAK

REPAIR

Water leakage around an air conditioner means it's time to replace the gasket before damage occurs

Every year, after the first big rain of the season, it's not uncommon for RV owners to discover that there's a leak originating from the air conditioner's inside ceiling assembly. After a period of time, the weight from the air conditioner compresses the gasket, which starts to work its way

loose during travel. Rainwater then finds a path into your RV, creating a stained ceiling and wet surroundings.

Replacing the gasket between the air conditioner and the rooftop is fairly simple. Foremost, if the gasket is in decent condition, the problem can usually be traced to a loose air condi-

tioner and can be remedied simply by tightening the bolts. For that reason, air conditioners should be inspected and/or tightened every six months for the first couple of years to compensate for the compressing gasket.

If tightening the bolts doesn't do the trick, the gasket needs to be



(1) Water stains are indicators of a leaking air-conditioner gasket. They can be removed with InstaGone. (2) Remove the four screws that hold the ceiling assembly in place to access the tie-down bolts. (3) Remove the electrical control box and tuck it up into the air-conditioner assembly.



(4) The tie-down bolts holding the air conditioner in place can be quite long, so we opted to use a cordless drill for removal. **(5)** Apply steady upward pressure to break the air-conditioner gasket loose from the roof material. **(6)** This particular roof sagged a little bit and water had pooled under the air-conditioning unit. Be sure to remove any excess water before continuing on with the repair.

replaced. Gaskets come in two sizes: 14-by-14 inches or 14-by-16 inches. If you know the model of your air conditioner, a call to the manufacturer usually will confirm the size. If not, just remove the interior ceiling assembly and measure the gasket from the inside. While there are a few styles of gaskets on the market, it's best to purchase one that's made of black neoprene foam; cost is around \$25, and they are available at most RV dealers and RV supply stores. Do not purchase the white universal air-conditioner gaskets; they will not hold up.

Installation is quite simple but requires a second person. To get started, make sure the RV is unplugged from electrical power and remove the ceiling assembly. Once the underside of the air conditioner is exposed, disconnect the electrical connections from the upper unit to the ceiling assembly. In most cases, the Romex 120-volt AC supply wire does not have to be removed. Once the bolts that secure the upper unit to the tie-down plate are removed, the air conditioner is ready to be lifted off the opening in

the roof. It may be easier to unscrew and lift off the plastic shroud that covers the top of the air conditioner, as this will give you some handholds to properly manipulate the air conditioner back into position during reassembly. We've done this job many times, so we were able to leave the shroud in place. With the help of another person, lift the air conditioner and place it on its side, being careful not to lay the unit on its top, which could damage the compressor. Clean and inspect the roof material where the gasket was seated. Mineral Spirits, Simple Green or a similar cleaner will do the job well.

If there are any cuts, tears or holes in the roof material, it will be necessary to make repairs before installing the

new gasket. This is most problematic when working with rubber roofs, where the material can be pulled off with the gasket (if this happens, 4-inch-wide EternaBond tape does a fabulous job of repairing damage to the roof area).

Using a sharp putty knife or a scraper, strip the old gasket from the bottom of the air conditioner. While it was simply installed with double-sided tape, over time the gasket can bond to the air-conditioner surface and become difficult to remove. This process will take the most time and require patience.

With the gasket removed, the surface is cleaned with the same product used on the roof. Install the new gasket in the same position. Be



(7) As you can see from the lifted rubber, the faulty old gasket was causing a water leak. **(8)** Use Mineral Spirits to clean the gasket area when household cleaners won't do the job. **(9)** Rubber roof material can easily become damaged while extracting the air conditioner. EternaBond tape can be used to make the repairs. This will make a permanent seal. **(10)** A heavy-duty putty knife with a sharp edge is used to remove the old gasket.



(11) When installing the new air-conditioner gasket, peel the tape backing off carefully. Once the gasket touches the surface, it's pretty well set into place. (12) Make sure you install the rear spacer that is supplied in the air-conditioner-gasket set. (13) With the new gasket installed, set the air conditioner in place and line up the bolt holes from the inside.

careful here; once it sticks, it cannot be repositioned easily. Before the air conditioner is reinstalled, use some type of a straight edge and check the roof for level. Over the years the weight from the air conditioner can cause the roof to sag and make it difficult to stop the leak, even if there is a new seal in place.

If the roof is sagging, carefully lift the roof material (rubber or fiberglass) and install a thin piece of plywood (shim) underneath the substrate. Be sure that the shim is at least an inch wider than the outside dimensions of the gasket. Secure the shim using the correct glue for the particular construction of the RV. There will be no need to use screws for installation, as they can cause additional permanent damage to the roof material. Some service techs suggest using caulking between the gasket and the roof material, but this mistake will make it nearly impossible to remove the air conditioner in the future. If you are the least bit unsure about this shimming process, it's best to leave it to a professional.

With the help of an assistant stationed on the roof, set the air conditioner back down over the opening and work together to center the unit. Once

the position is set, bolt the air conditioner to the roof. There is no specified torque rating for the holddown bolts, so snug them first and finish by giving them three or four turns. Install the upper shroud if it's been removed, then assemble the ceiling components. Now would be a great time to clean the foam filter with a mild soap and warm water and allow it to air dry.

After the first road trip, remove the inside ceiling assembly and retighten the holddown bolts. Then check again after six months.

Some RV manufacturers use fabric on the ceiling. As the air conditioner leaks, the water will stain the ceiling fabric, as it did on the RV we repaired. These water stains can be stubborn to remove, but a product called InstaGone does an amazing job without user

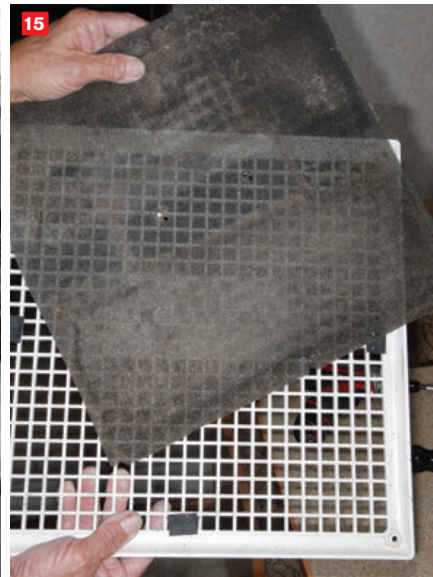
exertion. Simply spray the cleaner on the surface, and the stains will usually disappear. InstaGone also works on wood-panel ceilings. It's available online.

After a little time and some elbow grease, the leak will be sealed and the potential for future water damage will be diminished. 🚚

SOURCES

EternaBond (A division of ADCO)
800-248-4010
www.eter nabond.com

InstaGone Consumer Products
888-425-0125
www.instagone.com



(14) The interior holddown plate is recessed in each corner. If the air conditioner is not lined up properly the recess will not fit into the 14-by-14-inch opening. (15) Prior to installing the ceiling assembly is an ideal time to clean the foam filter.

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ROLLING & STOPPING

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With the RV travel season upon us, it's important to make sure the trailer chassis is in tip-top shape and ready to take on the summer roads. Unlike a tow vehicle, where the odometer serves as a reminder when maintenance is due, trailers are typically serviced seasonally, at the beginning or end of each travel season. Bearings and brakes are the two most critical components to inspect and service if the trailer is expected to stay on the road without breakdowns and safety issues.

Most chassis manufacturers recommend that brakes and wheel bearings be serviced every 10,000 miles or once a year, whichever comes first. But unless you keep an accurate log of every mile the trailer is towed, there is no precise way of knowing the true mileage. So to be safe, it is suggested that the brake and wheel bearing service be completed on an annual basis. Using a smartphone's reminder app is a good way to make sure the service interval is followed in a timely manner.



(1) Carefully pry the dust cap from the hub and drum assembly. Excessive damage may cause the dust cap to become dislodged during travel. **(2)** Remove the cotter pin that holds the spindle nut in place. After servicing, always use a new cotter pin. **(3)** Remove and replace the spindle nut using a large pair of adjustable pliers. **(4)** Be careful not to drop the outer bearing when removing the hub and drum assembly, which may damage the bearing.

Yearly inspection and maintenance will help ward off any brake or wheel-bearing failure by detecting a possible broken spring, a cracked shoe and lining or a brake magnet that has failed. It's amazing how one broken little spring can destroy the brakes after running that way for only a few miles — especially if the brakes are applied frequently.

Trailers that are stored for long periods of time are susceptible to moisture and condensation that can collect on the wheel bearings, despite the presence of grease. Once inside the wheel-bearing housing, it's only a matter of time before rust eats away at the surface and completely destroys the bearing.

Electric brakes are used in the majority of trailers, but disc brakes are slowly infiltrating the market as affordability and availability improve. Disc brakes are now an optional upgrade from several manufacturers of trailers and fifth-wheels; they offer tremendous stopping power and are highly resistant to fading, especially when used on heavier trailers.

Servicing Wheel Bearings

Begin this job by bringing in any extended slideouts. Jack up one side of the trailer at a time, securely chock the

wheels on the non-lifted side and remove the lifted tire and wheel assemblies.

For electric brakes, pop off the dust cap to gain access to the spindle nut and flat washer, which will be removed after extracting the cotter pin. Gently pull the hub and drum assembly outward. As you pull, be sure to cradle the hub to catch the outer bearing before falling to the ground. Soak the bearings in paint thinner or solvent to help loosen the grease. Once the bearings are clean and thoroughly dried, inspect them carefully for pitting or signs of overheating. Clean the grease from inside the hub assembly and carefully inspect each of the bearing races (cups) for uneven wear. If it's determined that the bearings must be replaced due to wear, be sure to replace the bearing races at the same time.

Once you're satisfied that the bearings are clean, it's time to repack. Some mechanics prefer to pack the grease into the bearing rollers by hand. This age-old method works well as long as the mechanic takes the time to make sure the grease is evenly distributed. Using a pressure packer to regrease each bearing is faster, and some mechanics claim the process is more effective. Always use a high-quality wheel-bearing grease on axles with electric

ROLLING & STOPPING

(5) Carefully remove the hub and drum assembly, using caution not to bump the threads on the end of the spindle. (6) After the hub and drum assembly is removed, the brake shoes and magnet will be exposed. (7) As you can see, there is plenty of lining on this brake shoe. When the lining is worn to approximately $\frac{1}{8}$ inch, it is time for replacement. (8) This brake magnet is in good condition. Uneven wear and exposure of the linings are sure signs that replacement is needed.

brakes. For disc brakes, use high-temperature grease engineered for that specific application.

After the grease has been squeezed in between the bearing rollers, coat the outside of the wheel bearings with a thick layer of grease and reinstall them into the hub assembly.

A number of trailer axles are fitted with Zerk fittings at the end of the spindle. This makes it easy to add grease via a standard grease gun. Use caution here; adding too much grease to the hub forces it past the grease seal, thus contaminating the brakes. Always replace the grease seals when repacking the wheel bearings.

When reinstalling the hub assembly, proper tightening of the spindle nut is

critical. Check the endplay specification for the individual axle with electric brakes. Disc brakes require zero endplay. Tighten the spindle nut two or three times at about 50 ft-lb of torque, then back it off to the required setting.

Servicing wheel bearings with disc brakes is a little more challenging. The calipers will need to be removed in order to pull the hub and rotor assembly. Upon initial inspection, make sure that the calipers are not rusted in place. If so, a full replacement is in order.

Two basic types of calipers are used on trailers: floating calipers and dual-piston calipers. Floating calipers move on a set of pins that must remain free of rust and debris. If one of the



disc-brake pads has worn considerably more than the other, this will be an indication that the calipers are not working properly and need renewal or replacement. Replacing the disc-brake pads must be done on both sides of the axle to ensure proper braking.

Inspect all fittings and hydraulic lines. Carefully inspect the flexible rubber hoses that run to each caliper. As rubber hoses age, they can crack and even collapse. If these hoses look questionable, replace them. Inspect

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all of the steel lines running along the frame to the hydraulic actuator for rust or leaks.

When inspecting the brake actuator, carefully look for any damage or excess wear. Remove the reservoir cap and check the fluid level. Add DOT 3 or DOT 4 brake fluid only. Brake fluid attracts moisture, and it's amazing how dirty the fluid can get over the years. Once the trailer hits its fifth birthday, it's time to flush the brake fluid from the entire system.

Electric Brake Inspection

While inspecting the brakes, carefully look for cracks and uneven or excess wear. If the brake shoes or linings are worn to roughly $\frac{1}{8}$ inch of material remaining, it's time to replace them. Always replace the brake shoes on both sides of the axle to prevent uneven braking.

The brake magnets must be inspected for abnormal or uneven wear. To make sure the magnets are working, simply hold a piece of flat steel against the surface while somebody activates

the brake control in the tow vehicle. That flat piece of steel will "stick" to the magnet while the brake control is activated. Brake magnets can be tested for amperage; each magnet will draw roughly 2.5 amps.

Take a close look at the area behind the brake assembly at the axle and check for any broken wires that should otherwise be attached to the magnets. Reconnect any broken wires and leave plenty of slack for the axle to move up and down during travel. The wiring is

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not polarized, so it makes no difference which wire goes to either side of the brake magnet. Make sure all connections are sealed with shrink tubing or use terminals that are water resistant.

Inspect the armature, the flat part of the hub and drum assembly that the magnet rides on. If the armature is badly grooved, it's time to replace the hub and drum assembly. Be sure to replace the magnet at the same time. It is not necessary to replace the magnets on both sides of the axle at the same time.

(9) Thoroughly inspect the brake surface for cracks or uneven wear. If there are any visible flaws, it's time for replacement. (10) Simple conical-shaped bearing pressure packers are available at most auto-parts stores — they are very effective aids when repacking wheel bearings. (11) Using a grease gun, pressurize the packer until the grease squeezes out between the bearing rollers.

Adjusting Electric Brakes

Most electric brakes have an adjuster wheel in the brake assembly. After the bearings have been serviced and the drums are back in place, remove the rubber plug at the bottom and behind the backing plate to gain access to the

adjuster wheel. Using a brake-adjusting spoon, tighten the shoe and linings against the drum until the drum can't be rotated by hand. Back the adjuster wheel off until the brake linings no longer contact the drum while spinning.

In the past several years, manu-



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facturers have started using a self-adjusting electric brake assembly. This is evident by the steel cables that are attached to the brake shoes and/or cams. These brakes automatically adjust every time the trailer is backed up. Disc brakes are essentially self-adjusting, providing that the calipers are functioning properly.

After removing and replacing the tire and wheel assemblies, check the wheel lug nuts or bolts every 50 miles for the first 200 miles.

As previously mentioned, tracking

(12) When repacking wheel bearings, always replace the grease seals. Carefully install them into the hub assembly without causing damage. (13) A properly installed grease seal will be flush with the top surface of the hub assembly. (14) Because the calipers need to be removed, repacking the bearings on a disc-brake system can be a little more challenging compared to servicing trailers with electric brakes.

mileage on a trailer can be difficult. To eliminate the hassle of keeping a logbook up to date, consider investing in a hubodometer. This is a digital meter that's mounted in the center of the trailer's wheel cap. Mileage is recorded as the wheel turns. DataTrac

makes a unit that sells for around \$100; it can even be ordered with the approximate current mileage on the trailer.

Performing a yearly bearing and brake check and service minimizes the chances of failures that often lead to spoiled vacations. 🚚

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SMOOTH SLIDING

Demco's Autoslide fifth-wheel hitch takes the guesswork — and worry — out of towing with a shortbed truck

Towing fifth-wheels with short-bed trucks is more popular than ever. Beyond the ability to maneuver into tighter spots, the ability to drive around town solo in a more nimble truck has always been a big selling point. But there are inherent issues to deal with, primarily keeping the front of the trailer from crashing into the back of the truck cab when making sharp turns — especially when trying to back into an RV site.

Some fifth-wheel manufacturers tout rounded front caps that allow for tighter turns, but without special-

ized kingpin or hitch equipment, a fifth-wheel of that type still cannot be maneuvered to its full potential.

In the early years, hitches that could be manually released offered some relief to stressful turning, but stopping in advance to activate a lever was not exactly convenient and could be disastrous if the procedure was forgotten. Hitches that automatically slide back when turning made towing with shortbed trucks practical and Demco has raised the bar in the design and function of this type of mechanism.

The newly improved Demco Hijacker

Autoslide Ultra Series fifth-wheel hitch utilizes rack-and-pinion gear technology that offers up to 14 inches of travel when turning. The hitch is rated to tow fifth-wheels up to 18,000 pounds. There are three height adjustments to help level the truck and trailer and make sure there's adequate clearance between the top of the truck bed and fifth-wheel; 6 inches is the preferred clearance. High-quality powder-coated surfaces should deter rust for the life of the hitch.

Thinking outside the box, Demco designed its new fifth-wheel hitch to fit

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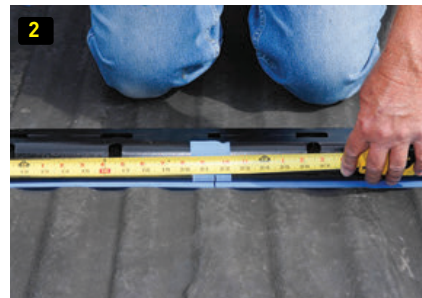
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(1) Try using blue painter's tape when the truck bed is too dark and a black felt-tip marker won't show up. (2) After measuring from the rear of the truck bed, carefully measure from side-to-side to accurately determine the true center of the truck bed. (3) Again, blue painter's tape is used as an indicator of where the center of both bedrails will be placed.

industry standard bedrails as well as an under-bed mount that leaves the bed of the truck free of obtrusive rails. There's also an optional system that mounts the hitch to Ford trucks with the fifth-wheel hitch prep package. We chose the above-rail kit for the installation described here.

The Autoslide hitch has a double pivot head with locking jaws that makes connecting and disconnecting simple and smooth. Capture plates are available for kingpin boxes that will not work with the double-pivot head. For the test, a capture plate was needed to immobilize the MOR/ryde kingpin box. That's because the kingpin does not

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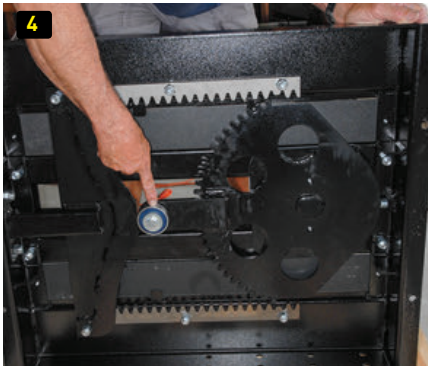
*Rates could be higher depending on health and build. Female rates are lower



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(4) Demco uses a high-quality bearing on its slide assembly. (5) The bedrail adapters are attached to the hitch body and tightened to 50 ft-lbs. The bolts are retorqued later. (6) Using an accurate torque wrench, tighten all bolts to the manufacturer's specifications. (7) Before drilling the holes for the bedrails, the hitch is installed onto the bedrails so that precision adjustments can be made. (8) When positioning the frame brackets, enlist the help of another person to install the nuts and lock washers on the bolts. (9) Use a $\frac{1}{8}$ -inch bit to drill the pilot hole through the existing hole in the frame bracket.

rotate in the hitch saddle when turning. Instead, the kingpin box is locked in the Autoslide pivot head, which rotates in the base while turning.

Installation

The instructions call for precise measurements before installing the slide-rail assemblies to the mainframe body. Once the proper distance

between the rear of the bed and rear rail is determined, we found it handy to lay down a strip of 1-inch-wide blue painter's tape from side to side. The blue masking tape made it much easier to see the black felt-pen marks that were darn near invisible to detect on the black spray-on lining.

After measuring the distance required to set the forward bedrail,

another strip of painter's tape was carefully laid down. The base of the hitch was set in the bedrails so it could be lined up in the exact location where the holes were to be drilled through the bed. Remember to measure twice, as the placement of the bedrails is very critical.

Before drilling, the left and right frame brackets are positioned and the

(10) The $\frac{1}{16}$ -inch bit must be centered before enlarging the hole in the truck bed for the bracket bolts. (11) To prevent rust, vacuum up the metal flakes from the truck bed. (12) Demco devised a clever plate-and-nut-assembly for the bedrail bolts.



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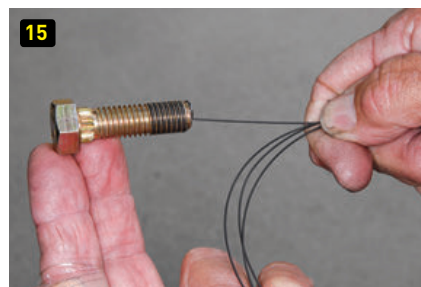
bolts hand-tightened. It's not necessary to remove the rear tires; however, we did to gain a little better access to the truck frame when mounting the brackets. Always use wheel chocks and jack stands when removing tires from the truck.

Using a 1/8-inch drill bit, the initial holes were drilled through the bedrails and slots in the frame brackets. There's some blind drilling here, so be sure to check the position of the small drill bit to make certain that the hole is centered in the frame bracket.

After drilling the final size hole through the bedrails and the frame bracket, the shims, washers and spacers were installed as instructed, and the four bolts torqued to 170 ft-lbs after tightening to spec all the bolts holding the brackets to the truck frame. All the bolts were double-checked for safety.

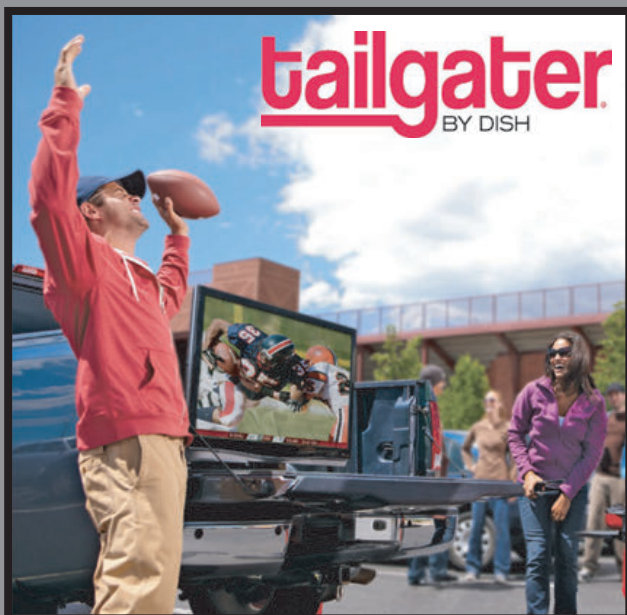
With the hitch base firmly in place, the pivot head was mounted. It's a relatively easy step, but there is some weight to contend with. The outrigger is installed to stabilize the rear of the hitch base. This is simply a bracket that sits firmly against the bed of the truck. The outrigger is designed to distribute the pin weight as the hitch slides rearward.

The final step was to adjust the rails on the pivot head so that the kingpin box fits tightly when the trailer was hitched up. This measurement is critical; there cannot be any play between the kingpin box/capture plate and the pivot head. Remove the lube plate, if previously installed on the kingpin box; it will interfere with the function of the locking jaws in the pivot head.



(13) Only one hole on each frame bracket needed enlarging. (14) To use the existing holes in the truck frame, Demco supplies unique plate-and-bolt assemblies to help reduce the number of holes that need to be drilled, saving time on the installation. (15) For those hard-to-reach places, Demco provides a fish wire to pull the bolt into place. (16) The outrigger at the rear of the hitch-base assembly is designed to support the weight of the kingpin as the pivot head slides rearward. (17) Before installing the pivot-head assembly, the two bumper stops in the hitch-base assembly are installed. (18) After setting the pivot-head assembly into place, the large pivot pin is installed.

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(19) With the pivot head in place, the release handle is installed with the supplied nut and bolt. (20 and 21) Carefully measure the pin box and then set the guides on the pivot head for a tight fit.

Test Drive

Backing into the kingpin was a breeze. The jaws snapped shut without a problem. Before the tailgate of the truck was closed, we carefully inspected the jaws, making sure they were securely in place. Demco designed the release handle in such a way that the safety lock pin cannot be inserted into the handle if the jaws are not locked in place.

Pulling forward while turning

sharply, the Autoslide pivoted freely and slid rearward seamlessly. In an open area of a large parking lot, we purposely jackknifed the truck and fifth-wheel. The front of the trailer missed the cab of the truck by a good 10 inches. Without the Autoslide, the truck and trailer would have collided. Venturing out into the streets, not one hair-raising noise came from the hitch. We were also able to maneuver through some pretty tight corners that

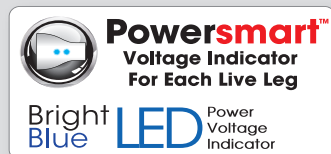
definitely would not be possible with the standard fifth-wheel hitch. The overall quality of this fifth-wheel hitch is impressive; it's made in the United States with American steel. The hitch has a five-year warranty and retails for \$1,483; the capture plate sells for \$129.

Demco recommends inspecting the Autoslide hitch before each trip. Remove the four screws on the two gear covers and inspect the system for any excess wear. Inspect all fasteners

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(22) Demco offers a custom capture plate for MOR/ryde pin boxes. (23) The Demco pivot head slides comfortably to the rear when making turns. (24) The Autoslide hitch makes for improved turning with exceptional quiet handling and allows for plenty of clearance when turning corners or backing into a site.

for tightness at least every 2,000 miles of operation. Additionally, inspect the jaw bars for freedom of movement and proper operation before each use. Demco recommends using white lithium grease to help prevent wear on the top plate surface.

Demco's Autoslide offers the luxury of a sliding hitch without the headaches and inconveniences that were once associated with mechanical sliding assemblies — so there are no worries when towing with shortbed trucks. 🚚

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The new RV Goose Coupler (RVGC) from PopUp Towing Products allows a fifth-wheel trailer to be towed with a lighter, space-saving gooseneck ball. Simply unbolt the existing kingpin box from the fifth-wheel and bolt the RVGC in its place. The patented self-latching coupler makes for an easy hitch and unhitch, according to the company. With a GVWR rating of 24,000 pounds and a hitch weight of 6,500 pounds, it will handle just about any fifth-wheel on the market today that's capable of handling the leverage presented by a gooseneck. An adjustable version, the RVGC-A, provides up to 7 inches total adjustment.

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(Continued on page 130)



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Once you get that truck camper into the back of your pickup, you want to make sure it stays put — and a set of good camper tie-downs is part of that equation. Torklift International released a new truck camper tie-down called the Talon, made of military-grade aluminum. Weighing just 25 pounds per set, the Talon is 40 percent lighter than the company's equivalent steel tie-downs and is backed by a lifetime warranty and lifetime corrosion protection. Like Torklift's other tie-downs, the Talon attaches to the truck frame, eliminating the possibility of bed damage. Talon Tie Downs are available for most popular Ford, Chevrolet and Dodge trucks, and require no drilling.

MSRP: \$386 (front set), \$318 (rear set)

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Although many of us like to brag about our trailer maneuvering skills, it can be stressful backing into an unfamiliar RV site or storage lot, and hitching up is a challenge for some people. The E-Go and Enduro Power Trailer Mover systems from Purple Line USA take a different approach: They allow you to move your trailer via remote control — no tow vehicle required. The system of two electric motors attaches permanently to the trailer's chassis and can direct the trailer into any position. Two motors can move up to 5,000 pounds, and four motors can move up to 7,800 pounds at a speed of 4.72 inches per second. The system includes all cables, clamps and hardware, plus the control board and remote control.

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415-802-3734, www.purplelineusa.com

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Flexible Solar Power

Looking for a green power source designed for mobile use? Go Power's thin, ultra-high-efficiency Solar Flex solar panels could be the solution. The Solar Flex GP-Flex series panels use high-efficiency monocrystalline cells to produce more power per square foot than any other flexible panel on the market, according to the company. Unlike rigid solar panels, Solar Flex panels require no mounting brackets or framework, and at just 3 millimeters thick, they can be contoured to mount almost anywhere on a vehicle. Solar Flex panels are clad in a tough, impermeable, marine-grade laminate and can be mounted to metal, rubber, fiberglass and plastic surfaces with parabolic bends up to 30 degrees. Solar Flex kits include the panel, solar controller and MC4 cables.

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On gasoline engines, aftermarket tuning essentially consists of changing the fuel mixture under various operating conditions and rpm to fill in lean spots and optimize fuel mixture across the power band. Tuners can also vary spark timing, which can add power and fuel economy. Many of them offer performance gains if the engine is run on higher octane gasoline.

Performance increases on naturally aspirated gasoline engines are typically not as large as those possible with turbodiesels. As the combination of gasoline-direct injection and turbochargers becomes more common, some of the strategies used in diesel engines will also be applied to these engines.

With the introduction of On-Board Diagnostics second generation (OBDII) in 1996, engine diagnostics and emission controls became more alike. At around the same time, diesel-engine manufacturers started to switch from mechanical to electronic engine controls.

The powertrain control module (PCM), or computer, opens common-rail injectors electronically. A PCM contains a software “map” that dictates for every engine speed, load and condition, how much fuel to inject into the engine, at what time and for how long. Aftermarket products seek to improve on the software to increase power and hopefully fuel economy, while limiting harmful emissions and not overstressing components.

In diesel engines, only air flows into the cylinder, and it is highly compressed as the rising pistons approach top dead center. Fuel is injected into the cylinder and self-ignites due to the high air

temperature. Diesel engines usually run with a surplus of air that is not used up during combustion. Modern common-rail systems can exploit this fact, as extra fuel can be injected into the chamber to produce more torque and horsepower. Fuel economy can also be improved by finding the most efficient tuning, which boosts torque and may allow the transmission to run in a higher gear.

Diesel engines must run with some degree of injection-timing advance, because it takes time for fuel to burn. For maximum efficiency, you want the expanding gases from burning fuel to push down on the piston as long as possible. A diesel engine’s high torque (relative to gas engines) is mainly a result of mean effective pressure (MEP) during the power stroke. While gas engines fire with a quick bang because all of the fuel must enter the cylinder before the valves close,

diesels can maintain cylinder pressure during the entire power stroke if the injectors continue to deliver fuel into the cylinders. This is the secret of high-diesel torque.

By continuing to inject fuel as the piston travels downward, burn time is extended, and torque-producing high-cylinder pressures last longer. And this avoids the potentially damaging pressure spikes that occur with over-advanced timing.

The other key item that diesel tuners can control is boost pressure. When intake boost pressure combines with an increase in fuel, the result is more power. However, it can come at a price: increased internal engine temperatures and, therefore, thermal stress. This can be mitigated by using an intercooler (aftercooler) to remove heat from the incoming air stream, or a more efficient one can be installed if the engine is already so equipped.

With the proper combination of timing, fueling and boost, you can derive much higher power with the same or lower peak-cylinder pressures. Whenever boost is increased, a boost gauge and exhaust-gas-temperature (EGT) gauge should be added to monitor operation.

Transmissions

A diesel tuner should be able to control shift points, scheduling and firmness (line pressure), torque converter lockup

Tuners are available for both gasoline and electronically controlled diesel engines from a number of aftermarket manufacturers. Some are downloaded into the powertrain computer, others work inline.



and other parameters such as tow-haul modes. Automatic transmissions can be a weak link behind a highly souped-up diesel, although moderate levels can usually be handled by modern transmissions, particularly if line pressure, etc. are controlled properly.

Not All Created Equal

Not all tuners are created equal, so educate yourself and ask questions before purchasing one. Generally, the safest ones to use are from well-known companies, are smog legal and advertised as designed for towing.

Some aftermarket units, known as in-line controllers, modify the sensor signals to "trick" the PCM into changing some of its outputs. Inline controllers come in many varieties, ranging from simple to more complex. The simple and cheaper units may vary only injection timing and fuel volume, not injection duration, and may not control automatic transmission functions to protect them from slippage due to higher torque. This may lead to transmission damage, especially at high power levels.

Certain in-line units have the ability to intercept transmission information and modify signals according to need. Some of these in-line devices also have the ability to increase injection duration (depending on application). This, of course, necessitates more advanced connectivity and electronic capability than a device that simply increases fuel pressure and/or modifies injection timing.

In-line devices leave no "footprint" in the PCM (for warranty concerns), they can be connected to a user interface and adjusted on-the-fly and can include additional signals, such as monitoring exhaust gas temperature (EGT).

When fuel is injected too early (too much advance) and/or excessive fuel is injected (over-fueling), it can cause temperature and pressure spikes and increase cylinder pressures to dangerous levels. Higher boost levels also raise cylinder pressures and temperatures. These factors put pistons, head gaskets and fasteners at risk. There are thermal and mechanical limits, and things can break. EGT is

a good remote indicator of internal cylinder temperatures and should be monitored and kept below engine manufacturer's upper limits. Moderation is a good thing; don't get carried away with making huge amounts of power just because you can.

The California Air Resources Board (CARB) maintains standards regulating aftermarket products that may affect vehicle emissions. For these products to be used and sold legally in California

and pass compliance tests, they must have a CARB executive order (EO) number. These standards also suffice to meet EPA requirements, so if a product has been issued a CARB EO number, it is usually legal for sale and use in all 50 states.

Be sure to verify that products have this if your vehicle is subject to emissions testing. Existing emission controls such as EGR, diesel particulate filters and selective catalytic reduction



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(SCR) must also remain functional. It is often misunderstood that in some states, "anything goes" related to emissions, and only consumers in those states that have some form of emissions testing need to be concerned about compliance. In reality, EPA has enforcement responsibility for the entire country and has rules about emissions "tampering" similar to CARB. After-market manufacturers are required to comply with EPA rules (although this is not heavily enforced and therefore many don't), and this is mostly done by securing a CARB EO. If a particular state does not have an inspection program, there is little chance of a consumer ever being negatively affected by a noncompliant product, but aftermarket manufacturers may be subject to enforcement actions.

Warranty

Aftermarket modifications can cause problems with warranty coverage, and vehicle manufacturers are within

their rights to deny coverage for items damaged due to these modifications. The Magnuson-Moss Warranty Act of 1975 protects consumers from being wrongfully denied warranty coverage by new car dealers or manufacturers. Essentially, the burden of proof is on the servicing dealer to show the root cause of a failure. However, manufacturers do maintain databases by VIN that include information on modifications, which may void coverage. Many owners remove aftermarket parts such as tuners before taking their vehicles to dealers for service. Some tuning products leave evidence that they were there. If this is a concern, check with the product's manufacturer before purchase.

Stiction Eliminator

Ford Power Stroke's precision fuel injectors have a reputation for stiction [sticking/friction], which may result in poor drivability and excessive black smoke, plus bucking and chugging on



cold starts. A layer of oxidized oil and additives typically forms, slowing down the injector due to the small clearances, and eventually stopping it altogether.

Lubrication Specialties developed Stiction Eliminator, which is said to not only clean injectors but other parts of the engine as well, including the turbocharger and EGR system. It's guaranteed to remove stiction within 4,000 miles or you can receive a full refund for the product. Lubrication Specialties Inc., 800-341-6516, www.hotshotsecret.com. 🚚

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DIFFICULTY

1 2 3 4 5

TIME TO COMPLETE

20 MINUTES

TOOLS NEEDED

SCREWDRIVER, 7/16-INCH
WRENCH

A barbecue is almost standard equipment in an RV. Most people enjoy cooking outdoors and a barbecue is a great way to get favorite meats, poultry and fish to the dinner table. Another dimension to this culinary experience is to smoke food, a process of slow-cooking meat using some type of wood to add flavor. Smoking food is often done in crude-looking metal drums that take their cues from various regions of the country that specialize in traditional cooking. Weber has refined that process with the Smokey Mountain Cooker Smoker, and the new 14.5-inch version is practical for taking along on RV trips.

As a smoked-food addict who worships Myron Mixon's *Smokin'* book, and an owner of a humongous smoker at home, getting the chance to try out Weber's diminutive Smokey Mountain Cooker met with some skepticism. The Weber smoker got the evil eye from my hard-core meat-smoking friends, but I touted that its dimensions make it packable in most RV storage compartments. So I took it along on a trip and volunteered to cook for a large group. After all, if this thing is going to work, it needs to be able to effectively smoke meat at its rated capacity.

Assembling the cooker was very easy. The instructions are clear and the whole process took about 20 minutes using only a screwdriver and 7/16-inch wrench. Basically, there are three sections: the bottom, which holds the charcoal/wood; the center module for the water pan and two grills; and the lid that sports the iconic Weber rounded look. In order to load the charcoal, the center section is lifted off the bottom; a lip keeps the components in place and stable without the use of fasteners.

Getting ready for the day's smoking



(Above from left) Charcoal is lit in a fire-starter chimney; 75 briquettes were used for the chicken. Water is added to the pan after lining it with aluminum foil. Adding the foil is not required, but aids in cleanup.



is a pretty simple process, thanks to the guide provided in the instruction manual. Charcoal quantity, cooking time and the amount of wood chunks are listed by meat type, which takes the guesswork out of setup. In our case, we planned on smoking chicken breasts using one of our favorite recipes in Mixon's book. Following the guide, we counted out 75 briquettes of charcoal and lit them in a Weber fire-starter chimney; starter chemicals or self-lighting charcoal should never be used, as these can impart an unpleasant taste in the meat. In about 15 minutes, the coals were ready to be poured into the charcoal chamber.

With the center section back in place, the water pan was positioned and the smoker filled with almost 12 pounds of chicken, divided between the lower and upper grills. The recipe we followed called for smoking the chicken in pans, so we bent the edges of disposable

aluminum pans to fit the round, plated-steel cooking grills.

Wood type for smoking is personal choice, but the Weber guide offers suggestions based on the type of meat. We went with apple, which always works well for poultry. Some other good choices include pecan, oak and alder, but you should always stay away from soft woods like pine, aspen and cedar. Using long-handle tongs, four chunks of apple-



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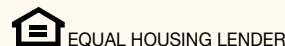
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wood (after soaking in water for an hour) were placed directly on the coals. Access is through a door in the middle section.

It's best to use a digital thermometer to monitor cooking temperatures. A silicone grommet is provided in the middle section for insertion of probes — one in the meat and one in the cavity of the smoker. The built-in thermometer in the lid can also be used to monitor cooking temperature. A standard cooking thermometer can be used to probe the meat, but every time the lid is opened, the temperature drops rather quickly. Temperature is regulated via aluminum dampers in the lower bowl assembly and lid.

According to the Weber cooking guide, some meat (depending on weight) requires up to 12 hours of cooking. That seems like a long time for the coals to last and our experience with the 2½-hour cooking time for the chicken suggests that adding briquettes and wood chunks during long cooking sessions will be necessary. We did not have to add charcoal or wood to smoke the chicken.

So how did it turn out? In a word, "great." The chicken was a big hit among our dinner guests.

Cleanup the next morning was uneventful. Once the coals



(Top right) Chicken is loaded on the top and bottom grills. Then a probe for a digital thermometer is pushed into the meat on the top grill. (Bottom right) After 2½ hours, the chicken was ready to rest before serving.



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were discarded and the grills tidied up, the pieces were reassembled, the cover (included with the smoker) installed and the whole thing was laid down on its side in a storage compartment. There was not enough height to store the smoker in an upright position, so the pieces got jiggled around during travel. It only took a minute to put everything back in place for the next cooking session.

The Smokey Mountain Cooker has the same porcelain enamel finish found on other Weber charcoal grills, which have a strong reputation for high quality and durability. Retail price for the smoker is \$219 and is available at Camping World and many home improvement/hardware stores.

Smoking foods allows outdoor chefs to experiment with recipes and wood. The Smokey Mountain Cooker will certainly make you very popular in any RV park. 🚐



(Above from left) Wood chunks (and additional charcoal if necessary) are added through the door in the center section of the smoker using long-handle tongs. The included premium-grade cover helps to protect the finish from deterioration and keeps sections together.

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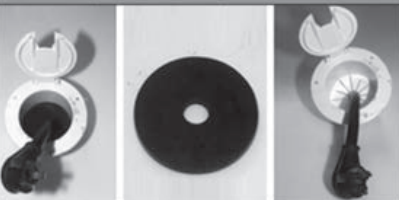
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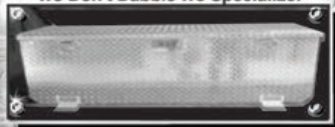


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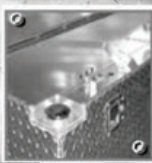
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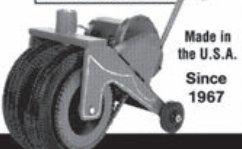


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While every effort is made to maintain accuracy and completeness, last-minute changes may occasionally result in omissions or errors.

30-AMP GENERATOR, 50-AMP TRAILER

Q I purchased a Powerhouse 3100Ri generator that has one 30-amp outlet and two 20-amp outlets for my 2005 30-foot travel trailer that I purchased last year. Only problem is, I just ordered a new 50-amp equipped fifth-wheel. Is it possible for me to use this generator with the fifth-wheel without having to buy a 50-amp generator? Is there an adapter that can be used and, if so, are there any issues associated with this?

Chuck Hirst, Marshall, Virginia

A Sure, Chuck, there are adapters that allow you to plug a 50-amp plug into a 30-amp receptacle. They're available in almost every RV accessory shop. You can plug your new trailer with the 50-amp cord into the existing generator, but the caveat is that use of the adapter means there are only 30 amps of power going to the trailer because that's what's coming from the 30-amp receptacle on the generator. The adapter does not bump the power up to 50 amps. There would still be enough power to run smaller accessories, such as a TV, microwave oven and the like, but if your RV has two air conditioners you will be

restricted to using just one of them. The new trailer has a 50-amp power supply due to the number of 120-volt AC-powered devices it has, and you'll need to determine how many of those devices you can operate when on the reduced 30-amp power supply. It won't be all of them, but by choosing carefully you can still have almost full use of your trailer's systems. — **Jeff Johnston**



NEW TIRES, NEW RATINGS

Q I tow a travel trailer that weighs approximately 7,300 pounds with a 2010 Toyota Tundra 5.7-liter V8, 4.30:1 rear-axle ratio, 4WD with a 10,300-pound towing capacity. If I add a 2- or 3-inch lift kit to increase the tires from 31 to 33 inches in diameter, how will the larger tire size affect the 4.30 gears and factory towing capacity? Will reprogramming the computer with the new tire size help keep the towing capacity at factory settings? I'm also considering the use of Timbren rubber suspension springs for better handling and to reduce the slight sag in the rear when hooked to the weight distributing (WD) hitch.

M. Simonelli Jr., Bordentown, New Jersey

A Reprogramming the truck's engine computer will help keep the speedometer and odometer accurate and make sure the fuel-injection and emissions systems continue operating up to snuff, and your vehicle's tow rating will remain at factory specs. Due to the larger tire diameter, towing performance will decrease somewhat. In effect, the 4.30 axle rating will be decreased by a few percentage points due to the larger tire size.

The Timbren products will probably help support a slightly saggy rear end, but if there is still sag with the WD hitch installed, the spring bars probably need to be tighter, which is a common mistake when using a WD hitch. A properly

adjusted WD hitch, as its name implies, will distribute some of the trailer hitch weight evenly between the truck's front and rear axles so the entire body squats down a bit rather than having just the aft end sag. Check the WD setup again or take it to a professional hitch shop for a checkup before you invest in extra parts. — **J.J.**

HOT FURNACE

Q In response to a reader in the March issue who asked about his RV's furnace cycling on and putting out too hot air, I have a 2014 Grey Wolf by Forest River with a Suburban furnace. I noted the exact same scenario as that reader described. As I dug into it a little, I found that it was cycling on the high-temp limit, and here is why: airflow, or the lack thereof. The reader's RV furnace problem could have been as simple. I ensured that all the vents were open and not blocked — in my case, Forest River ran only two 4-inch vents

THE TECH TEAM



KEN FREUND: Ken is a former ASE Certified Master Technician, service manager and shop owner who has authored numerous books on automotive repair.



JEFF JOHNSTON: Jeff served as technical director of *Trailer Life* for 18 years and has been an RV enthusiast, mechanic and writer since he could hold a wrench.

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off the furnace box. It has provisions for six warm-air outlets. I spent a little time and ran two new ducts through the spaces where the original two were for a total of four ducts and vents, and that completely solved the problem.

The trailer not only heats better now, but it does not cycle on the limit and no 90-degree air! It's a poor design on Forest River's part, and I'm sure there are others with the same issue who don't even realize it.

Allen Stegall, Spartanburg, South Carolina

A Thanks, Allen. Furnace manufacturers specify the number of knockouts that should be used on a particular model. As you found out, airflow for your setup was not high enough. — J.J.

RV REPAIR DATA RESOURCE

Q I'm in the market for a travel trailer. Can you tell me if there is an organization (like Consumers Union) that

collects a large volume of impartial information on repair records and consumer-complaint records and publishes tabulated results?

When I read the columns in *Trailer Life*, there seem to be a lot of people complaining about fairly major problems that I feel should never occur, such as gel coat delamination. Some firms seem to react to customer problems only under the higher visibility of a published account. Online forums and blogs are filled with people who have a single experience — some good, some bad. No meaningful information can be derived from this.

I'd tend to look for a firm with a longer standard warranty term, but even then there's no telling how the firm would react to a claim. Do you know of any reference such as I mentioned?

Ken Brooks, via email

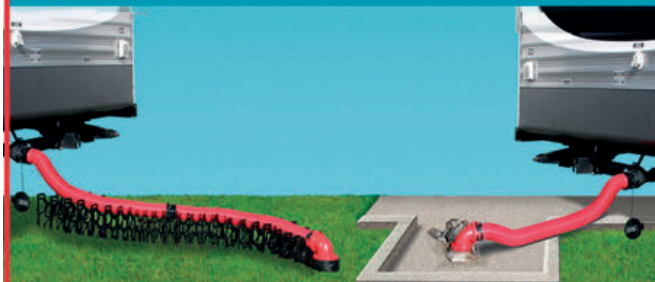
A I hate to tell you, but there is no one central source of compiled

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RV-repair or -problem information, Ken. There's RV sales data, of course, but the industry doesn't have the same type of repair-tracking system as the auto industry. About the best you can do is prowl the online user forums and try to compile the data you need. — J.J.

DULL FIBERGLASS

Q We have a 1999 Cardinal fifth-wheel trailer with a very dull fiberglass finish. Having tried a wide range of polishes, compounds, waxes, etc., with no real improvement, I am turning to you. Are there any products or techniques that can be used, either professionally or owner applied, to restore the shiny gel coat finish that once graced this great trailer?

Dave Pratt, Bardstown, Kentucky

A Meguiar's M4965 Marine/RV Fiberglass Restoration System works well but requires considerable elbow

grease. Use a regular car polisher with a 7-inch, 3,000-rpm wheel with Meguiar's medium-cut raspberry-colored foam pad. This should be available from some RV dealers and body shop supply stores. Also, 3M has a Marine Restorer and Wax designed for fiberglass and available in boating supply stores. Another product that many folks use on faded fiberglass is Penetrol, which is marketed as an additive for oil-based paints and sold in hardware and paint stores. After it is applied and dries, it should be protected with a coating of wax.

At the same time, your Cardinal fifth-wheel is 15 years old, and that's a lot of time for fiberglass to fade in the sun. You'll be able to help the finish with the above-mentioned steps, but chances are, you won't be able to bring it back to 100 percent of its original shine. If the finish is too far gone, about the best you can do is have the trailer painted, an expensive proposition but probably worth it from the standpoint

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of protecting the original fiberglass skin if you plan on long-term ownership. — **Ken Freund**

HIGH-WIND CONCERN

Q I recently logged onto YouTube and entered in the search window "RV Accidents" to see what would pop up. I did this to watch other accidents and gain some knowledge of what not

to do or what I can do to prevent the same kind of accidents with my 34-foot trailer. There's a video called "An RV Crash to Remember," posted about four years ago. After watching this video, I saw that this long travel trailer was being towed by a ¾- or 1-ton dually pickup down a two-lane highway out in an open field with traffic moving very slowly. It seems there was a strong side wind that pushed the trailer over

on its side. It also didn't look like there was anyplace that the driver could have pulled off and maybe pointed the trailer into the wind till it died down.

Do you see anything that could have been done to prevent this from happening? Later in the video, I noticed that the rear of the pickup was held up in the air by the trailer's chains, and the trailer came off the tow hitch. I didn't see any evidence that the driver was using any type of antisway device, but could such a device even have prevented this accident from occurring in the first place? Your input would greatly be appreciated because my wife and I would not like this to happen to us.

Dennis Weber, Milwaukee, Wisconsin

A High winds can come from, among other sources, storm fronts, thunderstorms and even microbursts, which are a strong localized vortex that can't be seen until it picks up dirt and debris. I'm sure you've seen many tornado aftermath pictures that show houses and vehicles flung far into the air.

It's not possible to predict exactly what wind speed will pick up a particular vehicle because there are so many variables such as angle, vehicle speed and drivers' reactions. However, such accidents are very rare and can be avoided by checking weather forecasts for the specific route and area. If there are high-wind warnings, delay the trip or reroute it. You can get a weather band radio for a modest amount of money, and it will even have alerts.

It takes a lot of wind to topple an RV. And it is unlikely that an antisway device would have prevented this accident. Use good judgment and be aware of your surroundings. If you're caught out in the open, pulling over to a stop can help. You can also seek temporary shelter under a bridge overpass on a freeway or on the lee side any obstruction. This can disturb the force of the wind enough to reduce your risk. — **K.F.**

BATTERY MAINTENANCE

Q I live in the northwestern part of Washington where the winters are usually fairly mild, and I store my

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three 12-volt deep-cycle batteries in my unheated shop. The power to the shop presently consists of extension cords. I charge the batteries about once a month with a 12-volt DC charger at 2 amps. Am I doing the right thing to preserve the batteries, considering my situation?

Tom Schmidt, Bow, Washington

A When batteries are fully charged, they are very resistant to freezing, so there's no problem there. The chemical action in batteries slows down at low temperatures, but if they are above freezing, don't worry. However, instead of the basic charger you are using, it's better to use a special maintenance charger such as Battery Tender or similar products. These are designed to sense battery voltage and keep the battery fully charged so it won't sulfate. Water levels in the cells should be checked regularly and topped off with distilled water as needed. — **K.F.**

REPLACEMENT MIRROR GLASS

Q I replaced my old Ford F-250 with a 2011 F-150 V-8. Ford really did a great job equipping it for RVing. It outperforms the old 460 and gets better than 14 mpg pulling our 29-foot Airstream. I replaced the standard mirrors with \$600 Ford slideout mirrors. The right-hand mirror has an excellent convex lower mirror, but they also made the large mirror convex. I don't need or want two convex mirrors. Ford sent me a "Thanks for your concern" form letter, so no help there. Is there any aftermarket flat mirror that attaches or replaces this unnecessary upper convex mirror?

Vic Jowders, via email

A There is a company called AutoMirrorGlassOnly.com (855-743-3452) that should have it. Some local auto-glass shops will also custom cut and install mirrors. — **K.F.**

DAMAGED SINK

Q We have a 2012 Jayco White Hawk DRSL, which we enjoy very much. During our last trip, we noticed that

we'd inadvertently placed a can of a bug spray in the kitchen sink. It seems to have leaked some of its contents and melted a small hole through the sink. The sink appears to be made of plastic material, which is thick around the top edge and very thin near the drain. We used the other sink during the trip, but now it's time to address the little hole. Is there any way to repair the sink, or am I looking at a replacement? I ap-

preciate any advice and look forward to next month's articles!

Gilbert Cabanas, Miami, Florida

A Assuming the sink is white, you might be able to repair it using a small fiberglass kit obtained in an auto-parts or boating store. Either remove the sink or work underneath it and apply a patch using the screen material to bridge the gap. After it



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sets up you can spot sand it and fill as needed. The main problem is getting it smooth and touching up the finish. You can also try a Devcon Bath/Tub Epoxy Repair Kit, available at home centers. Depending on the extent of the damage, you might have to replace the sink. — **K.F.**

ROOF ROT

Q I have a 2000 KZ Sportsmen trailer. Last fall, when I was covering it for the winter, I leaned on the roof and discovered it has a soft spot, which could indicate there are other soft spots as well. I checked with a local RV repairman, and he estimated, de-

pending on the amount of damage, that it could cost as much as \$4,000 to replace the roof. I assume I'm dealing with dry rot. So far, we have not noticed water leaks coming from the ceiling. Unfortunately, the trailer is not worth that amount, but we like the design and it fits in our driveway. I checked the Internet to see if there are any do-it-yourself instructions, and the one I found seems to indicate that it could be done but did not provide a lot of detail.

The rubber covering looks good with no cracks. Do you think it would be better to have the roof replaced professionally? I'm retired, so I have plenty of time and have done a number of projects without having prior experience, such as designing and building a storage shed without a professional set of plans. Do you know of any step-by-step instructions? Since I may be dealing with removing the air conditioner, replacing it, etc., it seems like it may be a little more complex than building a storage shed.

Robert Hohensee, Clackamas, Oregon

A This could turn out to be a major project. Often, when you open up the roof, you'll find that the rot has gone farther than expected. Having said that, if you Google "Repairing RV roof framing," you'll find a number of videos and other information on how to repair it yourself. It's not really that complicated. If you study the procedures and have the right tools and time to do it yourself, you can save a lot of money.

As a suggestion, you may want to tour an RV manufacturing plant in your area. By seeing how an RV is manufactured, layer by layer, you may develop a better understanding of what you need to do when making the decision to repair it yourself or hire a professional.

Look on the tires for the data that starts with DOT, then the next two letters are the country of manufacture. As a rule, stick with a name brand for your best chance at tire success

Chalet RV in Albany, Keystone in Pendleton and Forest River in Dallas are three companies you can check with regarding Oregon factory tours. — **K.F.**

POWER-SUPPLY PROBLEMS

Q This is regarding my 2002 Alpen-lite fifth-wheel. It has a Freedom Heart Interface No. 458/Model 20 with inverter and charger modes on the remote-control panel. I plug into 120-volt AC power and set the Power Share to 5 amps to keep the batteries charged while stored. I just recently noticed that the batteries show in the red state on the remote-control panel, and I have no 120-volt AC power. The circuit breakers are all on; the load test and electrolyte results are normal. All 12-volt batteries read 12.6 volts. I also did the equalizing procedure. Could this be a malfunction of the Freedom Interface?

Bill Teague, Bend, Oregon

A There's a built-in transfer switch that automatically transfers between inverter power and incoming

AC power. That's a likely cause of the loss of 120-volt AC power. The voltage for fully charged batteries at rest is 12.6 volts. The temperature controlled multistage charging has safety features to shut off and protect batteries from excessive depletion. You need to check all connections going in and out of the unit and measure voltage, using the appropriate AC or DC voltage ranges on the test meter. If 120-volt AC power is getting into the unit but not coming out, and all circuit protection devices are on then the unit needs repair. You can get more information or parts from Xantrex Technology Inc., 800-446-6180, www.xantrex.com. — **K.F.**

CHINESE TIRES

Q My trailer is a 2012 Flagstaff 31-footer, and its tires are ST 225/75R15 load range C. I'm having trouble finding trailer tires made in any country other than China. The last three sets of tires made in China cost me a lot of money within a short time of installing them. The trailer is not overloaded by any means. The last set that went was last summer when the trailer was only 1½ years old. The front right tire blew out, taking out the one behind it. I had stopped at a rest area only 5 miles before and as usual did a walk around checking the trailer. A friend of mine said that the tire was lost due to tire failure and not debris. I will never own another tire made in China, and a lot of my friends agree with me as they had the very same problems. I've looked online at tires, but they don't show where they're made. Should I go to a truck tire? Any suggestions would be very helpful.

Bob Hines, Southgate, Michigan

A Yes, non-Chinese trailer tires are getting as rare as hen's teeth. A lot of owners have been switching over to light truck (LT) tires instead of ST for this reason. Weigh the trailer axles when it's fully loaded to determine the weight on the tires. Then select a tire

that has a sufficient load rating for your application.

The country of manufacture may not be listed on a website, which could indicate the manufacturer or retail outlet doesn't necessarily want you to find out easily up front, but you can go to www.harriger.com/tires.htm and search the tire codes molded into the tire sidewall to find the answer. Look on the tires for the data that starts with DOT, then the next two letters are the country of manufacture. As a rule, stick with a name brand manufacturer for your best chance at tire success. — **K.F.**

SHUDDER COMMENT

Q In the January 2014 issue, you replied to B. Sadler's question regarding "launch shudder" in his 2011 Ram 2500. I have a 2011 Nissan Titan SL Crew Cab with the 5.6-liter flex-fuel engine. I was experiencing the same issue of a shudder in first gear when towing my 2007 Aero Tundra 30-foot travel trailer that has a gross weight of 7,600 pounds. This happened only from a dead stop, and I felt shudder only in first gear. Strangely enough, the same problem occurred in my last truck, a 2008 Nissan Titan King Cab. My Nissan dealer was never able to diagnose the problem in either truck. I took the suggestion that the U-joint angles might be changing due to high torque in lower gears. I installed a pair of Air Lift Ride-Control air bags to assist in leveling the truck when the trailer was connected. Problem solved. No more shudder in lower gears, not to mention the ride improved considerably with and without the trailer connected.

Henry L. Poage, Plant City, Florida

A Thanks for writing. Air bags won't stop the twisting of leaf springs from high starting torque. However, they will help if the problem is a low ride height due to weight changing driveshaft angularity. — **K.F.** 🚚

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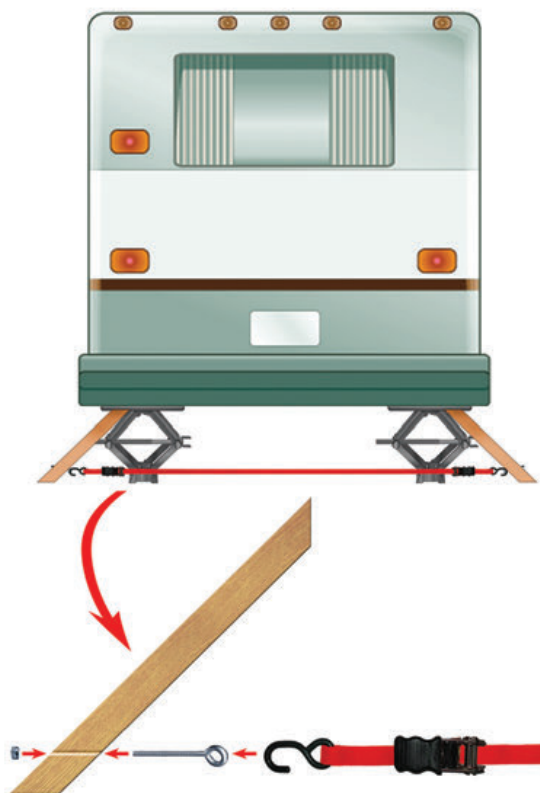
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Hands Down, Best Paint Protector

I came up with a great way to protect my RV's finish from ladder damage. I was replacing the awning on my camper and leaned a ladder against the RV. I didn't want to damage the finish, so I got out a pair of work gloves and put them on the tips of the ladder. It's an easy fix and saves the RV's paint without spending extra money!

Mike Cressy, Titusville, Florida



Wobble Stopper

After reading James Baucom's *RV Clinic* letter in the December 2013 issue regarding his wobbly trailer, I wanted to pass along my solution. I've told other RVerS about my fix and have found that it removes 90 percent of the wobble, both front-to-back and sideways, and for a mere fraction of the cost of commercial products.

The materials needed are two 8-foot pieces of 2-by-4-inch lumber, two 12-foot ratchet straps and four 6-inch eyebolts. Park the trailer on a level surface. At the rear of the trailer, measure an approximate 45-degree angle from the top of the trailer frame to the ground surface. Cut a 2-by-4 to that length on 45-degree angles on both ends. Drill a hole through the 2-by-4 approximately 6 to 8 inches from the end that will rest on the ground, and place an eyebolt with the eye facing the inside of the trailer frame. Do the same to the opposite side of the trailer. Place the ratchet strap between the eyebolts and tighten as much as possible. The 2-by-4s, while being tightened, work against the frame and the ground and make two solid stabilizers. They also extend the stabilizing point of the trailer outside from the frame about 18 inches. I still use the scissor jacks. I do the same to the front of the trailer, and it's amazing how solid my trailer is.

Jack Bell, High River, Alberta, Canada

Remove Black Streaks

During a recent "roughing it comfortably" trip, I was doing one of my usual morning routines — hovering around the outside of the RV doing little preventive-maintenance jobs. This particular morning, I was removing black streaks using an expensive black-streak remover and a cloth towel. I heard my RV neighbor say, "There's an easier way to do that." He handed me an inexpensive can of Scrubbing Bubbles and a paper towel with the instructions to spray it on, wait 10 seconds or so and wipe with the paper towel. That was it! The black streak was gone! You must use the aerosol can, not the pump-spray type, and rinse the surface off afterward. And I'd advise trying on a small, inconspicuous area first.

James Lennartz, Jacksonville, Arkansas



Keep Corner Cabinet Closed

In our trailer, there's a medicine cabinet with a mirror mounted above a sink and vanity in the bedroom. When towing the trailer, the cabinet door would always pop open, spilling the contents, so I came up with a pretty good solution. Since the cabinet is mounted in the corner, not on a side wall, it has empty space behind it. Duct tape would be ugly and gooey, and a piece of twine wouldn't be particularly attractive. With my sewing machine, I made a piece of cloth long enough to reach down behind the cabinet with the ends hanging out the bottom and over the top. Then I marked the ends where they meet and sewed on some hook-and-loop material. *Voilà!* It looks great (I made it from matching fabric), and the hook-and-loop fastener holds together over the roughest roads we've traveled.

Coleen Cornia, Evanston, Wyoming



Catch Water Leaks

I have a Watchdog water alarm that lets me know if there's a water leak. I hang mine on the wall and extend the sensor where I feel it will do the most good under the sink. I bought mine at Lowe's, model BWD-HWA, for less than \$12. If there is a leak, you will hear a loud squeal.

William Schmall, Coarsegold, California

QUICK FIX

More Cover Protection

In the February issue, Tom Peterson suggested using toilet paper rolls to protect RV covers from rain gutters. This is certainly a good low-cost idea using materials already on hand, but more durable options are using short sections of swimming pool noodles or foam insulation for ¾-inch water pipe. —**Hubert Paulson, Lincoln, Nebraska** 🐾

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Carried Away

During the tourist season, a ferry runs between mainland Wisconsin and Madeline Island of the Apostle group



Mali Gaber is a deckhand on the car ferry that makes the 20-minute run between Bayfield and Madeline Island, Wisconsin. It's a summer job. She's a student at the University of Wisconsin the rest of the year.

Summer is hustle season for those who earn a living up here on the south shore of Lake Superior. The season is short; the business is tourism. Between Memorial Day and Labor Day, the population on Madeline Island swells to 1,500. Normally it's 304.

Tourists riding the ferry visit for a day or stay on the island for maybe a week. They rent condos or cottages, along with kayaks and bicycles. They bring their RVs and hook up in the state park that has 60 sites or in the town park that has 36 more. Both have access to 2 miles of sand beach.

Madeline is the largest of the 22 forested islands of the Apostle group and is the only one that's developed. The rest of the islands are a national park called Apostle Islands National Lakeshore, which means controlled access. Camping on them requires a permit. In the summer, people explore the islands, their beaches and caves using sea kayaks. In the winter, they use snowmobiles.

There is no ferry service in the winter, of course — the lake is frozen. Residents and visitors alike drive the ice road that connects the mainland with the island. The county maintains it, which amounts to plowing it after it snows. Some walk the 2.6 miles each way, some use cross-country skis or bicycles or snowmobiles.

"Then there are the weeks in between," Mali told me, "when the ferry is not running and the ice is not hard enough to drive on. Arnie and Ronnie Nelson — they live on the island — run a wind sled that takes people back and forth. They make five round-trips a day to Bayfield. Without them, people on the island would not even get their mail."

Entering the island's breakwater, the ferry backed into its protected slip. Mali dropped the gate and began



(Top) Tom's Burned Down Café on Madeline Island. (Above) Mali Gaber, a student in the winter and a deckhand in the summer, secures a bowline as the ferry docks in Bayfield.

directing traffic off the ferry.

At the landing, I was met by Lois Carlson, who had earlier offered to show me around. A 10-year resident of the island, she and her husband started coming here as tourists 13 years ago. "Finally we wisened up," is how she explained why they are still here.

Lois picked up where Mali left off. "Arnie Nelson is sort of the 'Godfather' around here. His wind sled gets us through the shoulder periods when we have no ferry and no road. He's the guy who goes out there and measures the thickness of the ice and says when it's safe to drive on it. He's also the guy who rescues the crazies who venture out on thin ice and break through with snowmobiles.

"If there were a movie made about Madeline Island, Clint Eastwood would play Arnie Nelson. That's the kind of character Arnie is," Lois said.

Another Nelson on the island is Tommy. He had a café once named Leona's. In 1992 it burned, almost totally. He ran an extension cord to what was left of the bar and was selling beer within 36 hours of the fire. Then customers began showing up with boards and nailed a few up to make the place functional. So he hung out a sign: "Tom's Burned Down Café."

Twenty-two years later, that's still the bar's name.

He had no insurance. "You've got to be tough if you are going to be stupid," he told me. "And I have learned from this: If you don't rebuild it, they will come."

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Fig. 1 Saturn



Fig. 3 Asteroid Gaspra



Fig. 5 Mercury

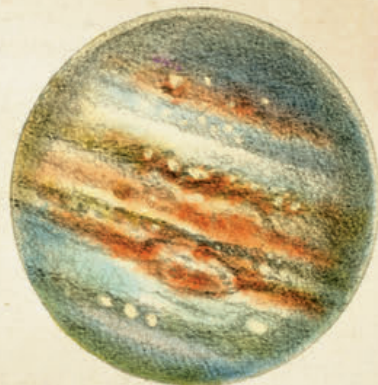


Fig. 7 Jupiter



Fig. 2 Neptune

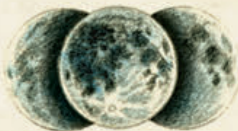


Fig. 4 Phases of the Moon

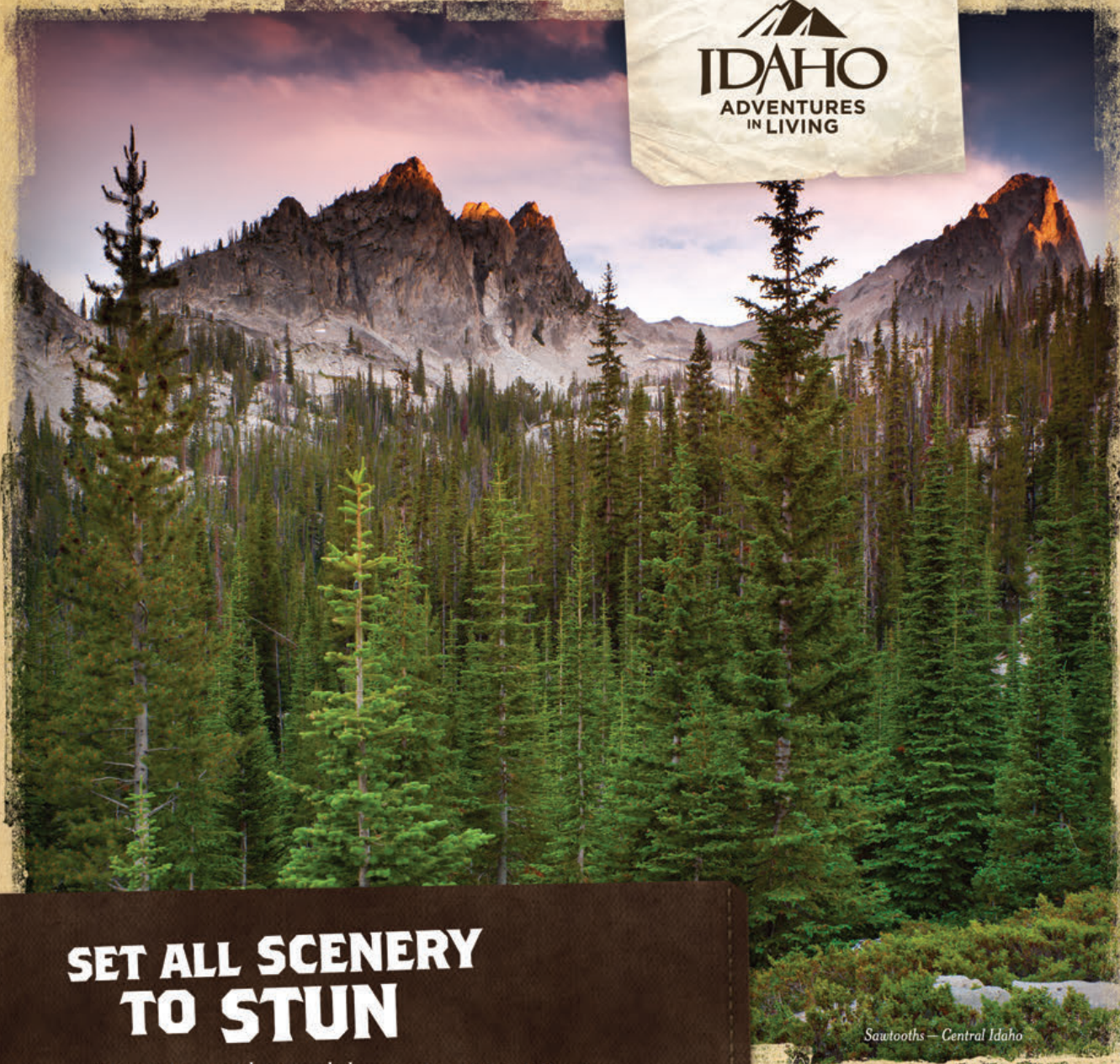


Fig. 6 Mars

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