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**RV Sanitation**  
The Right Way to  
Flush Away

**Trailer Movers  
for Tight Spots**

**Flight of  
the Mallard**

Heartland's Ultralight Bunkhouse





# OE Series Adapter

for factory prep packages



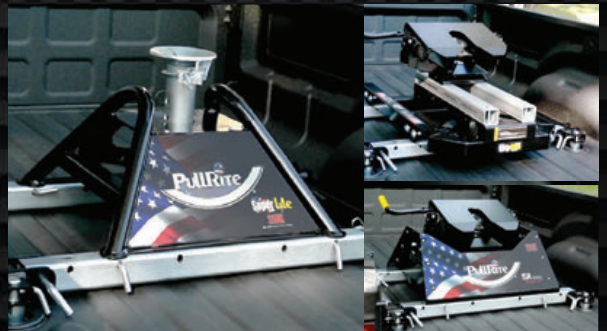
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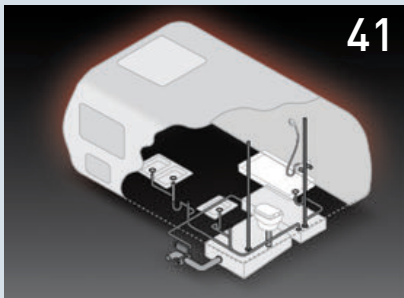
[www.pullrite.com/TL3](http://www.pullrite.com/TL3)



Pull-Rite, Circle 144 on Reader Service Card



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➤ Venture RV's front-living STT333VFL Touring Edition is "the perfect couple's RV." Page 10

# And They're Off!

As RV sales set a record-breaking pace, buyers have more choices than ever



**W**ith prime RVing season close at hand for most folks, I'd like to offer a hearty congratulations to all of you starting out the season with a brand-new RV. Why now, you ask? Because in 2016, 430,691 RVs were shipped from U.S. manufacturers, the most since records started being kept in 1978, according to the Recreation Vehicle Industry Association. This correlates to seven straight years of RV sales increases, with more than a 15 percent rise in 2016 over 2015.

RV ownership continues to gain popularity, not just with retirees and baby boomers, but with Gen Xers and Millennials who are finding that RVing is a great way to combine outdoor adventure with a technologically advanced mobile lifestyle. The RV industry's success is a strong sign that the economy is doing well, and people are discovering that some of the best adventures can be found while traveling and camping in an RV.

In this issue we take a close look at a couple of new RVs: the K-Z Durango Gold G384RLT, a fifth-wheel designed for full-time living (page 18), and the Heartland Mallard M26, a family bunkhouse trailer (page 28). The Mallard article introduces a new feature, the RV Close-Up, so I thought I'd take this opportunity to explain our different levels of reviews, so you know what to expect from each.

The *Trailer Life* Test is a full live-in evaluation, usually conducted over the course of a week, where the RV is scrutinized from the top down in every aspect. We tow the trailer to and from a campsite, weigh and measure it to provide accurate specifications, fill the tanks, run the systems and appliances, and have it professionally photographed, typically for the cover shot and a four- or five-page layout.

The debuting RV Close-Up is a three-page version of the *Trailer Life* Test in which we take an RV out for a day to examine it in detail, going over each feature and evaluating as much as we can without actually camping overnight in it. We shoot photos inside and out, but we rely on manufacturer-supplied specifications and certified weight labels.

In some issues, we include our most basic review, the Walk-Through, in which the evaluator spends a couple of hours with a new RV to get a feel for it. This is frequently done on a dealer's lot or at an RV show, and provides an inside look at a noteworthy model in two pages or less. Lastly, we showcase the latest RVs in short previews in the Around the Bend section and regularly featured roundups.

While we'd love to be able to test all the RVs on the market, this way we can share as many of the new RVs out there as possible.

It's a great time to go RVing. See you on the road! 🚐

— Chris Dougherty, Technical Editor

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## Don't Let It Slide

I am always happy to see *Trailer Life* arrive in the mail. There is so much about this magazine that I enjoy, from Letters and RV Resolutions to glimpses of the new trailers on the market and great trips across North America. This will be our third season with our 2016 Flagstaff Classic Super Lite. That is why I was pleased to see "Spring Opener," Chris Dougherty's March article on preparing RVs for travel. However, I felt the article was lacking information regarding slideout maintenance. Perhaps this topic could be a whole article in itself.

**Beth Franklin, Topeka, Kansas**

*Thanks for the suggestion, Beth. In the meantime, here's a slideout to-do list from the October 2015 issue: "Operate the slideout rooms while listening to and watching the movement. They should move freely and evenly, opening or closing. Inspect all slideout seals, including the upper seal. Clean and apply a protectant to both the inner and outer seals, if applicable. Only use protectant that is free of petroleum distillates. Don't forget to inspect the bottom of the slideout room. Inspect all visible parts of the slide mechanism for loose bolts, excess rust or damaged parts. Lubricate the slideout mechanism only if recommended by the manufacturer." — Editors*

## Late-Braking News

I read Leonard Peterson's March Letter, "Speaking of Disc Brakes." Leonard mentioned experiencing "a pause between applying the brakes in the truck and the activation of the trailer brakes." Two possibilities: Brake-controller incompatibility (not all controllers are compatible with electric-over-hydraulic systems) or an air bubble that delays actuation of the hydraulic system. Bubbles take time to compress, causing the disc brake to lag. Disc brakes that are properly installed and fully bled shouldn't lag.

**Gary Croyle, Hartsville, South Carolina**

## More Perks of Zerks

I just received the March issue and read "Smooth Sailing," Chris Dougherty's article on the MORyde SRE 4000 suspension setup. I installed this system on my 2016 Starcraft Autumn Ridge 315RKS with great results. However, I installed the shackles with the zerk fittings out. I then replaced the supplied straight zerk fittings with 45- and 90-degree fittings. I can grease all the zerks without reaching through the suspension or crawling underneath.

**Joseph Ohrem, Crystal Lake, Illinois**



In the February issue, you printed a letter from Jim Williams regarding "Master of Sway Control," Chris Dougherty's December 2016 article about the Sway Master electronic sway control from Hayes Towing Electronics. The letter stated that the Sway Master is not compatible with General Motors' integrated trailer-brake controller. Hayes now offers the 81755-GM module for use on GM vehicles equipped with the factory trailer-brake controller. The 81775 system is available for other makes and models.

**Bill Smith, Vice President  
Hayes Towing Electronics, Smyrna, Georgia**

## Remedy for Fading Endcaps

I want to toss in my two cents concerning the fading color of RV endcaps mentioned in a number of readers' letters. In March of 2013, we purchased a 2014 Sunset Trail made by CrossRoads. In less than two years, the trailer's dark-colored nose cap had faded significantly.

After going around and around with CrossRoads, which adamantly stuck to the 12-month factory warranty, I found a YouTube video on refinishing the fiberglass cab of a semitruck. The truck looked like new when they were done. I went to [www.wipenew.com](http://www.wipenew.com), bought two packages of Rust-Oleum Wipe New ReColor to treat the nose cap, followed the video procedure and the product directions, and our trailer

looks great again.

I still can't get over the fact that manufacturers of recreational vehicles for outdoor use aren't providing a coating that lasts more than two years outdoors. I hope there have been enough letters published by now that they cure the problem once and for all.

**Bob Kinson, Sidney, Ohio**

## Attitude of Gratitude

On a recent trip to Casper, Wyoming, we experienced a jammed slideout on our 2015 Outdoors RV Wind River trailer. Nelson's RV in Caldwell, Idaho, got us in the next morning and found that a weld on the slideout ratchet had broken. After repairs were made and we got to Casper, the water pump and air conditioner went out.

When we got home, we took the trailer to Lassen RV in Albany, Oregon. The water pump and air conditioner were replaced under our Good Sam extended warranty, and Outdoors RV agreed to pay for the remaining repairs and reimburse us for the work done in Caldwell.

All of these companies need to be commended for their great service.

**Glen A. Jones, Stayton, Oregon** 📧

**TALK TO US!**

**Write to:** *Trailer Life*,  
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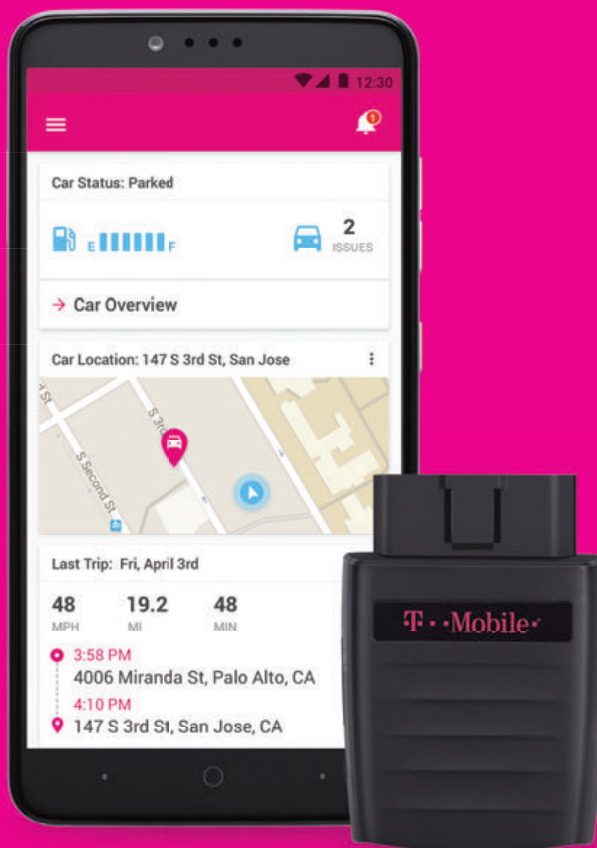
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Going Places





The Cumberland Band will be performing again at the Dunlap Coke Ovens Bluegrass Festival in June. (Right) The remains of more than 200 coke ovens used to convert mountain coal into iron ore in the early 1900s are spread over 88 acres in the Sequatchie Valley.

## Play Me Some Mountain Music

In the heart of Tennessee's Sequatchie Valley, the Dunlap Coke Museum hosts an annual bluegrass festival

article and photos by Neala McCarten

It wasn't always the serene woods that drew people to this part of the Sequatchie Valley in Tennessee. At one time, it was coal mining and the production of coke from that coal for use in the iron and steel foundries of Chattanooga. That history, and the lives of the miners who worked there, is remembered in the Dunlap Coke Museum. It is also honored in the bluegrass music that thrums yearly when local and regional musicians come together to play for the museum's fund-raising Coke Ovens Bluegrass Festival.

The Sequatchie Valley Historical Association (SVHA), formed in 1984 to nurture the property and create the museum, orchestrates the 30-year-old festival. A bluegrass event was a logical choice.

"I've been in bluegrass music most of my adult life, and that's what I knew," explains Ed Brown, a musician with

the Cumberland Band and a member of the SVHA. "We have about three or four local bands, and the others are generally regional, within 100 or 150 miles of Chattanooga," Brown says.

Festival-goers enjoy stage performances and the jam session that runs for hours afterward, but there's more than music ringing through the woods. The down-home and informal festival includes workshops, special events and Stump Dogs — a unique take on hot dogs that are cooked atop the burning interior of a tree stump. "It's a novel effect," Brown says, "and grilled over pure wood rather than charcoal."

It's fascinating to wander the grounds (open daily for self-guided tours) and the museum (open week-ends from April through November). The museum was built as a replica of the coal company store on its original site. Within the re-created walls, there's a fascinating collection of

hundreds of mining and blacksmith artifacts, and a truly extraordinary collection of photographs — the largest in the state. Historian and photographer member Carson Camp has amassed more than 2,000 photos of historical significance.

Visitors can also explore the numerous coke ovens in varied states of deterioration, spread out in huge curves across the landscape. These small wood-fired ovens literally burned off the impurities in the coal, creating a compact fuel that was 100 percent carbon. Hiking trails meander among these vestiges and through the 88-acre park, including a path that was once part of the Cherokee Trail of Tears (no pets allowed).

Parking for RVs and campers is on a pay-what-you-wish basis, and that policy extends to admission to the museum and the festival. This year's festival takes place June 2 and 3.

**Dunlap Coke Museum**  
423-949-2156, [www.cokeovens.com](http://www.cokeovens.com)

**Holiday Travel Park**  
In Chattanooga, approximately 40 miles from Dunlap  
800-693-2877, [www.chattacamp.com](http://www.chattacamp.com)

## Venture RV SportTrek Touring Edition

Venture RV describes its front-living STT333VFL, one of seven floorplans in the Touring Edition travel trailer lineup, as “the perfect couple’s RV.” With an exterior length of 36 feet 11 inches and a 70-inch trifold sofa that transforms into a bed, the trailer has room for a few overnight guests. The living area is spacious and relaxing with lay-flat faux-leather theater seating and a 5,500-Btu fireplace under the entertainment system housed in opposing slides. Interior height is 6 feet 10 inches, and overhead storage is plentiful.

A pony wall with shelving separates the galley’s free-standing table and four chairs from the living area. The kitchen has solid-surface countertops, a three-burner range with a glass cover, a 17-inch oven, a microwave and an 8-cubic-foot refrigerator. Waterfall-type frosted-glass inserts grace many of the upper cabinets, and to the right of the refrigerator is a hand-glazed hardwood door on the pantry.



In the bedroom, the third slide holds a walk-around 70x80-inch king-size bed with a reversible residential quilted comforter. The dresser cabinetry contains a second fireplace, and a solid-wood privacy door closes off the bedroom. Between the bedroom and galley, the bathroom features a radius shower with glass doors, a porcelain toilet and a skylight.

Two doors lead into the trailer, both of which are covered by the 20-foot electric awning. The main entry, located midships, has an all-aluminum step system that is stored inside the door and flips down for stable footing. To the right of the main door is an outdoor kitchen with a 3-cubic-foot refrigerator, sink, pullout cooktop, storage and TV connection. All exterior locksets are keyed alike, and slam-latch baggage doors have magnetic catches. Rock-chip protection goes halfway up the front cap.

The STT333VFL has a gross vehicle weight rating of 9,995 pounds and a base MSRP of \$41,295.

**Venture RV, 888-988-8440, [www.venture-rv.com](http://www.venture-rv.com)**

PHOTO COURTESY ARLINGTON NATIONAL CEMETERY



## Arlington National Cemetery's Memorial Day Service

Virginia's Arlington National Cemetery holds its annual Memorial Day service on May 29, 2017, in the Memorial Amphitheater. The service is sponsored by the U.S. Army Military District of Washington and considered by many to be the nation's official event to honor American military service members. The ceremony includes the presidential laying of a wreath at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier.

Encompassing 624 acres across the Potomac River from Washington, D.C., Arlington National Cemetery is open daily. Call or check the website for more details about the Memorial Day event and the time of the ceremony.

### Arlington National Cemetery

877-907-8585, [www.arlingtoncemetery.mil](http://www.arlingtoncemetery.mil)

### Cherry Hill RV Park

In College Park, Maryland, 20 miles from Arlington  
800-801-6449, [www.cherryhillpark.com](http://www.cherryhillpark.com)

PHOTO COURTESY AVON HERITAGE DUCK TAPE FESTIVAL



## Sticky Situation: Ohio's Duck Tape Festival

Stick together with family and friends for unique entertainment at the 14th annual Avon Heritage Duck Tape Festival at Veterans Memorial Park in Avon, Ohio. This year's June 16 to 18 circus-themed event celebrates Duck Brand Duct Tape, a favorite fix-all available in hundreds of colors and designs. Wacky family fun includes a parade of vibrant Duck Tape floats, a Duck Tape fashion show (participation encouraged!), scavenger hunt, food vendors, games, an arts-and-crafts tent, live entertainment, life-size Duck Tape sculptures and carnival rides. The first 500 guests each day receive a free roll of Duck Tape, and admission and parking are free.

### Avon Heritage Duck Tape Festival

866-818-1116, [www.ducktapefestival.com](http://www.ducktapefestival.com)

### American Wilderness Campground

In Grafton, 14 miles from Avon, 30 miles from Cleveland  
440-926-3700, [www.americanwildernesscampground.com](http://www.americanwildernesscampground.com)

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**Comfortable and powerful:** GMC's 2017 Sierra 3500 Denali HD sports an induction-style hood and generates 445 horsepower and 910 lb-ft of torque.

new heads, rods, pistons, cam, crank, turbo and injectors. They're all combined to give the LP5 19 percent more torque (910 versus 765 lb-ft) and 12 percent more horsepower (445 versus 397) than the previous engine.

The power gain begins at the hood, which now incorporates a full-function induction hood scoop that feeds cool air to the intake system. The LP5 uses a larger BorgWarner variable-vane turbo that delivers better airflow and greater exhaust braking than the outgoing model and features a dedicated oil-cooling system to further improve longevity in demanding conditions.

The cylinder heads are higher flowing (20 percent), the rods are stronger, and the crank-forged and solenoid-activated injectors replace the piezo-type used in previous engines. Tom Dye, lead development engineer for GM full-size HD pickups, says solenoid-activated injectors allowed the factory to further fine-tune the 6.6-liter LP5's towing power without sacrificing fuel economy. — Bruce W. Smith

## GMC HD Denali Muscles Up

Towing big trailers in comfort and style has always been the hallmark of GMC's Sierra 3500 Denali HD dually pickups. The 2017 model moves the trailering performance needle a big step upward with the introduction of the new 6.6-liter Duramax LP5 V-8 turbodiesel.

GM's LP5 Duramax, backed with the Allison 1000 six-speed automatic transmission, uses the same block as the older model, but from there it's 90 percent new parts:

## NEWSWIRE



CONFERENCE

### College for RVers

The next RV Technical Education and Safety Conference, designed for enthusiasts who desire to learn about RVs, is scheduled for October 1 through 5, 2017, in Elizabethtown, Kentucky. The large assembly of RVIA award-winning RV experts, authors and educators will lead a multitude of seminars, classes and roundtable discussions. Also available is behind-the-wheel training. According to Walter Cannon, executive director of the RV Safety and Education Foundation, "We have been fortunate to have the top caliber of instructors possessing technical training expertise sharing...education, knowledge and experience with our attendees."

Early-bird registration is \$199 through May 31, 2017; regular price is \$249.  
[www.rvsafety.com](http://www.rvsafety.com)



GIVEAWAY

### Lance Trailer Winner

Lance, manufacturer of truck campers, travel trailers and toy haulers, has partnered with the California RV Show for the past 13 years to provide the grand prize for the annual event's sweepstakes. This year the show will celebrate its 65th anniversary at the Pomona Fairplex during the October 6 through 15 display of more than 1,350 RVs. Last February, Tom Gaither, RVIA western show director, announced Dan Burbott as the 2016 winner of a 2017 Lance 1475 travel trailer. Burbott, a newcomer to RVing, entered the sweepstakes while attending the 2016 show. He said he practiced with "driveway camping," and is now enjoying RV trips to local destinations with his family.

[www.lancecamper.com](http://www.lancecamper.com)  
[www.thebestrvshow.com](http://www.thebestrvshow.com)



VACATIONS

### Escorted RV Tours

Fantasy RV Tours provides escorted RV vacations throughout North America, including Alaska and Baja, Mexico, as well as South Africa, Australia, Europe and other worldwide locations. The company has been in business for more than 20 years and offers 41 tours for the remainder of 2017. Travelers can choose an itinerary and join fellow RVers while attending rallies, experiencing culinary delights, and marveling at pristine wilderness and wildlife.

Fantasy RV Tours allows RVers to travel at their own pace and do things on their own, while experienced guides take care of planning the routes, making RV park and campground reservations, and arranging activities. Discounts available to Good Sam members.  
800-952-8496, [www.fantasyrvtours.com](http://www.fantasyrvtours.com)

## Go Big in Beaumont, Texas

Beaumont, Texas, has some big attractions: a 24-foot-tall working fire hydrant covered in Dalmatian spots; Big Tex, a 900-pound, 13-foot 8-inch alligator; and the Lucas Gusher, a 25-foot oil-well replica that sprays water more than 100 feet into the air at the same rate it blew oil on the day of discovery in 1901.

The fire hydrant was created by Disney to promote its 1999 *101 Dalmatians* movie and now resides in front of the Fire Museum of Texas (open weekdays, 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.). Big Tex, the largest alligator ever caught in Texas, lives in a 15-acre preserve for alligators, crocodiles and snakes called Gator Country (open daily, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.), along with Big Al, a 13-foot 4-inch gator weighing more than 1,000 pounds. The Lucas Gusher, one of America's first big oil wells, pumped 100,000 gallons a day during its heyday and has been re-created at the Spindletop-Gladys City Boomtown Museum on the Lamar University campus (open Tuesday through Saturday, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., and Sunday, 1 to 5 p.m.).

Beaumont's residents welcome y'all to spend time checking out the city's supersize attractions.



PHOTO COURTESY BEAUMONT TX

Fire Museum of Texas, 409-880-3927, [www.fmotassn.com](http://www.fmotassn.com)

Gator Country, 409-794-9453, [www.gatorrescue.com](http://www.gatorrescue.com)

Spindletop-Gladys City Boomtown Museum

409-880-1750, [www.lamar.edu/spindletop-gladys-city](http://www.lamar.edu/spindletop-gladys-city)

### RV Camping

Gulf Coast RV Resort, 866-410-7801, [www.gulfcoastrvresort.com](http://www.gulfcoastrvresort.com)

Hidden Lake RV Park, 409-840-9691, [www.hiddenlakervparktx.com](http://www.hiddenlakervparktx.com)

Lucas Gusher RV Park, 409-835-7848, [www.lucasgusherrv.com](http://www.lucasgusherrv.com) 🚐

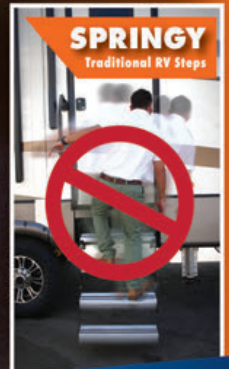
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## A River Ran Through It

A Pennsylvania family contacted RV Resolutions after an unsecured freshwater hose flooded their week-old travel trailer:



► We purchased our 2016 Forest River Salem Cruise Lite last May. Not even a week after purchasing the RV, we decided to camp in it at home for the night. While filling the freshwater tank, we started to see water running out from underneath the RV. We felt the underbelly covering, and it was full of water. Inside, water was all over the floor.

My husband figured something was wrong with the overflow hose for the holding tank. We removed the outside valve where the freshwater hose is inserted and found the clamp that should have been hooked to the overflow hose. After taking apart the compartments under the kitchen sink, we discovered that the hose was not connected.

We took the trailer to the dealership and were told little to no damage was found, but how do we know they even checked? How do we know mold won't grow under the compartments? How do we know the wood won't rot? We paid a plumber, got a dehumidifier and canceled two camping trips, but the worst of it was that we purchased a new RV and could not go camping in it. All Forest River

has said is, as a "goodwill gesture," our original factory warranty will be extended for three months.

We are hoping RV Resolutions can help with compensation.  
**Keri Kish, Stroudsburg, Pennsylvania**

### THE COMPANY RESPONDS

After RV Resolutions reached out to Forest River's Salem division, we received an explanation of the company's policy:

Although we understand the customers' frustration with having a leak in their trailer and missing out on planned camping time, Forest River has fulfilled our requirements of repairing the trailer per our warranty policy through the selling dealership. Our dealer partner, Stoltzfus RVs and Marine in Adamstown, Pennsylvania, completed the necessary inspections to ensure that there were no extensive water damages present inside or outside the trailer and that any damages found were repaired per the warranty policy.

As a good-faith gesture, Forest River agreed to extend the customer's warranty by three months, since the trailer was at the dealership for approximately 30 days during the inspection and repair process. Forest River is still willing to entertain the possibility of reimbursing for the plumbing bill and lost deposits for camping trips, as another good-faith gesture, if the customers can provide invoices or receipts to document those expenses.

**Todd Jones, Service and Warranty Manager  
Salem/Wildwood Division of Forest River, Goshen, Indiana**

## No End to Endcap Issues

In the past few years, RV Resolutions has received a number of letters about faded paint on endcaps on relatively new trailers, including the following request for help:

We bought a 2015 Cedar Creek fifth-wheel in 2014. In June 2015, I saw a 2013 model with badly deteriorating paint on the front cap. The owner told me the manufacturer would not correct the problem because the trailer was out of warranty.

After reading in *Trailer Life* about other owners having similar issues, I began to keep a close watch on our fifth-wheel's endcaps. I noticed in October 2015 that the paint on the front cap was beginning to deteriorate. I took the RV to our dealer, and the front cap was repainted under the warranty. In April 2016 the rear

cap was beginning to deteriorate, but coverage was denied because the fifth-wheel was out of warranty.

Since then, Cedar Creek has offered to repair the rear cap at the factory in Indiana or provide \$750 plus replacement decals to have the work done near our home in Florida. Towing the RV to Indiana would be quite an expense, and having the job done here is estimated to cost \$1,900, which would be \$1,150 out of pocket.

I feel the paint on these RVs should certainly last longer than what we and others are experiencing. Any help you

can give would be greatly appreciated.  
**Tommy Ferguson, Gainesville, Florida**

### THE COMPANY RESPONDS

RV Resolutions asked the manufacturer to reconsider Tommy Ferguson's case and received the following reply:

Cedar Creek made contact with Mr. Ferguson and has agreed to a one-time goodwill offer for retaining the rear cap and reinstalling the decals.

**Denise Davis, RVIA Certified Technician  
Cedar Creek Division of Forest River  
Topeka, Indiana**

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

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## REVIEWS YOU CAN USE

Reading and sharing guest feedback about RV parks is easy on the Good Sam Club website



California's Caliente Springs Resort (above) and Colorado's Tiger Run Resort (top) are two of the thousands of RV parks and campgrounds that can be reviewed on the Good Sam Club website.

Have you found a great-sounding RV resort online? Before booking a reservation, check the RV Park Reviews on the Good Sam Club website, [www.goodsam.com](http://www.goodsam.com), to make sure the destination lives up to your expectations.

More than 10,000 RV Park Reviews have been posted by park guests on the Good Sam website, providing invaluable firsthand impressions of overall service and quality. Reviewers also rate RV parks from one to five stars, and the average score appears on each reviewed park's information page. Also included in each RV park's online listing is Good Sam's annual three-numbered rating.

Since launching RV Park Reviews two years ago, hundreds of reviews have been posted each month, and the results have shown the following:

- ▶ Sixty-two percent of all parks reviewed receive four or five stars.
- ▶ Good Sam Parks, which offer members a 10 percent discount on nightly stays, earn an average of four stars.

### START REVIEWING AND JOIN THE CONVERSATION

You can share your own RV Park Reviews on the Good Sam website by going to [www.goodsam.com/rvparkreviews](http://www.goodsam.com/rvparkreviews) and clicking on Get Started Reviewing. Use the Find a Campground search tool to look up the park you'd like to review. On the park's information page, go to the Reviews tab and start sharing. To leave a review, RVers must be signed in on the Good Sam Club website.



**📌 DID YOU KNOW?** The Good Sam Club got its start in 1966 with a simple letter. A small RV periodical named *Trail-R-News* heard from a reader who suggested that the magazine form a club. The publisher, Art Griffin, printed stickers of the smiling, haloed mascot, and members were encouraged to help each other on the road and in the campground.

### The Reviews Are In

As the following excerpts show, RV Park Reviews give RVers information they won't find anywhere else.



"What a pleasant surprise to pull in and be welcomed by a staff that was so efficient. All spaces are large. Ours was 100 feet. We went to the on-site café for dinner and breakfast. The meals were great."



"Very large sites and lots of grass for our pets. Staffers were extremely friendly and very attentive to the campers' needs."



"The campground staff is very helpful. Sites are generally level and easy to access. The only drawbacks are that the Wi-Fi is very weak and cellphone service is almost nonexistent."



"Arrived after dark and was surprised to find no lighting, not even in the sign, making it tough to find. This park is set back off the highway and is quite dark at night."



## SMARTER HOME SECURITY

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After his friends were robbed, Chad Laurans learned that most home security companies charge hefty fees and lock users into long-term contracts, so he came up with something new. Relying on his electrical engineering degree from Yale and an MBA from Harvard, Laurans designed a more affordable 24/7 home security system, SimpliSafe.

True to its name, the wireless SimpliSafe system is easy to install, and security monitoring starts at \$14.99 a month, less than half of what many other companies charge. And unlike most of the competition, the service doesn't require a long-term commitment.

For Good Sam Club members, the deal is even better. SimpliSafe is now offering members two months of free round-the-clock monitoring with the purchase of a security system. Members also save with free shipping and can try the system risk free, thanks to the 60-day money-back guarantee. The company even covers the cost of return shipping.

With no hard-wiring or drilling needed, SimpliSafe can be set up in about 30 minutes, so there are no installation fees. There's also no vulnerable landline that can be cut. A security camera provides live-stream HD video, and owners can check in from anywhere on a smartphone or other internet device. All of these features helped SimpliSafe win an Editors' Choice award from CNET, a leading technology news and reviews organization.

► To learn more about the SimpliSafe home security system and the Good Sam Club deal, go to [www.simplisafe.com/goodsam](http://www.simplisafe.com/goodsam).



## GOOD TIMES, GREAT SAVINGS WITH THE RV TRAVEL GUIDE



The 2017 *Good Sam RV Travel & Savings Guide* gives Good Sam Club members the tools to plan great trips and save big bucks along the way.

This year's guide comes packed with information on 12,504 North American RV parks and public campgrounds, including more than 2,100 Good Sam Parks that offer 10 percent discounts to members. New for 2017, campground listings include Wi-Fi-at-site availability and expanded hookup and amperage information.

Helping readers decide where to stay are Good Sam's exclusive RV park ratings and articles on everything from family camping to snowbird destinations. State and provincial maps make navigation easy. Also included in the annually updated guide is \$1,000 worth of coupons redeemable at Camping World.

► Members can save more than 60 percent off the newsstand price of the 2017 *Good Sam RV Travel & Savings Guide*, paying just \$6.95. That's a \$13 savings off the \$19.95 non-member price. The guide is available at Camping World SuperCenters and [www.campingworld.com/2017guide](http://www.campingworld.com/2017guide). Good Sam members provide their membership number at checkout for the discount.

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hundreds of dollars on outdoor gear and RV accessories at Camping World SuperCenters and on phone orders at **888-857-6631**. The members-only coupons are updated every quarter on the Good Sam Club website. Check often to find the latest offers at [www.goodsamclub.com/coupons](http://www.goodsamclub.com/coupons).



**LP-GAS DISCOUNTS:** Good Sam Club members can save 25 percent off the regular

retail price on up to 40 gallons of LP-gas every Tuesday and Wednesday at Camping World SuperCenters. LP-gas (aka propane) is available at most Camping World locations throughout the United States. To find participating stores in your neck of the woods, go to [www.campingworld.com/stores](http://www.campingworld.com/stores).



**MAIL FORWARDING:** Traveling Good Sam Club members and

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# A Touch of Gold

K-Z RV's Durango Gold targets full-timers wanting to spread out, store lots of supplies and benefit from a slideout-positioned entry door

In modern society, it is inevitable that things are going to change, and that includes products produced by the RV industry. Of late, manufacturers have been introducing new models and floorplans at a record pace, and just about every builder is refining its models to cater to the whims of buyers. K-Z RV, now part of the Thor family, followed that thinking when it upgraded its popular Durango Gold fifth-wheels for 2017.

The Durango Gold line is targeted at full-timers who are looking for luxury without breaking the bank, and the G384RLT is the latest addition. In getting there, the company focuses on

adding touches that upgrade the look and function of the fifth-wheel without throwing in high-dollar items that make you feel like you're inside a rolling mansion, or paying for one. The designers highlighted specific features, carefully coordinating the development of this latest iteration with good styling and good-quality, value-priced items, where possible. The result is a fifth-wheel with a solid build and enough changes to appeal to more discriminating buyers who spend a lot of time in their fifth-wheels.

Take, for example, the platform on which the Durango Gold is built. Starting with a commonly used I-beam fifth-wheel frame, the foundation isn't



In revamping its 2017 Durango Gold line, the company added enough upscale amenities without a high cost.



anything you'd call fancy, but then it adds the trusted Equa-Flex Equalizer suspension and Trailair Rota Flex pin box. This road-worthy hardware quickly proved itself with a smooth pull that allowed us to easily maneuver the 40-foot 4-inch G384RLT with confidence and in comfort. Finishing off the chassis are a pair of 7,000-

**(Above left)** An entertainment center with a fireplace shares the slideout with a roomy galley. **(Above right)** Theater seating and a dining table flank the entry door built into the slideout. Four people can sit at the table when the two extra chairs are used (stored under the bed).

pound Dexter axles with auto-adjusting brakes, supported by 235/80R16E tires on attractive gun-metal-gray, eight-lug aluminum wheels. Also attached to the frame is the newest version of Lippert's

six-point hydraulic auto-leveling system. This more compact and versatile system worked well after clocking a little time with the owner's manual.

While there isn't an abundance of



modern digital entertainment equipment lurking behind the exterior compartment doors, there is the right amount of space for users — even full-timers — to keep just about anything needed to participate in the lifestyle. This includes a nicely organized and easily accessible convenience center containing heated and enclosed dump valves. Complementing the heated and encased underbelly is a massive pass-through storage compartment located near the center of the trailer that is totally finished, sealed and heated, and fitted with firm-grasping slam latches.

Up front there's another compartment with optional generator prewiring and a specialized battery box/compartment combo, where traditional battery boxes have been swapped for a much cleaner and user-friendly facility. The living side of the 8-foot-5-inch-wide exterior provides a home for a set of speakers and an optional pair of Carefree LED-lit electric awnings, 17 feet for the front and 11 feet for the slideout, which houses the entry door. The entry in the slideout is fairly uncommon in the industry. Perfectly tinted frameless windows flow seamlessly among the easy-on-the-eyes silver and black graphics.

As for that aforementioned entry door in the slideout, it may not be the first one on the market, but the company claims it's the first to incorporate MORryde's new flip-up entry-door stairs, the StepAbove. Although the entrance inspired our skepticism at first glance, the configuration was quickly



**A king-size bed and a generous assortment of cabinets complement the front wardrobe closet and add to the Durango Gold's homelike feel. The well-placed sink is a nice touch.**

appreciated. Not only was the slideout super solid once deployed, but this structure provides tons of otherwise untapped interior space because a wall does not have to be devoted to the entry door.

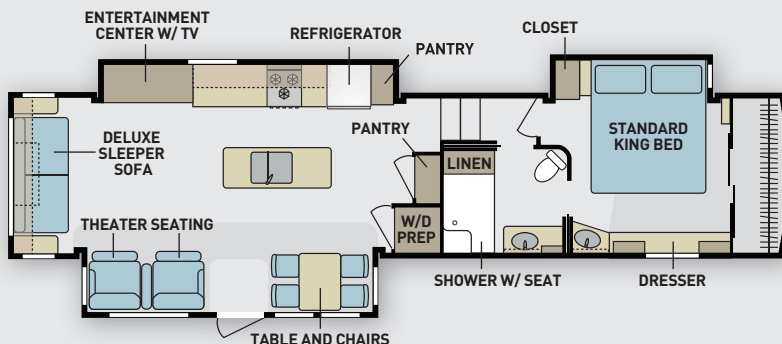
We initially scratched out heads trying to figure out how to deploy the StepAbove before opening the slideout, since the panel to run the slide was inside the trailer, and we were outside. When the steps are in their stored position, entry to the interior is impossible. Once we found a second touch pad for opening the slides inside an exterior compartment, we were able to deploy the slide and lower the steps. In use, the StepAbove is sturdy and offered great landings for our feet. It does require extra space, so parking close in

a storage area or crowded parking lot may be problematic. Also, while not heavy enough to be a burden for some, it does require some strength to maneuver, especially when lifting it back into the allocated travel space in the door frame.

Speaking of sturdy structures, a peek into the nuts and bolts reveals a solid foundation for the Durango's body and living quarters. The fifth-wheel is built on an aluminum-perimeter frame using 2x2- and 2x3-inch materials, all fully welded. To assemble this big rig from the floor up starts with 5/8-inch marine-grade tongue-and-groove decking that's been glued and screwed, providing a noticeably flex-free base needed for a lot of foot traffic. Before the floor is seated, an extra measure is taken to prevent freezing pipes by sandwiching all plumbing lines between the floor and insulation, plus the lines are heated, too.

The company touts its All Weather Insulation package, which includes double-insulated holding tanks rated at R-38. The same R-value is applied to the floor, ceiling, roof and end caps. Side walls have an R-11 insulation rating, and wall construction uses the industry-standard lamination process with the addition of a Lamilux high-gloss-ivory fiberglass finishing layer, projecting a deep, glossy and rich-looking luster. Topping the towering

## K-Z DURANGO GOLD G384RLT





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walls, a full-walk-on Superflex TPO roof membrane overlies  $\frac{3}{8}$ -inch decking on 5-inch welded trusses. Crowning the front end is an extra-reinforced, heavy-duty painted fiberglass front cap with integrated LEDs, which highlight the golden hues of the ivory coat.

Once aboard the fifth-wheel, what appears to be a small home's worth of coordinated cabinetry, top to bottom and front to back, graces the gray-toned walls. Again, it's not difficult to see the benefits of having the entry door in the slide room and that this rig is intended for long stays. Your eyes are almost mesmerized by the wonderfully wide seating and entertaining area. Within the nearly condo-size living room, not only does the open space peak out at a healthy 6-foot-4-inch height and 8-foot-1-inch width, but there's also a comfortably viewed entertainment center housing a huge flat-screen TV and a fireplace underneath. A plush hide-a-bed couch and matching optional theater seating provide more creature comforts.

Some key items inside the G384RLT are an out-of-the-way but easily accessible pantry with LED backlighting and a prepped washer-dryer closet that is large enough for stackable appliances. An optional onboard InterVac central-vacuum system resides nearby with enough power to tidy up at a moment's notice. For those lacking the experience with one of these built-in soil suckers, it's well worth the money. An electrical epicenter provides access to several switches and climate controls in one spot. Keeping the inner elements cozy year-round are a 35,000-Btu furnace and optional dual 15,000-Btu air conditioners, one in the living room and another in the front bedroom.

Before strolling up to the master bedroom and bathroom, attention focuses on the galley, which is inviting and homelike. It is impossible to miss the large, deep-basin residential stainless-steel sink that smoothly flows off the edges of the solid-surface counter on the kitchen island. Aiding in kitchen

cleanup and food prep are a high-arch pullout sprayer faucet and an optional dishwasher. Immediately opposing the ideally placed island is another, even longer solid-surface counter, but with a flush-mounted, folding glass-covered high-output range, trimmed in stainless. Directly above the stove is a matching home-size convection microwave. Nestled in the neighboring kitchen cabinetry is an optional 18.3-cubic-foot, four-door Norcold PolarMax RV refrigerator. Forgoing a residential refrigerator is somewhat of an anomaly in a full-timer's rig these days, but it does provide the versatility to stay unleashed from hookup power; a residential model is available as an option.

The kitchen cabinets are cleanly fit and finished, and every drawer has heavy-duty 100-pound-rated guides to prevent sagging. Lighting up the kitchen and living room are variously colored, tactically positioned LED lights in the ceiling, cabinets and anywhere else they'll fit throughout the interior.



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\*Universal Hardware fits the following Carefree® 8' extension awnings models: Spirit, Fiesta, Simplicity Traveler and Eclipse.



(Above) Towing the 40-plus-footer was uneventful. Well-placed exterior graphics are aesthetically pleasing. (Right) The large glass-door shower is inviting, but the bathroom could use a little more pizzazz for targeting full-timers.

While K-Z tags this fifth-wheel as a luxury model, the bathroom falls a little short in this department. There's the usual array of fixtures, and the rectangular shower, which is inviting and easy to spend time in lounging under the water, is complemented by a solid-surface counter and stainless under-mount sink. It would be nice to see a higher-quality faucet and shower-head that is a little more residential in

styling and function, and not plastic. On the positive side, there's plenty of room for dressing and moving around, the toilet is not crowded, and there's a good glass shower door.

The front bedroom will not disappoint and is suitable for those who need to store a large selection of clothing and other items in a wardrobe closet. In just about any direction from the king-size bed are a grand assortment of cabinets

and storage cubbyholes. At the foot of the bed is a full-wall dresser with a very appreciated secondary sink, mirror and full personal-prep station at one end, while the center section houses another fairly large TV. Following the edge of the dresser leads to a full-length, double-door mirrored closet.

Like the rest of the fifth-wheel, the bedroom has plenty of LED lighting for dressing and reading. Although the bed

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## SPECIFICATIONS

## K-Z DURANGO GOLD G384RLT

Exterior Length	40' 4"
Exterior Width	8' 5"
Exterior Height	13' 3"
Interior Width	8' 1"
Interior Height	6' 4"

**Construction** Welded-aluminum construction with laminated, glossy fiberglass side walls, 5/8-inch tongue-and-groove marine-grade decking, 5-inch welded trusses and 3/8-inch deck; radius roof with one-piece TPO membrane

**Freshwater Cap.** 67 gal.

**Black-/Gray-Water Cap.** 57/97 gal.

**LP-Gas Cap.** 14 gal.

**Water-Heater Cap.** 12 gal.

**Refrigerator** 18.3 cu. ft.

**Furnace** 35,000 Btu

**Air Conditioner** (2) 15,000 Btu

**Converter** 65 amp

**Battery** (2) 12-volt

**Tires** ST 235/80R16 LRE

**Suspension** Leaf spring with Equa-Flex

**Weight** (freshwater, water heater, LP-gas full; no cargo) 13,140 lbs.

**Hitch Weight** 2,780 lbs.

**Axle Weight** 10,360 lbs.

**GVWR** 14,995 lbs.

**GAWR** (2) 7,000 lbs.

**Cargo Carrying Cap.** 1,855 lbs.

**Base MSRP** \$68,130

**As-Tested MSRP** \$79,911

**Basic Warranty** 2 years

## K-Z RV

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MORryde's StepAbove is built into the slideout's doorway. Folding out from the Durango's entry door is clever, and the rungs provide positive footing.

allows access to a huge storage area under the mattress and is very comfortable, it takes up a lot of real estate, and potential owners may want to opt for a queen-size bed to allow more walking room. Also, more attention to detail could be exercised when assembling the bed structure, as some of the overhanging plastic trim corners were not cut properly and created a problem when walking too close to the bed. This is a simple fix that the dealer should be able to rectify, but better yet, do it right the first time at the factory.

Overall, the Durango Gold provides

an inviting home base for full-timers, and the G384RLT is a good choice for those who like to spread out and enjoy the features of a rear living room with theater seating and entertainment areas. Rest assured that hosting visitors can be easily handled without fighting for personal space. The right touch of technology, the slideout entry door and robust steps, and the long list of amenities make this fifth-wheel a real contender in the full-time arena, and its overall exterior looks and interior decor will contribute to pride of ownership. 🚐





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- Convenient plug handles



CW# 81278 120/240V, 50A, 3850 Joules  
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**With the substantial investment you make in owning and maintaining your RV, a commonly overlooked need is electrical protection.**

Do you ever wonder why electronics and electrical equipment seem to fail more regularly in an RV than in a home? This is all related to the condition of the power source to which the equipment is connected. Campground power systems are not rated for the same demand as a residential system, which can lead to issues with the incoming voltage levels. In addition, physical damage to the electrical equipment is more likely to occur at a campground. Damaged receptacles or damaged wires very often result in electric shock, fire or equipment damage.

Southwire has meticulously engineered and refined one of the most complete lines of protective devices for RV power protection. From full electrical protection, to surge protection with diagnostics, Southwire's Surge Guard® power protection products have you covered. Surge protection with diagnostics is designed for pop-up campers and small travel trailers without many electrical amenities, while the full electrical protection products are ideal for larger towables and motorhomes that contain more electronics. Protect your family and investment from the dangerous and costly results of bad campground power.

## Surge Protection with Diagnostics

Surge Guard® models 44260 and 44270 provide trusted surge protection with easy-to-read wiring diagnostics. LED indicators provide a read out of the incoming power condition to alert you to open ground, open neutral and reverse polarity. There is also a surge protection status light to indicate if the product is still protecting against a surge. The 30A #73993 provides 2100 Joules of surge protection while the 50A #73995 provides 4200 Joules.



## Surge Protection with Enhanced Diagnostics

New for 2017, Surge Guard® models #102467 and #102468 provide the same trusted surge protection (2100/4200 Joules) as models #73993 and #73995, while upgrading the diagnostic capabilities. In addition to open ground, open neutral, reverse polarity, and surge status indication, this product also indicates reverse ground/line and overheating plug. Flip-up weather cover protects receptacle.



## Portable – Full Electrical Protection

Surge Guard® models #81277 (2450 Joules) and #81278 (3850 Joules) provide full electrical protection for any RV type and are highly recommended for larger towables and motorhomes. With an easy to read LCD display, these models provide a textual information display that does not require code interpretation. Real time voltage and amp draw are continuously displayed on the LCD screen. Power is automatically disconnected if the following conditions are present: low/high voltage, open ground, open neutral, reverse polarity, and overheating of plugs. The incoming power is constantly monitored, allowing for automatic reset when acceptable power is restored. These models also include a surge status LED indicator.



## Hardwire – Full Electrical Protection

Providing the same features and benefits as the portable Surge Guard® models #81277/81278, the hardwire Surge Guard® models #90195 and #90196 provide full electrical protection with the convenience of being wired directly into the coach. With multi-mode surge protection, the hardwire Surge Guard® models will automatically monitor the incoming power and disconnect when a fault is present. These UL listed devices are installed out of the elements without the need to carry in and out of your coach to plug in. An optional LCD display, part number #90197, is available to provide an easy to read display that can be located anywhere inside of your coach. The #90197 display includes 50' of data cable.



*Don't let this happen to you! Using a surge protector that offers multi-mode surge suppression and additional safety features will help protect against the risk of electrical fire, which can quickly consume an RV and leave you, your family and pets little time to escape.*

Southwire's Surge Guard® products and accessories are available at Camping World stores and other retail outlets. Southwire provides everything you need to "Protect What You Value Most™" when you plug in your RV.

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**RV CLOSE-UP**



# AT HOME IN THE HEARTLAND

The venerable Mallard travel trailer offers family-friendly features at an affordable price

**T**he Mallard is a migratory duck that brings to mind images of the outdoors, like beautiful lakes and mountains, plaid flannels and camping. It is in the shadow of those images that the Mallard name has existed as a travel-trailer builder since 1952 and carries on today as a division of Thor's Heartland RV.

We had an opportunity to take a close-up look at a 2017 Mallard M26 at Happy Traveler RV Park in Thonotosassa, Florida, a 224-site, full-featured Good Sam Park situated

in a heavily shaded grove.

Sold exclusively at Camping World, the 32-foot M26 is a single-slide, ultralight travel trailer with rear-corner bunks, a rear-corner

bath with a shower/tub, and a front master bedroom. The trailer's amenities are designed to cater to six to eight family members.

Entering the M26 reveals classy decor with light-colored walls and dark accents and upholstery. The gray vinyl-plank flooring is attractive and covers the whole floor sans the slide-out, which has tan and gray carpeting. Care of either is easy with the optional central-vacuum system, and vinyl floors are all the rage, especially for families, because of their wear resistance and easy cleaning.

The slideout contains the standard dinette with a freestanding table, which is a nice feature. The table can be moved outside or even around the kitchen for extra prep space. The legs fold up, and the table sits on the bench-seat supports to create a bed

**The Mallard M26's L-shaped kitchen is open and has plenty of counter space for preparing family repasts. The double bunk and corner bath are at the rear of the travel trailer, next to a closet/pantry above an optional built-in vacuum system.**



The exterior of the M26 contrasts light-colored side walls with a gloss black front cap. The compartments feature slam-latch doors with magnetic catches for ease of use.

for one tall adult or a couple of kids. Next to the dinette is a Thomas Payne sofa bed clad in a soft PolyHyde vinyl.

Toward the front of the trailer in the living area is an island entertainment center with a Furrion 12-volt DC AM/FM/DVD radio with speakers and connections for an owner-supplied wall-mount flat-screen TV. The TV cabinet spins around for convenient viewing in the master bedroom. Above the TV is a storage cabinet with mirrored lift-up doors. Below is an open space for electronic gear and another closed storage cabinet on the bottom.

The L-shaped kitchen is open and nicely equipped. It features a glass-topped Suburban range and a double-bowl sink with a gooseneck faucet and pull-out sprayer. Counter space is adequate, and, as mentioned, the dinette table can be pulled over

if needed. At the end of the counter is a drawer pack, and there's more storage under the sink base. The space has plenty of LED lighting, and receptacles are adequate. Above the range are a vent hood and a High Pointe microwave oven. The kitchen is equipped with a Dometic DM2652 6-cubic-foot refrigerator and freezer next to a pantry and wardrobe cabinet that houses the central-vacuum system and 55-amp converter.

The master bedroom has a 74-inch queen bed tucked snugly between the front wall and the entertainment-island wall. Each side has an electrical receptacle and LED reading lights. The bed lifts for storage and is flanked by large bedside tables with cubbies underneath. Shirt wardrobes are above on both sides, along with a cross-bed upper cabinet, all with mirrored doors.

## HEARTLAND MALLARD M26

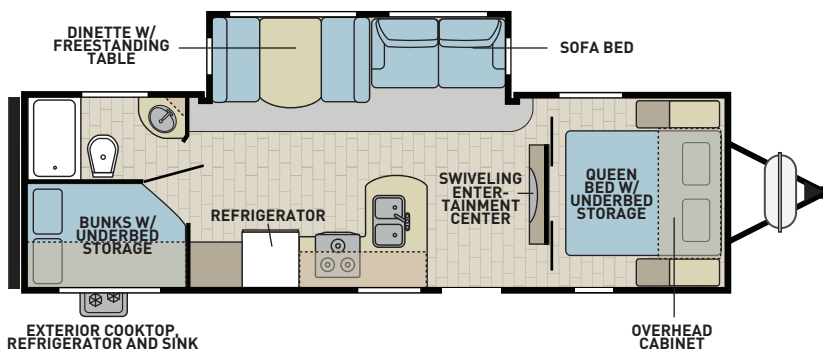


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## PICTURE



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(Above left) The bathroom gets the job done with enough room for showering. There is no sink base storage, however. (Above right) The double bunks are roomy, and each has a window and light, with storage beneath.



Moving to the rear, large bunk beds occupy one corner, with a nice storage cabinet below the bottom bunk. On the opposite side is the bathroom, which has plenty of space for even a 6-footer. The pedestal sink is on the tight side with no storage underneath. There is a vanity cabinet but no place to store towels, toilet paper or other necessities. The tub and shower are compact but with a skylight above, so, again, a 6-footer can get clean adequately. The tub is ideal for kids, and there is plenty of floor space for toweling off.

Comfort throughout the trailer is maintained by the standard 15,000-

Btu dual-ducted air conditioner and 30,000-Btu furnace.

The exterior of the Mallard M26 is sharp looking with bright-white fiberglass side walls set off by black trim and a gloss-black fiberglass front cap. Gloss-black diamond plate adorns the lower section of the front, with a light fixture attached on the curb side at the frame level to make nighttime hitching duties easier. On the street side is the Furrion solar-charge connection. The A-frame houses two 5-gallon LP-gas cylinders, a battery and a manual jack. While we would love to see 7-gallon cylinders and a power jack, these are

(Below left) The slideout contains the dinette with a portable table and sofa sleeper. (Below middle) The master bedroom features a queen bed, reading lights and bedside tables with ample space. (Below right) To make outdoor entertaining easy, an exterior kitchen is set up with a two-burner LP-gas cooktop and a bar-sized refrigerator and sink.



easy upgrades at the time of purchase.

Construction of the body of the trailer is sturdy, with a 2-inch laminated, aluminum-framed floor and fiberglass-clad side walls, and a 4-inch vacuum-bonded, fully walkable rubber-clad roof, although the M26 doesn't have a roof ladder as an option.

The curb side features an electric awning with an LED light strip, a porch light, AC-power receptacles, a freshwater fill, and the furnace access port and exhaust. There are outside speakers for the stereo system but no outside TV connection on this model; again, that can easily be added, should the owner desire to watch TV out under the awning.

Toward the rear of the trailer, the M26 features Heartland's Outdoor Party Center, an exterior kitchen that contains a small bar refrigerator, a two-burner LP-gas cooktop and a full-bar sink, plus some usable counter space for prep.

The LP-gas quick-connection under the trailer is useful for the cooktop or a barbecue grill. We had some difficulty connecting and disconnecting the hose from the cooktop, as the hose is separate, and no clearance was left to access the connection on the cooktop, requiring us to remove the cooktop to connect it. This would be easily rectified during a predelivery inspection at the dealership, however.

Both outside compartments feature radius slam-latch doors with paddle-style locks and magnetic holdups, which are welcome additions.

The utility connections are standard, with a twist-on 30-amp cord set, cable TV, city water and black-tank flush all on the street side behind the

## MANUFACTURER'S SPECIFICATIONS\*

### 2017 Heartland Mallard M26

Exterior Length	32' 2"
Exterior Width	8'
Exterior Height	11' 4"
Interior Width	7' 8"
Interior Height	6' 6"
Construction	Vacuum-laminated, aluminum-frame; 2" side walls; 4" roof with rubber membrane
Freshwater Cap.	36 gal.
Gray-Water Cap.	37 gal.
Black-Water Cap.	35 gal.
LP-Gas Cap.	9.4 gal.
Water-Heater Cap.	6 gal.
Refrigerator	6 cu. ft.
Furnace	30,000 Btu
Air Conditioner	15,000 Btu
Converter	55 amp
Tires	ST225/75R15E
Suspension	Leaf spring with Wide Trax
GVWR	8,600 lbs.
Dry Weight	6,236 lbs.
Hitch Weight	660 lbs.
CCC	2,364 lbs.
GAWR (2)	4,400 lbs.
MSRP	\$26,496 (all options standard)
Warranty	1-year comprehensive

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slideout. The sanitary connections are tucked out of the way to prevent damage, although they can be a little hard to reach.

The trailer is built on a Lippert chassis and features the Wide Trax trailer suspension with 15-inch aluminum rims and a power stabilizer jack system, front and rear, operable from the front compartment on the curb side, which we felt was a welcome option, making camp setup much easier.

All in all, the 2017 Mallard M-26 is a family-friendly bunkhouse for summertime weekend getaways and vacations, and, with an MSRP of \$26,496, it's a great value. 🚐

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# SIMPLY GO

FEW PLACES IN THE WORLD ARE AS SPECTACULAR, OR AS PERFECT FOR

**F**ourteen million years ago, glacial floods carved 4,000-foot basalt cliffs and a deep chasm for the mighty Columbia River. Today, the Columbia Gorge forms the boundary between Oregon and Washington and is an 80-mile-long National Scenic Area. It's lined with things to see and do, along with riverside campgrounds and a historic highway that celebrated its centennial last year.

Most Columbia Gorge tourists travel west to east from the Portland area, but we've come from central Oregon, so we enter the gorge at the little burg of Biggs Junction. The undulating hills in this eastern section are dressed in shades of summer yellow and gold with irrigated fields carved into bright green squares. Dozens of giant white windmills, their blades whirring in the breeze, top the surrounding hills, offering a surreal techno-contrast to this natural setting.

As we cross the Route 97 bridge to the Washington side of the river, a stiff wind buffets our rig and kicks up frothy whitecaps in the deep green water. Two unusual landmarks, Stonehenge Memorial and Maryhill Museum of Art, are worth visiting just across the Columbia.

Stonehenge, a life-size replica of England's prehistoric landmark, was commissioned by businessman Sam Hill in 1918 to honor the county's soldiers and sailors who died in World War I. The monument, which took 11 years to build and used 1,650 tons of reinforced concrete, was constructed as an antiwar "sermon in stone." Its 15-foot pillars perch on the edge of the gorge with sweeping views of the river and snowcapped Mount Hood. It's the kind of place that makes you stop and breathe deeply, and we hungrily snap photos of the grandeur.

Just down the road is another of Hill's legacies, Maryhill Museum of Art, housed in a 1914 Beaux Arts-style mansion. What's an art museum doing in this lonely, windswept place? Hill purchased 5,300 acres to build a Quaker farming community. He constructed the mansion as his home, but the war and financial difficulties intervened. Artist friends convinced him to turn the building into an art museum.

We pull into the RV-friendly parking lot and walk to the museum along a stone path that hugs the precipice. Big trees and a grassy area with picnic tables invite visitors to enjoy the surroundings.

The museum's collection is as eclectic as its location, with fantastical chess sets from around the world, artworks from French sculptor Auguste Rodin, and Russian and Ukrainian orthodox icons. An extensive exhibit features Native American baskets, beadwork and petroglyphs. Personal artifacts range from Hill's mementos to a bejeweled crown and flowing gowns from the Romanian monarchy (Hill was friends with Queen Marie). There's also a modern 25,000-foot wing that houses a café, gallery and education space, and juts out over the cliff, offering eagle-eye views.

Weary from driving and museum-hopping, we wend downhill to Maryhill State Park where we have campground reservations for two nights. The park's 4,700 feet of riverfront make it a favorite among wind-surfers and kite-boarders, and we spend the evening watching these athletes battle the Columbia's wind and waves.

## MARYHILL TO THE DALLES

Waking to sunny skies and warm breezes, we cross back over the river to Oregon and travel along Interstate 84 to the historic town of the Dalles. The name comes from the French word *dalle*, for "flagstone," and refers to the columnar basalt narrows carved by the river. After coffee and croissants at Petite Provence, we head to the Dalles Dam visitor center for the free one-hour tour.

The Columbia River, which courses from its headwaters in British Columbia to the Pacific, has 14 dams that provide energy production, flood control and water for irrigation. From May through September, visitors can tour the Dalles Dam's powerhouse and fish ladders.

We climb aboard an electric sloop for a short ride to the dam. Our Army Corps of Engineers guide, Amber, tells us that the Dalles Dam is one of the 10 largest in the country and provides electricity to a million homes. Completed in 1957, the dam submerged Celilo Falls and



# GORGEOUS

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## SIMPLY GORGE-OUS

the village of Celilo, a Native American fishing ground and trading hub.

We take an elevator to the 1/2-mile-long powerhouse. "You're underwater," Amber says, speaking loudly enough to be heard above the din of 22 enormous generators. "These concrete walls are holding back the river. And concrete is porous," she adds. "How's that make you feel?"

In another room, we peer through a fish-counting window and watch salmon and lamprey swim past. Outside, we travel down a ramp to enormous fish ladders that enable migrating chinook, coho and steelhead to spawn upstream. As we gaze into the murky depths, hundreds of salmon and an occasional giant sturgeon jockey for position.

Back at the visitor center, Claudia Brown and her husband, who are towing a fifth-wheel from Florida, tell us they've been visiting the gorge for a week. "There's so much to do here, and we've barely scratched the surface."

At the exit for the Dalles, we turn into the Winery at the Sunshine Mill. For more than a century, the Sunshine Mill ground wheat here. The flour mill closed in 1978, and the cavernous building and silos sat empty until local entrepreneurs James and Molli Martin reopened it for wine tasting and special events. The old building retains much of its original machinery and charm, including tables made from milling machine guards and a cavelike dining room with massive concrete pillars.

We sample Quenett and Copa Di Vino wines (\$7 for five tastings), and eat scrumptious grilled-cheese sandwiches for lunch. Then we motor uphill to the Fort Dalles Museum. The military outpost, built to protect settlers from Native tribes, once covered a square mile and featured Gothic Revival residences. Sadly, fire destroyed all but the 1856 Surgeon's Quarters, which visitors can tour.

Museum volunteer Mary shows us displays of Native artifacts, including arrowheads, saddles and guns, along with antique furnishings, paintings and photographs. Outdoors, she points to old-time buggies, wagons, hearses and other horse-drawn conveyances.



**(Above)** A wind-surfer plies the currents off the beach at Washington's Maryhill State Park. **(Right)** Benson Footbridge spans Multnomah Falls on the Oregon side. **(Previous page)** Vista House at Crown Point.

PHOTOS BY ANNEWEAVER



Then it's on to the Columbia Gorge Discovery Center, a modern exhibition facility that tells the story of the gorge from its geology to its people. The sleek glass-and-wood building also houses the Wasco County Museum. We spend a few hours meandering through mammoth bones, Native artifacts, and exhibits on explorers Lewis and Clark and the river's canals and locks. Wasco County built an entire Western town here, complete with cowboys, and a fascinating display on little-known pioneer John Charles Fremont, who mapped the Oregon Trail.

We leave the Discovery Center with our heads spinning. We're also famished and drive to Baldwin Saloon, a favorite eatery in the Dalles. Built in 1876, the old brick building has been a bar and restaurant, coffin storage space, steamboat-navigation office, warehouse and custom saddle shop. In 1991, Mark and Tracy Linebarger restored the Baldwin, and foodies have been flocking here ever since.

We enjoy perfectly cooked prime rib and Parmesan-crusted halibut with creamy mashed potatoes and sautéed brussels sprouts. We're stuffed, so we take our desserts — bread pudding with blueberries and a triple-chocolate cake — back to camp to enjoy later.

#### CASCADE LOCKS TO CROWN POINT

The Florida RVers we met were right — we could spend days exploring this area. But time is limited, and the following morning we drive west

on I-84 to exit 40, and turn off at the Bonneville Fish Hatchery in Cascade Locks. (Note that the overpass clearance is 15 feet in the center and 12.4 feet on the sides.)

The hatchery, one of the country's oldest, is a hidden gem with beautiful old buildings and shady ponds teeming with salmon, sturgeon and rainbow trout. The free self-guided tour leads

us to an underwater-viewing window and, Herman, a 70-year-old celebrity sturgeon, who's 10 feet long.

We lunch under the hatchery's massive firs and cedars, and then head to Ainsworth State Park, our berth for the night, to drop off the trailer at our forested campsite. We're eager to drive the Columbia River Historic Highway (a.k.a. U.S. Route 30), but the road is

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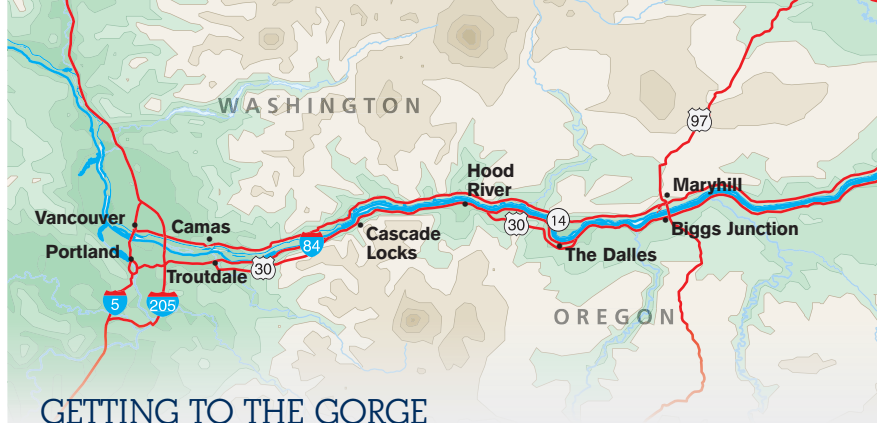
## SIMPLY GORGE-OUS

narrow and winding, and parking space is limited.

The 73-mile route, built a century ago by Sam Hill of Maryhill Museum and Stonehenge fame, was called the King of Roads for its spectacular views and handcrafted stone bridges and guard walls. Largely abandoned when the new highway was built, the road has been reconstructed with segments that are drivable; other stretches can be hiked and biked.

Our first stop is Horsetail Falls, an impressive 176-foot cascade that drops over sheer basalt walls into a plunge pool surrounded by hand-chiseled rock walls. Visitors can hike the 1.4-mile Oneonta Trail to Upper Horsetail or the shorter .4-mile route straight up.

Just down the road is Multnomah Falls, a roaring, awe-inspiring cascade of icy water. This double waterfall and its 1925 stone lodge draw thousands of visitors each year, and this Sunday is no exception. We skip the crowds and stop instead at Rowena Crest, a



### GETTING TO THE GORGE

Easily drivable, the Columbia River Gorge stretches east to west along Interstate 84 from Biggs Junction to Troutdale on the Oregon side of the river and from Maryhill to Camas along State Route 14 on the Washington side.

Oregon's Historic Columbia River Highway parallels I-84 from the Dalles to Troutdale. Some sections of the century-old highway have been developed as a state trail for hiking and biking. Other sections, designated U.S. Route 30, are accessible to motor vehicles, but portions are narrow and winding. Trailer-towing RVers may want to consider unhitching before driving the historic route.

dramatic overlook that provides wide views of the dry eastern side of the gorge and the Rowena Loops, figure-eights built into the highway to enable Model-Ts to climb the heights.

Then it's on to bucolic Shepperd's Dell where there's a wide turnout and an easy hike to the falls' viewing

platform. I stand, feeling the delicate spray on my face, and peer up at sheer basalt walls festooned with moss, ferns and splashes of red poison oak.

Latourell Falls, a 249-foot plunge surrounded by swirling basalt that forms an otherworldly cave, is another popular stop. We follow a steady



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**Stonehenge on the Columbia River, a full-scale replica of England's landmark, was built by Sam Hill in 1918 as a World War I memorial.**

stream of visitors to its plunge pool and then lose the crowds on the shady 2.4-mile loop trail to the upper falls and Guy Talbot Park.

Our final stop is Crown Point and Vista House which, for many, is the starting point of the trip. Completed in 1918, Vista House is an elegant rest stop with marble floors, opalescent glass windows and world-class views. We stand on the second-floor observation deck and breathe in the magic and the miracle that is the Columbia Gorge. 🚗

## CAMPING ON THE COLUMBIA

Commercial RV parks and public campgrounds can be found along the Columbia Gorge, including two tree-shaded state parks where the author camped — one in Washington on the eastern end of the gorge and the other in Oregon next to the Historic Columbia River Highway.

### OREGON

#### Ainsworth State Park

In Cascade Locks, a few miles from Multnomah Falls on the waterfall stretch of the Historic Columbia River Highway, this forested public campground has 40 full-hookup sites, hot showers and an RV dump station. 503-695-2261, [www.oregonstateparks.org](http://www.oregonstateparks.org)

### WASHINGTON

#### Maryhill State Park

With 50 spacious full-hookup sites right on the Columbia River, a shower house and a free RV dump station, this campground near Sam Hill's Stonehenge fills up fast in summer, so make reservations well in advance. 509-773-5007, [www.parks.state.wa.us](http://www.parks.state.wa.us)

To find more places to stay, go to [www.goodsamcamping.com](http://www.goodsamcamping.com).



PHOTOS BY ANNE WEAVER

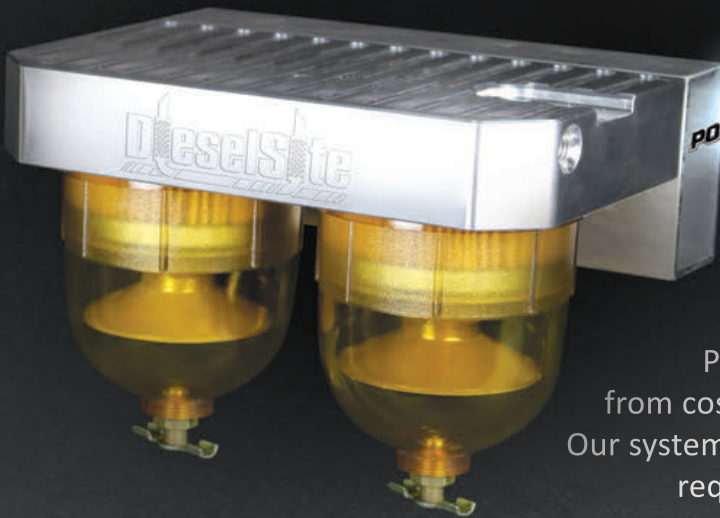
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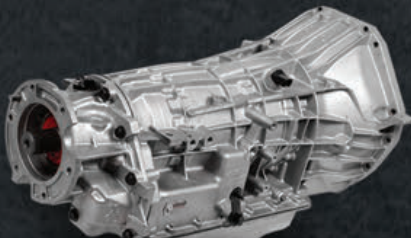
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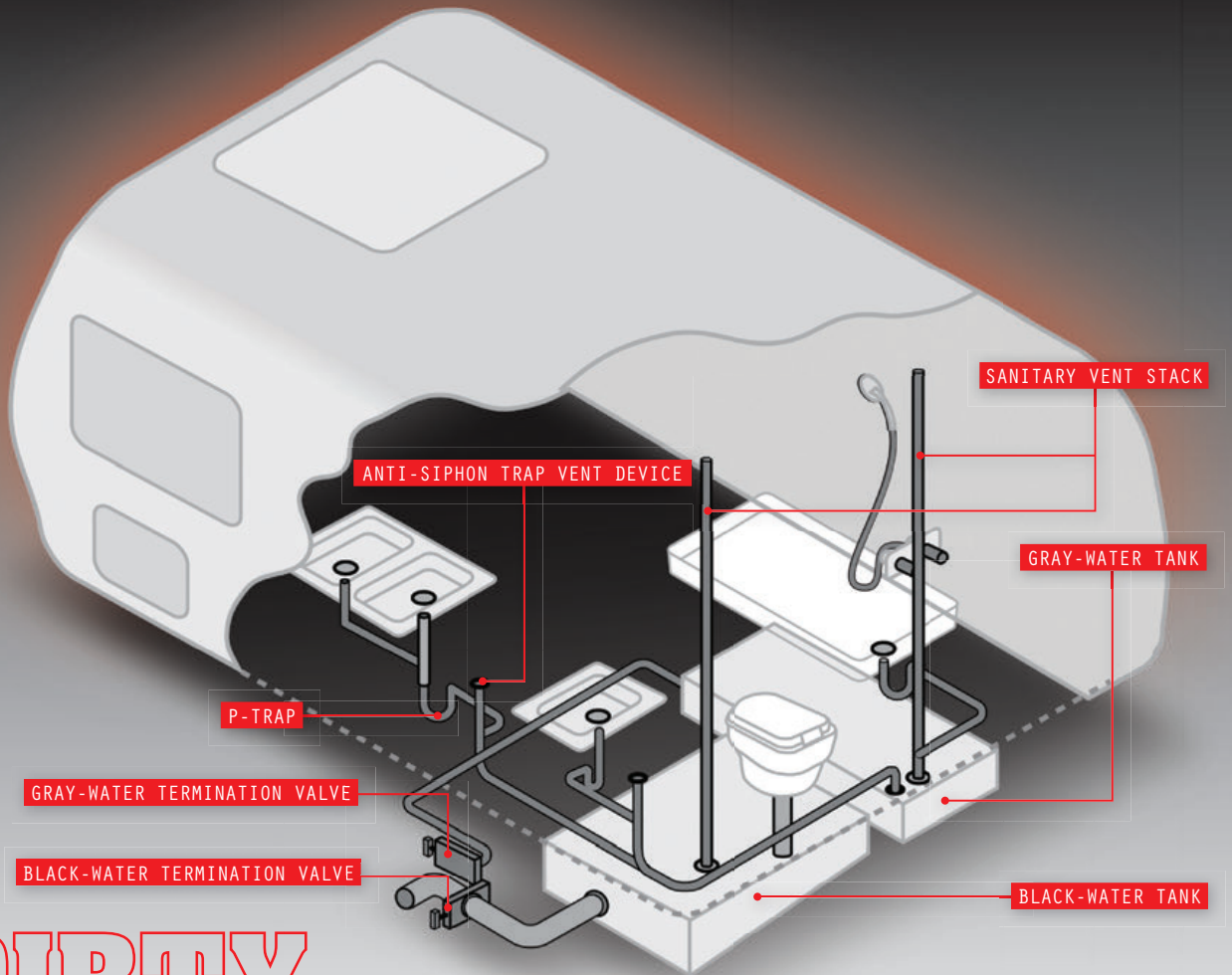
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# DIRTY LITTLE SECRETS

The right RV sanitation techniques and materials can make these humbling chores cleaner and easier

**RV**ing gives us the freedom to see the world from the comfort of our living rooms. We enjoy a fully self-contained environment wherever we happen to be, but as anyone who has been an RVer for a while will tell you, probably the most unpleasant part of the experience, yet arguably one of the most important, is dealing with the sanitation system. Proper use and care will ensure that your travels will be footloose and fancy-free. On the flip side, without the right equipment and proper use of the system, you can be in for some very unpleasant surprises.

For the most part, RV sanitation systems are gravity-powered. They usually consist of two separate arrangements: the gray-water system, which collects wastewater from sinks, showers and clothes washers, and the black-

water system, which handles body waste from toilets. It's also possible that in some RVs, parts of these systems can be combined, like the sink and toilet in a second bathroom. And macerators, rather than gravity, can be used for toilets and dumping the holding tanks.

RV sanitation systems share a few similarities with the systems in stationary homes. These include the piping, and the requirement for the pipes to have a slope for drainage, ventilation and certain fixtures. Otherwise, they're quite different. The biggest difference is that the gray and black water in an RV are held in separate tanks, instead of being discharged into a sewer system via a common pipe.

The gray-water system consists of sinks and showers, a 1½-inch pipe, ventilation, a dedicated holding tank and a

**WASTEWATER SYSTEM** The components pictured above can be found in most towable RVs, although placement varies by floorplan.

termination valve for dumping. Ventilation is the most complex part, and important to understand. For the water to drain from a fixture or the holding tank, ventilation, usually through the roof, is needed to prevent a vacuum.

In some RVs, the vent stack is too far away to reach. Instead of running an additional pipe through the roof, a vent check is installed, usually right under the fixture. A vent check, which in the RV industry is called an anti-siphon trap vent device, or ASTVD, is a combination of a vent and a check valve. It is installed on the 1½-inch pipe under the fixture and has a small rubber flapper inside that opens to draw air into the drain system to prevent a vacuum, or chugging, at the sink or drain. This flapper reseals itself when no vacuum is present to prevent odor or gray-water overflow from entering the trailer.

The drain piping has a P-trap, just like at home, or a new waterless, self-sealing type of P-trap called a HepvO. By code, the drain plumbing must maintain a minimum slope to the tank or main drain of ¼ inch per foot for proper drainage.

The black-water system consists of the toilet(s), 3-inch piping to a

holding tank and a termination valve for dumping. Often, there will be a built-in black-water flushing system with a separate hose connection to assist with cleaning solids from the tank. Care must be taken when using the black flush to prevent accidental overfilling of the black tank with too much water, causing the RV to fill with effluent, often resulting in serious damage or a total loss.

RV termination valves, historically known as full-way valves, use a knife gate that slides in a plastic housing with a rubber grommet or seal. These valves are typically 1½ inch or 3 inches in diameter, and there's usually at least one of each, but there are exceptions. Some truck campers, for instance, have only one holding tank for everything, so they have one 3-inch connection. Many larger fifth-wheels have up to five separate valves, depending on the number of bathrooms. Fifth-wheels with plumbing in the upstairs (front) area may have two sets of holding tanks, and the largest trailers with a rear half-bath have another tank in the rear.

Termination valves are fairly simple devices. Held in place by four stainless-steel bolts that compress

the valve between two flanges, the valves are easy to remove and service, if they become sticky or leaky. Kits are available with replacement seals and bolts. Simply remove the valves after the tanks have been emptied and flushed, remove the seals and thoroughly clean the valve. If you prefer, you can replace the entire valve. Occasionally, the valves are buried under the RV and controlled by a remote cable, which requires dropping the underbelly for service.

Once clean, the valves can be treated with a waterproof valve lubricant such as Dow Corning Molykote 111 and exercised. Make sure the valve is in good shape and not deformed or missing any chunks, and if it is, replace the valve. Make sure the new seals are installed correctly. A helper can make prying apart the pipe flanges and removing and reinserting the valve easier. Once the valve is seated, reinstall the bolts, test it, and you're done. Don't overtighten the bolts; snug plus a quarter turn is fine. Make sure the valve operates freely and smoothly.

## Using the System

There are lots of opinions on how to use your RV's wastewater system and insufficient space here to debunk all the myths. Instead, here are the procedures specified by the professionals.

The gray-water system is pretty simple and will seldom cause problems. You can occasionally use a gray-water deodorizer, if you feel the need. Enzymatic cleaners are available to help keep soap scum and grease from building up inside the tank with long-term extreme usage.

When it comes to the black-water system, many problems can be prevented by remembering this one phrase: Water is your friend. Take it



**(Top, left to right) When dumping tanks, open the black-water valve and rinse the tank, then close it and dump the gray-water tank to flush out the hose. Some dump valves use remote cables to keep the valves in an enclosed, heated basement. (Left) Invest in a good-quality sewer-hose kit with a clear connector.**



(Above left) A typical termination-valve assembly on trailers has a 3-inch-diameter black-water hub with a black handle and a 1.5-inch-diameter gray-water hub with a gray handle. (Above right) If the termination valve sticks or leaks, it may need to be serviced. Here, a valve is disassembled. The two flanges will be glued to the pipe on the RV, and the gaskets seated. The valve can be cleaned and then lubricated with valve grease, such as Dow Corning Molykote 111. Once the valve is working well, the new gaskets are installed on the flanges. The pipes are manually pried apart for the valve to slide in between (a helper makes this easier), and the four bolts are installed.

from someone who has had to dig out and flush black-water holding tanks that were full of solids and no water. Leaving the black-tank termination valves open while at an RV park will allow the solids to collect in the bottom of the tank and eventually fill and block the flow of contents in the tank.

Keep the termination valves closed while in camp, monitor tank levels and dump as needed. This includes the gray water, unless you're using a clothes washer, in which case, it's best to leave the gray valve open to ensure that the tank doesn't overflow. If you keep the valve closed, the gray water in the tank will flush the sewer hose after emptying the black tank. Once the black tank is emptied and flushed, close its valve and open the gray-water valve to flush the sewer hose, washing out remaining solids.

Once the dumping cycle is complete, be sure to add water and a holding-tank treatment to the black tank. Many prefer non-formaldehyde versions, which are required in some states. Add at least 2 gallons of water, and instruct everyone to use plenty of water when using the toilet. The combination of the water and chemicals will aid in breaking down solids and deodorizing the effluent, and some additives also help maintain the lubricity of the termination valve. Of course, make certain not to introduce

any foreign objects into the toilet and holding tanks.

RV and marine toilet paper is formulated to break down more easily than commercially available papers. Using the wrong paper, along with too little water, will plug the system, and that's a bad thing, as plumber's snakes don't work in RVs. Tank cleaning has to be done by hand and is messy. Scott toilet tissue is an old standby for some RVers, but if you want to be safe, use the stuff made for RV and marine use.

Holding-tank treatments come in a variety of formulations and forms, from small single-dose bottles to drop-in bags. Most work as directed. Ask fellow RVers for recommendations and try different ones to see what you like best. Contents left in the black tank for a long time in hot weather will put the chemicals to the test, and adding extra in those conditions is recommended.

Many folks are buying four-season RVs these days and venturing out into cold weather. If you're braving freezing temperatures, tank heaters are a must, and a great investment. You can also use some potable antifreeze in the tanks to prevent freezing. Potable RV antifreeze is key; do not use automotive antifreeze, as it is poisonous and can sicken and kill pets and wildlife, and seep into the water table at parks with septic systems.

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## Holding-Tank Sensors

For some RVers, holding-tank sensors are the bane of their existence. Tank monitors are notoriously inaccurate. Ordinary tank sensors in most RVs consist of metal buttons attached through the side of the holding tank. These buttons connect to a resistor-pack wiring harness that allows the monitor panel to show the resistance between the sensors and illuminate the corresponding LEDs. The problem lies in introducing water contaminated with sewage, soap and fat into the tanks, and

these can accumulate on the sides of the tank. Depending on the placement of the ground wire in relation to the sensor wires, the panel can be fooled into thinking those sensors are under water, giving a false reading.

Cleaning the tanks is one way to correct this issue, and most methods for doing this have been defended or debunked over the years. Holding-tank cleaners can aid in this task. Using an aforementioned black-tank flush system is a great way to clean the sides of the tank, especially if the sprayer is

aimed at the side that has the sensors.

Another method for fixing a sensor problem is to upgrade the system with Horst Miracle Probes, which replace the original button probes. The probes use a pin that sticks out into the tank, rather than a button, so any growth inside the tank can't create an electrical connection. The black-tank version has a shroud over the top of the pin to prevent paper or other material from hanging on and creating contact.

Alternatively, the entire system can be replaced with an electronic-

## RV TOILETS

Simple plastic toilets are an old-time standard in the RV world and are functional at best. In the last decade or two, a good selection of porcelain and porcelain-plastic hybrid thrones have come to market from Dometic and Thetford to make just about anyone's derriere feel like royalty. Selections include short and long bowl, foot pedal or hand flush, rinse sprayer/bidet, and manual or electric flush with integrated maceration, which often requires installation of special plumbing.

Swapping out an ordinary RV toilet is usually a simple job. Freshwater plumbing extensions are sometimes required, and on rare occasions, the flange will need to be rotated. Always use a new foam flange seal (not wax) when installing or reinstalling an RV toilet. Also, inspect the new toilet carefully, making sure all the bolts that connect the bowl to the base are tight and that the flush mechanism moves freely.



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sensor system like Garnet's SeeLevel II monitoring system. In this system, electronic strips are adhered to the sides of the tank and detect the dielectric differences between liquid and air through the tank wall. This means accurate readings, despite growth inside the tank. An additional benefit is that the sensor strips read the entire level of the tank, unlike typical probe systems that read the tank in thirds.

## Sewage Handling Gear

There are a number of choices when it comes to purchasing waste-disposal gear, from upgraded toilets to sewer-connection rings. Two pieces of advice: Do your homework and don't go cheap.

Sewer hoses and kits come in many forms, and it is tempting to make do with a \$7 to \$10 hose. Instead, invest in a good-quality sewer-hose kit with solid connections. High-quality hoses that are freeze-, crack- and even crush-resistant are available.

Start with a clear connector, as it's

## RV MACERATORS

In the past few years, macerators have become more popular in RVs. Basically, a grinder and a pump for sanitary discharge, macerators have some definite benefits over regular sewer-hose systems. They connect directly to the tank discharge or are built-in, and the hose has only a 1½-inch diameter and is very flexible. Multiple hoses can be used to discharge contents longer distances — some as far as 150 feet. The business end of the hose will usually twist into any sewer connection or cleanout, even at home, and the system can pump uphill. Once done, the handle on the business end is sealed, and there's no spillage.

the only way to see what is draining out of the black tank and, while flushing the tank, to make sure that the water coming out is clean. Second, use a kit with an end that will screw into the sewer connection at the campground. Not all dump stations have threaded fittings, but those that do offer an extra bit of security against spillage. Third, have a matching extension hose with the proper connector, and if your RV has more than one termination connection, get the matching Y connector and lengths of hose. It's not uncommon for the sewer connection to be 25 feet or more away from the connection on your RV.

Some campgrounds have gray-water pits instead of full sewer connections, in states or communities where it is legal. This is where sewer caps with garden-hose connections on them come in. If a honey wagon comes around to pump your RV's black tank and you dispose of the gray water into the pit, leaving the gray valve open into the pit is probably fine, as the honey wagon will effectively pump off the black tank. Once that's done, follow the previously mentioned steps by adding water and chemicals back into the black tank.

Lastly, practice safe dumping. Always wear waterproof and preferably

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disposable gloves and some type of eye protection. The heavy-weight disposable gloves from Harbor Freight are inexpensive and work well. If you happen to get splashed with waste material, clean the area right away, and isolate and wash any affected clothing.

By following a few simple rules, having good equipment and remembering that water is your friend, you will have a more pleasant time dealing with the chore of dumping an RV tank and can get back to the real purpose of RVing — having fun and spending time with family and friends. ☘

## RV SANITATION RESOURCES

### Holding-Tank Sensors

Garnet Technologies (SeeLevel), [www.garnetinstruments.com](http://www.garnetinstruments.com)  
 Horst Miracle Probe, [www.rvprobes.com](http://www.rvprobes.com)

### Holding-Tank Treatments

Camco (TST), [www.camco.net](http://www.camco.net)  
 Century Chemical (Travel Jon), [www.centurychemical.com](http://www.centurychemical.com)  
 Dometic, [www.dometic.com/usa](http://www.dometic.com/usa)  
 Eco-Save, [www.eco-save.com](http://www.eco-save.com)  
 Star brite (Instant Fresh), [www.starbrite.com](http://www.starbrite.com)  
 Thetford (Aqua-Kem, Campa-Chem, Eco-Smart), [www.thetford.com](http://www.thetford.com)  
 Valterra (Odorlos, Potty Toddy, Pure Power), [www.valterra.com](http://www.valterra.com)  
 Wallex (Bio-Active, Bio-Pak, Commando, Elemonate, Porta-Pak), [www.wallex.com](http://www.wallex.com)  
 Worldwide Monochem (Dyna-Bact, T-5), [www.monochem.net](http://www.monochem.net)

### Macerators

Clean Dump, [www.cleandump.com](http://www.cleandump.com)  
 Thetford (Sani-Con Turbo), [www.thetford.com](http://www.thetford.com)  
 Valterra (Sewer Solution), [www.valterra.com](http://www.valterra.com)  
 Xylem (Flojet), [www.xylemflowcontrol.com](http://www.xylemflowcontrol.com)

### Sewer Hoses

Camco (RhinoFlex), [www.camco.net](http://www.camco.net)  
 Lippert (Waste Master), [www.lci1.com](http://www.lci1.com)  
 Prest-o-Fit (BlueLine, DuraForm), [www.prestofit.com](http://www.prestofit.com)  
 Thetford (Titan), [www.thetford.com](http://www.thetford.com)  
 Valterra (Dominator, EZ Flush, Quick Drain, Viper), [www.valterra.com](http://www.valterra.com)

### Termination Valves and Parts

Barker Manufacturing, [www.barkermfg.com](http://www.barkermfg.com)  
 Camco, [www.camco.net](http://www.camco.net)  
 Drain Master, [www.drainmaster.com](http://www.drainmaster.com)  
 LaSalle Bristol, [www.lasallebristol.com](http://www.lasallebristol.com)  
 Valterra, [www.valterra.com](http://www.valterra.com)

### Toilets

Dometic, [www.dometic.com/usa](http://www.dometic.com/usa)  
 Thetford, [www.thetford.com](http://www.thetford.com)

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# Moving Experience

Getting travel trailers into tight spots is simple and safe with the right dolly

**F**ew things intimidate some trailer owners more than backing into a tight space, whether it's at a campsite, RV park or storage lot. Who among us hasn't encountered a site with a power post, picnic table or other obstruction nearby and wondered if they could get their trailer into place without causing expensive damage? That concern can be magnified when squeezing in between other RVs at night or returning the trailer to a tight storage space. Backup cameras have certainly helped in this regard, but there's nothing better than being able to take it slow and confirm with your own eyes that you're going to make it in safely.

That's where power dollies — also known as trailer movers — come in handy. By attaching them to the A-frame or ball coupler on the trailer, these products allow you to gradually walk the trailer into a spot (or move it by remote control), and stop at any time along the way to make sure you're clear of any obstructions. When used correctly, they can make moving a large travel trailer as easy as wheeling a small utility trailer into place on the

side of your house, for example.

Like many products, power dollies come in all shapes and sizes, depending on the weight you need to move, whether you'd like the unit to be portable, and whether you want to use 12-volt DC, 120-volt AC or human power. There are even some gasoline-engine-powered models available, and some products designed to move fifth-wheels as well.

We've compiled an assortment of power dollies for your consideration, but in some cases we simply don't have room to cover all the features and options. So, be sure to contact the manufacturer you're interested in for more details, especially if you have atypical conditions, such as a steep driveway or a storage lot that is on gravel or dirt. These considerations can influence which product will work best for your particular needs.

With the freedom to move your trailer into a tight spot, no matter what the circumstances, a power dolly can ease your anxiety and help make RV travel the relaxing experience it should be.

## Parkit360 ➔

Canadian-made Parkit360 dollies are compact enough to fit in the back of a small car yet powerful enough to move most travel trailers and even fifth-wheels. All models can use almost any 12-volt DC battery in the integrated battery box (including an automotive booster pack, according to the company) or be powered with an 80-inch cable adapter for trailers that have a working battery onboard. Ball-mounted Stableloc technology that locks the existing trailer ball in place means that Parkit360 models are compatible with most trailers right out of the box, and all but the base model come with a brake controller that operates the trailer's brakes by plugging in the harness. A freewheeling feature allows the user to disengage the unit's transmission to make it easy to roll to and from the trailer. The Force 5K (from \$1,096) is available in three models that



# Moving Experience

can handle 5,000 pounds and up to 900 pounds of hitch weight, and the tall, wide tires (4- or 6.5-inch, depending on the model) are designed to get traction on almost any terrain or gradient. The Force 10K (from \$1,342) comes in three models as well and can move up to 10,000 pounds. If you have a heavier travel trailer or fifth-wheel, Parkit360 offers the Transformer (\$3,495; shown on page 49), which can handle up to 15,000 pounds and includes a kingpin adapter and a wireless remote controller. Parkit360 even offers some customization for its products; contact the company for more details.

888-926-5517, [www.parkit360.ca](http://www.parkit360.ca)

## Power Caster

In business for nearly 50 years, Power Caster is the original power-dolly company and offers three models to move just about any travel trailer. Model PC-1 (\$1,125) is powered by a 1/4-horsepower electric motor with 400

inch-pounds of torque at 30 RPM that can handle up to 5,000-pound trailers and 500 pounds of hitch weight. The PC-2 (\$1,275) has a 1/2-horsepower electric motor with twice the torque for trailers up to 6,500 pounds and 800 pounds of hitch weight. And the PC-3 (\$1,425; pictured below) can shoulder up to 30,000 pounds and a staggering 1,800 pounds of hitch weight, thanks



to its 1/2-horsepower electric motor and dual four-ply nylon tires (the other two models use a single tire). Powered by an electric cord and 120-volt AC household current, the Power Caster moves at a slow but sure 15 feet per minute in either forward or reverse. It does not have an integrated brake, but the company does offer a brake kit that leverages the trailer's electric brakes (the trailer must have a battery in good working order for this feature). It's important to note that the Power Caster does not attach to the ball coupler on the trailer; it is designed to accept the A-frame jack post (without the wheel, of course) in a cup located above the Power Caster's tire(s). Four sleeves compensate for different post sizes for a secure fit. The chances of bending the post are slim if used correctly, according to the company, but if you have any doubts, Power Caster offers adapters that can be bolted or welded to the A-frame of the trailer.

800-773-3833, [www.powercaster.com](http://www.powercaster.com)

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## TIRES





## Power Movers Ⓢ

If you have a special need or aren't sure what power dolly would be best for your particular application, Power Movers might be the solution. The company offers a wide variety of products, including 120-volt AC-powered models with a 50-foot cord, 12-volt DC battery-powered dollies, and even gasoline-powered units, manually operated models and fifth-wheel dollies. Ranging in price from \$929 to \$1,349 for AC-powered travel trailer dollies and up to \$1,999 for the twin-motor model



## PURPLE POWER

The E-Go by Purple Line USA may not be a power dolly, but it is definitely designed to move a travel trailer with ease and confidence. Used in the European market for years, the E-Go system (featured in the May 2015 issue) employs two or four motors (depending on the number of axles on the trailer) that are permanently mounted to the frame. A drill motor and supplied socket tool are used to engage the cast-alloy rollers against the tires, after which a cordless remote control activates the direct drive-gear boxes. A jack shaft between the units allows the rollers to be engaged from one side of the trailer. The key benefit of the system is that the wireless remote allows the user to walk around the trailer as it is being moved, ensuring that it won't hit any obstacles on the way to its parking spot. As you can imagine, the E-Go is ideal for narrow parking spots that present a challenge to back into. Priced between \$1,499 for a two-motor system (rated up to 5,000 pounds) and \$3,599 for four motors (rated up to 7,800 pounds), the E-Go isn't cheap, but it is a robust system that, while permanently mounted, can still be removed and installed on another trailer if you sell or trade your existing one.

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ST205 / 75R15 - 6PR

ST205 / 75R15 - 8PR

ST225 / 75R15 - 8PR

ST225 / 75R15 - 10PR

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that can move a fifth-wheel, Power Movers are custom engineered using "just in time" manufacturing processes so the company can provide exactly what you need. All Power Movers use tough, U.S.-built components, and feature four-ply tires and long handles for ease of maneuverability. **760-231-9048, [www.powerdolly.co](http://www.powerdolly.co) (that's co, not com)**

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## Trailer Valet

The Trailer Valet 5X is a patented A-frame jack and trailer dolly system designed to move most any trailer up to 5,000 pounds and 500 pounds of hitch weight by simply turning a hand crank. Featuring high and low gearing, the dolly has one crank handle that can be operated from either side to suit righties or lefties, while a second handle is used to steer the trailer. If that sounds like too much work, the company also offers an optional attachment for an 18-volt drill motor. A handy safety benefit is the brake system, which is engaged once the handle is released. The Trailer Valet can be conveniently rotated into the stow position for easy storage when the job is done. If your trailer is heavier than 5,000 pounds, opt for the Trailer Valet XL (pictured on the right). It offers the same dolly features as its smaller sibling but can handle trailers up to 10,000 pounds. Prices range from \$340 for the 5X model to \$580 for the XL.

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<b>NEW!</b> EG2800i	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	
EU3000i	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■ (13,500 BTU)
EU7000i	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■ (15,000 BTU)

For optimum performance and safety, we recommend you read the owner's manual before operating your Honda Power Equipment. ©2016 American Honda Motor Co., Inc. Connection of a generator to house power requires a transfer device to avoid possible injury to power company personnel. Consult a qualified electrician. Spark arrestor approved by U.S. Forest Service for use in National Parks.

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# HONDA'S NEW EG2800i BRINGS MORE CLEAN POWER & VERSATILITY FOR CAMPING OR TAILGATING



Fuel Gauge  
Eco-Throttle 30 Amp Outlet Circuit Breaker

Lightweight, quiet and fuel efficient, this compact, portable powerhouse offers exceptional versatility and affordability along with Honda's legendary dependability.

Whether you need 120-volt power in camp, at your tailgate party, for emergency home backup or for work projects, Honda's new EG2800i open-frame portable generator is ready to take on the task. Weighing only 66.6 lbs. and measuring only 16.9"L x 17.6"W x 18.9"H, it's easy to grab and go wherever the need arises.

What makes this compact generator so versatile is a combination of features also found in Honda's popular EU Series generators:

- Inverter technology produces clean, ripple-free sine wave power comparable to home AC current
- Built-in 30 amp outlet to plug in your RV or for home backup\*
- Two 20 amp/120 volt outlets with resettable circuit breakers
- Eco-Throttle® for quieter operation and more fuel efficiency
- Oil Alert® shuts down the motor when it detects low oil level to prevent damage
- USDA-qualified spark arrestor/muffler keeps noise levels between 61 and 69 dB
- Meets 50-state EPA and CARB emission standards
- Protected by Honda's three-year residential/one-year commercial warranty

The open-frame design of the EG2800i helps make it light in weight (it's lighter than Honda's EG, EB and EM open-frame generators) but not light on capability and features.

The rugged steel frame that protects the vital components of the EG2800i also provides numerous hand-hold and tie-down locations, adding to its easy portability. The easy-access open-frame design also makes regular maintenance simple.

The easy recoil-start 186cc Honda GC190LA engine can run up to 12 hours at quarter load on 2.1 gallons of gasoline (5.1 hours at rated load), producing a maximum 2800 watts (23.3 amps) to start appliances, electronics and tools, and a rated 2500 watts (20.8 amps) to keep them humming along. A handy built-in fuel gauge makes it easy to see when to refuel the top-mounted fuel tank.

The EG2800i is USA-assembled in North Carolina, and is a smart choice for those looking for portable power for a small travel trailer, pop-up, van conversion or truck camper. With its affordable price and compact size, it's also easy to take along as an additional power source for RVs with large, built-in generators, offering backup power for lights and small appliances if the main unit fails, or portable power for off-site use such as a flea market or craft fair display booth.

## EU Series

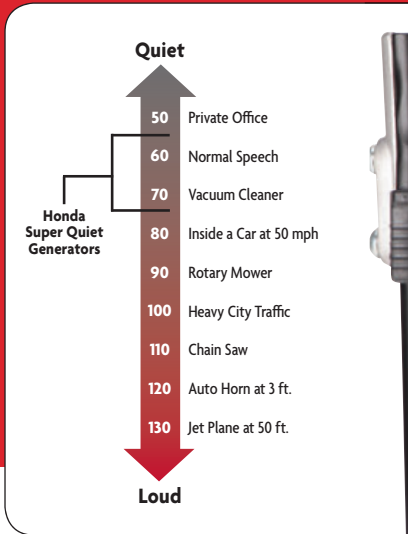
Honda's EU Series of portable inverter generators are renowned for quiet, dependable, fuel efficient operation, and are ready to meet virtually any power need while camping, tailgating or for home backup.

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- Run a 13,500 BTU air conditioner from a EU3000iS; add an optional wheel kit for convenience
- Honda's lightest, most portable 3000 watt generator, the EU3000i Handi™ comes with built-in tow wheels, a tow handle and built-in 30 amp outlet
- Power two RV air conditioners and more with the EU7000iS; electronic fuel injection boosts fuel efficiency up to 20%

The clean, smooth inverter AC power produced by all of the EU Series generators is ideal for running home or RV electronics, lights and appliances. Plug in your TV, satellite dish and patio lights in camp or while tailgating with the same peace of mind as when you plug in your drill, compressor and other power tools for “honey-do” projects.

The new Honda EG2800i portable generator is available now at Camping World, along with the full lineup of Honda EU Series portable generators and accessories. The EG2800i and select Honda EU Series generators are also available online at CampingWorld.com. Free generator prep including gas and oil is available on request at time of purchase at Camping World SuperCenters nationwide.



EU2000i

EU2000i Companion

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\* Connecting a generator to home power requires a transfer device to avoid possible injury to power company personnel. Consult a qualified electrician for installation. For optimum performance and safety, read the owner's manual before operating your Honda Power Equipment. 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](http://honda.com). © 2017 American Honda Motor Co., Inc.

# COLUMBIA'S FOUNDATION

COVERING A LOT OF GROUND IN MISSOURI'S  
WELL-ROUNDED COLLEGE TOWN WHERE THE  
UNIVERSITY PREVAILS OVER A CITY RICH IN HISTORY



Majestic Jesse Hall (below) is Mizzou's administration building, built in 1893 after Academic Hall burned and left its six columns (above) as the campus landmark.

Columbia, sometimes called “the Athens of Missouri,” has almost always been a college town. Located in Boone County, in the center of the state, where wide-open prairie begins to meld into Ozark hills, Columbia is virtually synonymous with the University of Missouri, MU for short, or the nickname Mizzou, which goes back more than a century. It's one of three institutions of higher learning in the town.

Mizzou, with a student body of about 34,000, was established in 1839, less than two decades after the city was founded, and enjoys numerous claims to fame. It was the first state university west of the Mississippi and the first in Thomas Jefferson's Louisiana Purchase

(the third president's original tombstone was given to the school by heirs in 1883). The first civil-engineering classes west of the Mississippi were offered here in 1849, and MU opened the world's first journalism school in 1908.

The town's other two schools of higher learning include Columbia College, with about 2,100 undergraduates, begun in 1851 as Christian Female College, the first for women west of

the Mississippi (MU wasn't fully open to women until 1871), and Stephens College, in the heart of downtown, with a student body of about 850. It was founded in 1833 as the Columbia Female Academy and today is the second oldest women's college in the country.

My husband, Guy, and I live in St. Louis, just 125 miles east of Columbia, so it's not surprising that many of our high school friends and a few relatives went on to university there. Because the town lies along Missouri's main east-west corridor, Interstate 70, we've passed by many times en route to elsewhere. But until recently, we had never chosen Columbia as a destination — and didn't know what we'd been missing.







**(Above left) Hikers enjoy a peaceful walk at the namesake span in 2,000-plus-acre Rock Bridge Memorial Park, 5 miles south of Columbia. (Above right) Sunset casts golden light on Moniteau Creek, a tributary of the Missouri River, in picturesque Rocheport just west of Columbia.**

The town of 120,000 is lovely, rich in history and culture, with a vibrant and growing community and plentiful attractions. There are the expected great restaurants (it's a college town, after all), museums, parks, music and theater venues, and a bunch of festivals. And if you visit in the fall, there's football, which is a big deal here. Part of the Southeastern Conference, the Mizzou Tigers play at Faurot Field, a stadium worthy of a professional team.

Guy and I have always wondered why the team is the Tigers and not the Mules, which seems more logical. Missouri has long been famous for its large, intelligent draft mules, bred in the state since a herd of donkeys was brought here from Mexico in the 1820s. It was a flourishing industry. The mule is the state animal.

On our recent four-day visit, Chris Campbell, director of the Walters-Boone County Historical Museum, explained why. During the Civil War, he said, when fighting in Missouri was intense, the university was shuttered and federal troops and officers occupied the buildings. Townspeople, struggling to keep their city out of Confederate hands, became known as "the fighting tigers of Columbia." A quarter-century later, when the school's football team was formed, an alumnus suggested Tigers, out of respect for those who had fought to defend the town, and the name was adopted.

## HIGHER EDUCATION

We began our visit with a walking tour of the University of Missouri's imposing 1,262-acre campus. Many of the buildings are neo-Gothic, among them the 140-foot-tall Memorial Union, built in 1926 as a tribute to MU students and alumni lost in war. Francis Quadrangle, at the heart of the campus, is named for David R. Francis, governor of Missouri from 1888 to 1892. The quad includes white-domed Jesse Hall, MU's oldest, and six stately columns, all that remain of Academic Hall, the school's first building, which burned in 1892.

**(Right) Chocolatier Aaron Schilb at the Candy Factory shows off chocolate tigers made for a Mizzou-themed party. (Far right) This strange creature of a fanciful ocean is part of the master's degree project of University of Missouri student Joshua Maier.**

Sixteen years ago, the campus was transformed into Mizzou Botanic Garden, with 18 different gardens spread throughout, including the Siberian Iris Garden, Peony Garden, Butterfly Garden and others. All are bursting with showy blooms: roses, purple asters, coneflowers, delicately sweet pink peonies, Missouri-native ironweed, fuchsia-colored butterfly bush and many more.

Galleries and museums are spread across the campus, with exhibits for most any interest. For reptile enthusiasts (I'm one), there's must-see Stewart Hall. Here, creatures peer quizzically (turtles) or indifferently (snakes) from aquariums populated with Mississippi mud turtles, rose-tinted painted turtles, timber rattlers and black king snakes, among some 30 species. The most unusual is Missouri's largest salamander, an eel-like three-toed amphiuma, 24 inches of gray slither, which, said Exhibit Director Richard Daniel, inhabits the shallow, sluggish waters of the state's southeasternmost part, the Bootheel.

Among art lovers, Missouri is noted particularly for



## COLUMBIA'S FOUNDATION

two of its painters, George Caleb Bingham (1811 to 1879), born in Virginia but known as “the Missouri artist,” and Thomas Hart Benton (1889 to 1975) of Neosho. We visited the Bingham Gallery in the Fine Arts Center, which, despite the name, doesn't display his work. Instead, exhibits are by students, faculty and others — on this occasion, “Friends from Isolation” by MFA candidate Joshua Maier. The dozen well-crafted “friends” are whimsical dachshund-size sea creatures made of painted clay.

Nearby, at the State Historical Society of Missouri within Ellis Library, paintings by Bingham are displayed, as are numerous works by Benton. Bingham was a politician as well as an artist, elected to the state legislature in 1848, then appointed state treasurer in 1862, before becoming MU's first professor of art in 1877.

The society owns numerous Bingham works, and exhibits change at the 365-square-foot Bingham Room, said Joan Stack, curator of art collections. But the artist's last major work, *General Order No. 11*, painted in 1863, is always on display. It was Bingham's “painterly protest” against martial law on the Kansas-Missouri border during the war, when the hated order given by Union General Thomas Ewing forced the evacuation of some 20,000 Missourians from four border counties. Though a Unionist, Bingham promised to make Ewing, who appears in the painting, “infamous.”

Adjoining galleries display the stylized work of Benton's



Shoppers look for flowers and homegrown goods at Columbia's seasonal farmer's market at Clary-Shy Community Park.

World War II paintings (*Starry Night*, *Casualty* and *Embarkation*) and lithographs, among them the 1934 *Plowing It Under* and 1970 *Mr. President*, which portrays Harry Truman, another famous Missourian. In the corridor outside, a 320-foot “linear gallery” presents dozens of fine lithographs from the 1930s and '40s by Missouri artist Ben Messick (1891 to 1981).

MU also offers museums of anthropology, art and archaeology, entomology and geology, plus the Glen Smart Waterfowl and Upland Game Bird Collection, as well as the Yeckel Collection, which displays animal specimens from



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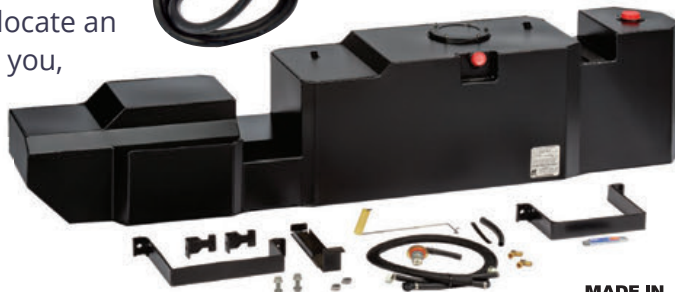
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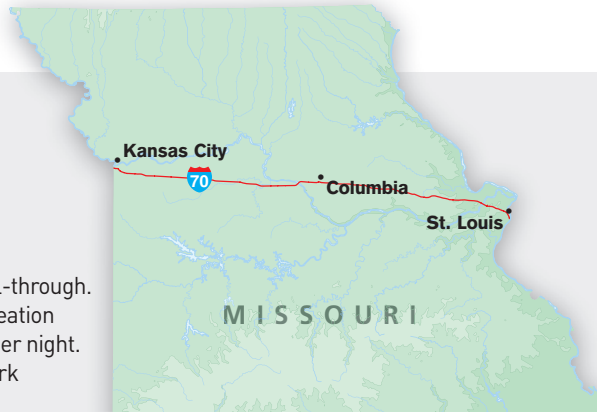


## IF YOU GO

The Columbia Convention and Visitors Bureau Tourist Information Center is open weekdays from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. at 300 S. Providence Road. 800-652-0987, [www.visitcolumbiamo.com](http://www.visitcolumbiamo.com)

### Cottonwoods RV Park

Open year-round, this Good Sam Park has 97 full-service sites, 63 of which are pull-through. Amenities include a convenience store, gift shop, playground, swimming pool, recreation room, free high-speed wireless internet and planned activities. Rates start at \$40 per night. 573-474-2747, 888-303-3313/reservations, [www.visitmo.com/cottonwoods-rv-park](http://www.visitmo.com/cottonwoods-rv-park)



Africa, Eurasia and North America.

Galleries at Columbia College exhibit artwork by students, faculty and professional artists, and Stephens College Costume Museum and Research Library features rotating exhibits of more than 13,000 garments dating back to the mid-18th century.

### CANDY AND CONFECTIONS

The city guidebook we used lists the Candy Factory downtown as a must-see for kids, but whatever your age, you should visit. The 3,500-square-foot

retail area is a magical candy world, with tables and shelves bearing every type of sugary treat you can imagine. Glass jars of jelly beans and lollipops, boxes of traditional chocolates, bins of chocolate-covered potato chips and pretzels, deep-dish chocolate pizza, chocolate Missouri maps and chocolate tigers (for Truman the Tiger, the Mizzou mascot), plus many others, are all festively displayed among candles, beaded bracelets, greeting cards, stuffed animals and much more.

Owner Michael Atkinson, who now

runs the "factory" with his wife, Amy, and six full-time and 10 part-time employees, said it was started in 1974 by "home candy-maker" Georgia Lundgren and bought by his parents, Sam and Donna Atkinson, a dozen years later. It's now located in a historic building the family bought in 1999.

Atkinson said jelly beans and lollipops are acquired elsewhere, but every chocolate item is made here in the 5,500-square-foot production area. At the viewing room, he pointed out the copper pots and marble-slab



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tables where chocolates are made daily "using a hundred-year-old method." While we watched, Russell Testerman funneled hot liquid caramel through an extruder onto trays of chopped pecans for chocolate turtles. In another area, Aaron Schilb poured chocolate into plastic elephant and tiger molds.

The factory makes candy buffets for weddings, chocolate-covered strawberries for hotel favors and festive specialties for Christmas, Valentine's Day, Easter and other holidays. This year for Father's Day, Atkinson said they'll offer something new: chocolate-covered bacon.

**HISTORY, PARKS AND PRESERVES**

We spent a pleasant afternoon at Boone County Museum and Galleries, located in 60-acre Frank G. Nifong Memorial Park and operated by the Boone County Historical Society. Director Campbell gave us some local history. In 1818, a group of settlers established the town of Smithton a mile or so from present-day downtown Columbia. However, due to

lack of water, the site was soon moved, the name was changed, and in 1821 the new town was incorporated as Columbia. From the beginning, Campbell said, land was set aside for a university. The town grew quickly and continues to grow. "Economic foundations" are medicine and insurance, as well as education, though "it was the university that made Columbia what it is today," he said.

The historical society manages Italianate Maplewood House, built in 1877 and now on the National Register of Historic Places (it was temporarily closed for renovations). But the 5,500-square-foot Walters-Boone County Historical Museum was open, as was the 4,800-square-foot Montminy Art Gallery, where the work of local, regional and state artists is displayed — on this occasion, elegant plein art paintings by M. Shawn Cornell. The ornate 9-foot grand piano built in 1891 for local ragtime pianist and composer John William "Blind" Boone (1864 to 1927) is permanently in the



**Beautiful Cottonwoods RV Park is lush with amenities and convenient to downtown and the MU campus. The park even offers borrow-a-book and borrow-a-DVD libraries.**

gallery and is played during Blind Boone Piano Concerts.

The museum complex also includes River-Horse Pavilion, where the boat *Nikawa* (Osage for "river-horse") is displayed. In 1995, Boone County author William Least Heat-Moon piloted the little craft along inland waterways clear across the continent. The Village at Boone Junction (open through October 30 this year for tours of four or more by appointment), comprised of four historic buildings, is nearby. The 1821 Gordon-Collins Log Cabin is believed to be the oldest surviving log building in the county. The 1890 Ryland Farmhouse is furnished with items typical to the era, and Easley Country Store, also from the 1890s, is a replica of a landmark on the banks of the Missouri River. The 1911 McQuitty "Shotgun" House was built by a local black contractor and realtor.

Columbia is unusual for its large expanse of parks and preserves (nearly 12,000 acres) including the Columbia Audubon Nature Sanctuary, Eagle Bluffs Conservation Area, Finger Lakes State Park, Rocky Fork Lakes Conservation Area, Three Creeks Conservation Area and Rock Bridge Memorial State Park. There's also Katy Trail State Park. At 237 miles, the park is the country's longest rails-to-trails project, spanning Missouri from Machens to Clinton, with 9 miles of the trail running through Columbia.

Our two dogs were finally able to enjoy Columbia with us at Rock Bridge Memorial Park, with its 2,273 acres of wooded rolling hills, more than two dozen miles of trails, and the eroded limestone wonders that are the bridge and Devil's Icebox Cave. The ½-mile-loop Devil's Icebox Trail, one of the

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park's eight hiking trails, is a boardwalk with some serious ups and downs that leads through the woods to the cave. I counted 45 steps on one ascent, 50 at another, 93 on a third, and there were many others. An engineering marvel, it is definitely not handicap accessible; in fact, our geriatric dogs had to be carried much of the way. But if you're able, it's an experience that shouldn't be missed.

A steep descent leads to the low-vaulted cave, where inside the mouth, water gurgles over a jumble of rocks. Near the start of the trail, you can, if you like, walk under the massive stone bridge. Many up-and-down staircases later, you see the bridge's other side from high up. A placard explains that at one time a rock roof extended from the bridge clear up the valley to connect with an enormous cave system. But long ago the cave roof collapsed, and today geologic processes continue to wear away the bridge.

### HISTORIC ROCHEPORT

Our Columbia guidebook suggests a short drive to historic Rocheport (15 miles west on I-70), a quaint Missouri River town noted for its antique shops, a stretch of the Katy Trail and family-owned Les Bourgeois Winery, third largest of the state's 125 wineries. Les Bourgeois wines range from dry to sweet, and tastings and tours are available.

We drove to Rocheport the last evening of our trip, and heartily recommend dinner at Les Bourgeois' bluff-top Bistro for the view as much as the extensive menu and excellent wine. Two-story floor-to-ceiling windows provide sublime vistas of the river, which arcs off to the west, and the surrounding, thickly treed countryside. Through the windows, the only sign of civilization is a short, far-distant stretch of I-70, where vehicles the size of termites creep along.

Otherwise, this is what Lewis and Clark might have seen as they poled past more than 200 years ago, perhaps on a warm spring evening when the western sky was a temporary rainbow of purple, pink and turquoise, and the sun, just over the horizon, glittered through the trees like a kindly eye. ☺

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# DOUBLE THE DIESEL, DOUBLE THE DRIVE

Transfer Flow's replacement fuel tank boosts the Nissan Titan XD's capacity from 26 to 50 gallons

The 2016 Nissan Titan XD full-size pickup powered by a Cummins 5.0-liter V-8 turbo-diesel XD has received numerous accolades including Official Truck of Texas for best powertrain, and Truck of the Year for PickupTrucks.com, Cars.com and AutoGuide.com. Its two-stage turbocharger contributes to a very impressive peak torque of 555 lb-ft and 310 horsepower.

Of course, we would expect amazing fuel economy, but reports were underwhelming. *Motor Trend* ran the Titan XD through its sophisticated Real MPG Test. The result was 15.8/city, 20.8/highway and 17.7/combined miles per gallon. *Car and Driver's* tests gave it an average of only 15.5 MPG. We would have to guess that neither of these tests was done with the Titan's available maximum payload of 2,000 pounds or its towing

capacity of more than 12,000 pounds (when properly equipped).

That brings us to the subject of this article. While the Titan XD offers some impressive alternatives to the light-truck market, its factory 26-gallon fuel tank is, well, puny. Under a real-life load, its range could be less than 350 miles before you'd be looking for diesel at any price. Transfer Flow, a leading supplier of aftermarket fuel tanks, saw a way to almost double the stock fuel capacity to 50 gallons. Amazing, to say the least.

While it's exciting to almost double the driving range of the Titan, one caveat is the additional weight that will decrease the GVWR, payload and towing capability. The extra fuel will tack on 177 pounds, plus the weight of the tank. Owners must take this into consideration with matching the



The creative design of the new Transfer Flow tank uses 15 separate pieces of 12-gauge aluminized steel, a work of masterful engineering.

1) Transfer Flow's 50-gallon replacement tank comes with all the necessary hardware and step-by-step installation instructions. 2) First, the factory skid plate under the plastic fuel tank was removed. Transfer Flow tanks are made of 12-gauge aluminized steel, so a skid plate is not really required. 3) The small cover plate was removed to access the fuel-supply line, the fuel-return line and the electrical sender connector. 4) With the filling and vent hoses disconnected, the factory tank was lowered out of the way. 5) The rollover-vent valve fitting was unclipped. It would be reused on the new tank. 6) The OEM sender is difficult to see when the tank is still attached, but experienced hands made it look easy.



## DOUBLE THE DIESEL, DOUBLE THE DRIVE

7) The Titan XD's bulky water separator was in the way of Transfer Flow's design and had to be moved. 8) The water separator was unbolted and lowered without disconnecting any tubes. 9) A short section of the factory separator mounting bracket was cut out of the way, allowing the new tank to fit all the way to the transfer case. 10) Rough edges of the cut were ground smooth and repainted.



truck with a trailer and hauling stuff in the cab and bed.

When we first saw the new tank at the 2016 SEMA Show in Las Vegas, it looked like a complicated piece of a jigsaw puzzle. The image came to mind of the amazing rock walls of the ball court in the Inca ruins of Sacsayhuaman in Cusco, Peru. How the Incas managed to cut, transport, lift and fit the huge multisided pieces of stone into the walls has never been fully explained. Modern technology says it was impossible.

Fitting a 50-gallon tank into the space used by a 26-gallon tank sounded nearly impossible, but the engineers at

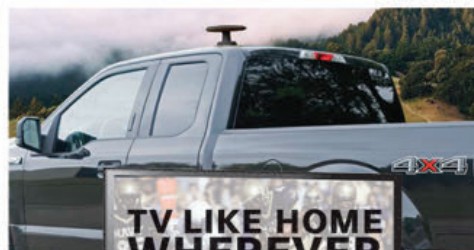


Transfer Flow are famous for getting every ounce of fuel from the available space. We wanted to see the installation of the company's new 50-gallon tank up close. This required a visit to Transfer Flow's Chico, California, facility.

The retrofit process was remarkably simple, using all factory holes and requiring no drilling. The process starts by removing the factory skid plate under the plastic fuel tank. Transfer Flow tanks are made of 12-gauge aluminized



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## DOUBLE THE DIESEL, DOUBLE THE DRIVE

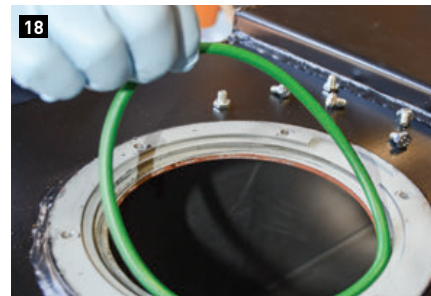
steel, so a skid plate is not really needed. Lowering the tank slightly facilitated removing the factory hold-up straps. A cover plate was removed to unplug the fuel-supply line, the fuel-return line and the OEM electrical sender connector. The fill and vent hoses on the side were removed from the truck body so the tank could be lowered out of the frame, and the OEM rollover-vent valve fitting was unclipped.

Next came the tricky part. The rock shield was removed from the bulky fuel/water separator, and the separator was unbolted and lowered out of the way without disconnecting any tubes. A small section of the factory fuel/water separator bracket was cut off, sanded smooth and painted to prevent rust. A little stud no longer needed was tapped back into the frame. Then a new tank-hanger bracket was fitted, using factory T-slots in the frame and all factory bolts. With that in place, the water separator was relocated closer to the frame, using all factory hardware, and its small wiring harness was relocated just behind the frame. Moving the water separator makes room for the new tank to extend all the way up to the transfer case.

The sending unit was removed from the OEM tank and a newly engineered float replaced the original and was calibrated for the bigger tank before being installed using a new O-ring. As a final safety step, the tank was pressurized, and the sending unit seal was checked for any leaks. The rollover-vent valve was reconnected. Using a hydraulic lift the Incas never had, the uniquely shaped tank was raised into place like part of a giant plug into a socket. Not so impossible after all.

With the new hold-up straps attached, the next step was to reinstall the fill and vent hoses and transfer the fuel from the original tank to the new one. The final step was to run the truck over to Transfer Flow's fuel station where the tank was topped off, five gallons at a time, to check the accuracy of the factory gauge.

The new tank, including its three baffles, is made up of 15 separate pieces of precisely cut and welded 12-gauge aluminized steel. Many of



**11)** An unneeded stud was just tapped back into the frame. **12)** The replacement tank's hold-up strap was installed using factory T-slots and original bolts. **13)** The new tank was mounted using the factory T-slots. **14)** The water separator was attached to the new tank's mounting-strap bracket, now closer to the frame. **15)** The factory fuel sender was removed from the original tank to be reinstalled in the Transfer Flow tank. **16)** A new fuel-level float (black, on the right) was designed to replace the OEM float. **17)** Before reinstalling the sender in the new tank, it was carefully calibrated. **18)** A new O-ring was fitted before the fuel-level sender was dropped into place. **19)** Using a new O-ring, the factory fuel-level sender was reinstalled in the new tank. **20)** The sender's gasket was checked with soapy water for any sign of a leak under pressure.



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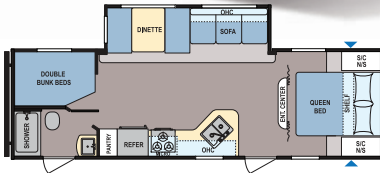
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## DOUBLE THE DIESEL, DOUBLE THE DRIVE

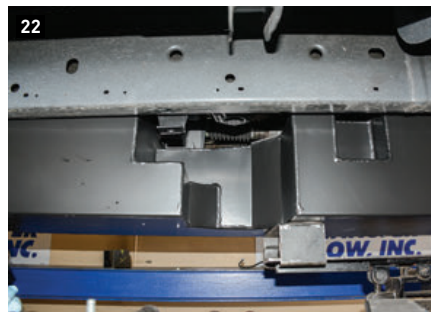
the welds are done by robotic arms, but each is checked and hand-sanded before going into the full-immersion water tank for a final pressurized water tank for a final pressurized test. Then it goes to the powder-coating room, and it's ready to ship to any of Transfer Flow's outlets around the country. Transfer Flow also does

installs at the factory for those living or traveling near Chico.

The suggested retail price of the 50-gallon tank is \$1,784.50. Installation at the factory runs another \$250.

### Transfer Flow

800-442-0056, [www.transferflow.com](http://www.transferflow.com)



- 21)** Factory fuel-fill and vent hoses were reused on the 50-gallon tank for an original fit. **22)** Using a hydraulic lift, the uniquely shaped tank was raised into place like part of a giant jigsaw puzzle. **23)** New rubber-padded tank straps were bolted into place. **24)** The final step was to top off the tank 5 gallons at a time to check the factory gauge. **25)** The new 50-gallon tank doubles the Titan XD's fuel capacity, an impressive bit of engineering and design. **26)** At Transfer Flow's Chico, California, facility, sheets of 12-gauge aluminized steel are formed for the basic design of tanks and toolboxes. **27)** All welds are carefully checked and smoothed with a hand grinder. **28)** Robotic arms do much of the precise welding.

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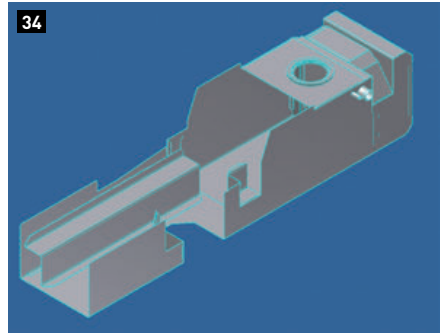
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**DOUBLE THE DIESEL, DOUBLE THE DRIVE**



**29)** Tanks are pressurized and checked for even the smallest leak. **30)** The full-immersion water tank is used for the final pressurized leak test for every tank. **31)** After thorough testing, the tanks move to the powder-coating room. **32)** A good coat of PPG powder coat gives the 12-gauge aluminized steel tanks added protection from

the elements. **33)** In with the new and out with old. The plastic 26-gallon factory tanks are recycled. **34)** This CAD drawing shows the complex design of Transfer Flow's 50-gallon tank for the Titan XD with 15 separate pieces of precisely cut and welded 12-gauge aluminized steel. 🚚

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~~comp at \$79.99~~ ~~comp at \$198.45~~

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## GREENWOOD SCISSOR SUPER COUPON



**1-1/4 GALLON HOME AND GARDEN SPRAYER**  
ITEM 61280/63124  
63145/95692 shown

Customer Rating **★★★★★**

SAVE 39%  
**SUPER COUPON \$8.99**  
~~comp at \$12.99~~ ~~comp at \$14.97~~

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## CENTECH SCISSOR SUPER COUPON



**12 VOLT, 10/2/50 AMP BATTERY CHARGER/ENGINE STARTER**  
ITEM 60581/60653 shown

Customer Rating **★★★★★**

SAVE 57%  
**SUPER COUPON \$29.99**  
~~comp at \$49.99~~ ~~comp at \$69.99~~

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**PREDATOR GENERATORS**

**SUPER COUPON**

**8750 PEAK/7000 RUNNING WATTS 13 HP GAS GENERATORS**

ITEM 68530/63086/69671/63085 shown  
ITEM 68525/69677/63087/63088 CALIFORNIA ONLY

**Customer Rating** ★★★★★



**BEST BUY WINNER\***  
3 YEARS IN A ROW

8-13 HRS. RUN-TIME  
420 CC ENGINE  
76 DB SUPER QUIET  
ELECTRIC START

**SAVE \$469** Wheel and battery sold separately.

**SUPER COUPON**

**\$529.99** comp at \$999

**\$599.99** comp at \$999

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**SUPER COUPON**

**FREE**

**WITH ANY PURCHASE**

**CENTECH 7 FUNCTION DIGITAL MULTIMETER**

ITEM 90899 shown 98025/69096

**\$1645 VALUE**



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**US GENERAL**

**SUPER COUPON**

**26", 4 DRAWER TOOL CART**

ITEM 95659 shown 61634/61952

**SAVE \$269**

580 lb. capacity

**Customer Rating** ★★★★★

**SUPER COUPON**

**\$999.99** comp at \$1499.99

**\$1499.99** comp at \$369.32



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**HaulMaster**

**SUPER COUPON**

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

ITEM 63056/63057/63094 63150/61524/62322/90984 shown

**SAVE 80%**

**SUPER COUPON**

**\$6.99** comp at \$11.99

**Customer Rating** ★★★★★

**\$11.99** comp at \$34.95



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**CHICAGO ELECTRIC POWER TOOLS**

**SUPER COUPON**

**12" SLIDING COMPOUND DOUBLE-BEVEL MITER SAW WITH LASER GUIDE**

ITEM 69684 shown 61969/61970

**Customer Rating** ★★★★★

**SUPER COUPON**

**\$134.99** comp at \$199.99

**\$109.99** comp at \$339

**SAVE \$204**

Blade sold separately.



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**PITTSBURGH AUTOMOTIVE**

**SUPER COUPON**

**42" OFF-ROAD/FARM JACK**

ITEM 60668/6530 shown

3-1/2 ton capacity

**Customer Rating** ★★★★★

**SAVE NOW**

**SUPER COUPON**

**\$399.99** comp at \$599.99



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**COVER PRO**

**SUPER COUPON**

**10 FT. x 20 FT. PORTABLE CAR CANOPY**

ITEM 63054/60728/69034/62858 shown

**Customer Rating** ★★★★★

**SUPER COUPON**

**\$99.99** comp at \$205.99

**\$149.99** comp at \$205.99

**SAVE \$106**



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**PITTSBURGH**

**SUPER COUPON**

**16 OZ. HAMMERS WITH FIBERGLASS HANDLE**

ITEM 69006 shown 60715/60714

**Customer Rating** ★★★★★

**YOUR CHOICE**

**\$3.99** comp at \$4.99

**SAVE 77%**

**\$17.99** comp at \$17.99



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**SUPER COUPON**

**Customer Rating** ★★★★★

**TILTING FLAT PANEL TV MOUNT**

HOLDS FLAT SCREEN TV UP TO 70 INCHES

ITEM 62289 61807 shown

176 lb. capacity

**SAVE \$24.99**

**\$149.99** comp at \$55.82



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**SUPER COUPON**

**LED WORKLIGHTS**

A. 27 LED  
ITEM 63601/69567 60566/62332/67227 shown

B. 39 LED  
ITEM 62417/62574 62158 shown

Batteries included.

**Customer Rating** ★★★★★

**YOUR CHOICE**

**\$2.99** comp at \$3.99

**SAVE 71%**

**\$10.64** comp at \$10.64



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**WARRIOR**

**SUPER COUPON**

**Customer Rating** ★★★★★

• Drill 28 Hole Sizes

**3 PIECE TITANIUM NITRIDE COATED HIGH SPEED STEEL STEP BIT SET**

ITEM 91616 shown 69087/60379

**SAVE 85%**

**SUPER COUPON**

**\$8.99** comp at \$13.99

**\$59.97** comp at \$59.97



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**BADLAND**

**SUPER COUPON**

**SAVE \$70**

**2500 LB. ELECTRIC WINCH WITH WIRELESS REMOTE CONTROL**

ITEM 61258 shown 61840/68146 61297/63476

Voted Best Winches in Quality & Price

**Customer Rating** ★★★★★

**SUPER COUPON**

**\$499.99** comp at \$899.99

**\$119.99** comp at \$119.99



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**PITTSBURGH PRO**

**SUPER COUPON**

**3/8" DRIVE QUICK RELEASE RATCHET**

ITEM 62324/62287 shown

**Customer Rating** ★★★★★

**SAVE 63%**

**SUPER COUPON**

**\$8.99** comp at \$12.99

**\$24.97** comp at \$24.97



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**HaulMaster**

**SUPER COUPON**

**Customer Rating** ★★★★★

**3/8" x 14 FT. GRADE 43 TOWING CHAIN**

Not for overhead lifting. ITEM 60658/97711 shown

**SAVE 67%**

**SUPER COUPON**

**\$199.99** comp at \$309.99

**\$60.95** comp at \$60.95

5400 lb. capacity



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**HaulMaster**

**SUPER COUPON**

**Customer Rating** ★★★★★

**17 FT. TYPE IA MULTI-TASK LADDER**

ITEM 62656/62514/67640 shown

**SAVE \$161**

**Customer Rating** ★★★★★

Versatile - 23 Combinations  
Safe - Secure & Stable  
Super Strong - Holds 300 lbs.

**SUPER COUPON**

**\$119.99** comp at \$139.99

**\$281.87** comp at \$281.87



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**PITTSBURGH**

**SUPER COUPON**

**32 PIECE SCREWDRIVER SET**

ITEM 61259/90764 shown

**Customer Rating** ★★★★★

**SUPER COUPON**

**\$5.99** comp at \$8.99

**SAVE 56%**

**\$13.67** comp at \$13.67



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# ON THE LEVEL

Installing Lippert Components' Ground Control 3.0 automatic leveling system brings modern convenience to an older fifth-wheel

**T**here's no denying that the RV lifestyle is about getting away from it all and relaxing among friends, family and the bounty of nature. After all, that's why they're called recreational vehicles, right? But as the miles melt away behind us and we begin to think about our next destination, the specter of work begins to loom. Not at the office or shop, mind you, but at the campsite. Unhitching, leveling, hooking up and unpacking all come before unwinding — so most of us are always looking for a way to shorten up the process to maximize relaxation time.

If you have an older fifth-wheel, the odds are good that it came equipped with manual stabilizers in the rear, and electric landing jacks up front that, while easy to deploy, are slow and still may require manually leveling the trailer from side to side. You may cast an envious gaze on your neighbor, who simply pushes a button and goes about his or her business while the trailer levels itself, and wonder if it's time to upgrade to a new fifth-wheel. That's one option, or you can simply retrofit your trailer with the Ground Control 3.0 from Lippert Components.

The Ground Control 3.0 automatic leveling system consists of four electric jacks (20,000-pound capacity) or six electric jacks (30,000-pound capacity), as well as a touch pad, leveling sensors, mounting brackets, electrical harnesses, hardware and instructions.

Installing the system isn't so much difficult as time consuming. How the front compartment is configured with respect to the plumbing and electrical systems, as well as how the original landing jacks were installed can make a big difference in installation time.

Another major consideration is the routing of the electrical harnesses from the rear jacks to the front controller, which can be difficult, depending on whether or not the trailer has an enclosed underbelly and where the holding tanks and slideouts are located. Suffice it to say, unless you have a mechanical background and an impressive set of tools, you should probably leave this installation to the experts. Getting an estimate for the job ahead of time will prevent any unpleasant financial surprises.

To see what's involved and to

evaluate the system's function as a whole, we had the RV experts at C&S RV Service Center ([www.candsrv.com](http://www.candsrv.com)) in Oxnard, California, install the Ground Control 3.0 four-jack system on a 2005 Holiday Rambler Presidential. Installation on this particular fifth-wheel took every bit of 10 hours, which, in addition to the system's retail cost of around \$2,600, isn't pocket change. However, once the system was installed, the trailer leveled itself in about a minute with the push of a button — so what you spend in money you'll save in time at every campsite from now on. To us, that's a good investment.





**1)** The Lippert Ground Control 3.0 aftermarket kit includes everything needed to retrofit or replace an auto-leveling system in a fifth-wheel trailer, including front and rear electric jacks, mounting brackets, electrical harnesses, leveling sensors, hardware and instructions. **2)** This 2005 Holiday Rambler Presidential fifth-wheel was equipped from the factory with power front landing jacks enabled by a single electric motor on the street side of the forward cargo compartment connected to a shaft that operates the jack on the curb side. The motor is small, the jacks didn't work independently, and the operation slow, so the owner wanted to upgrade to the Lippert Ground Control system. **3)** The motor for the stock landing jacks is disassembled first by removing the four screws that secure it to the housing. **4)** Removing the motor reveals the gearbox, which is held onto the driveshaft with a collar and cotter pin. **5)** Once this is removed, the gearbox can be pulled free. **6)** The stock jack assemblies are secured with a metal strap and bolt.

**7)** Once the bolt is removed, the jack can be wiggled free. **8)** As it turned out, the original jacks had been bent and could not be retracted far enough to allow them to be removed. This, and the fact that the Lippert motor and jack assemblies were quite a bit larger, meant the cargo floor of the trailer had to be cut for clearance. The holes were later filled in with a custom plate and spray-foam insulation. **9)** Here, you can clearly see the difference between the single motor that operated both front jacks and the motor on just one of the Lippert jack assemblies. **10)** The new jack assembly is carefully moved into place on the street side of the trailer. Instructions specify that the motor be positioned toward the front of the trailer to orient the jack pinholes on the sides, but there was insufficient room at the front of the compartment to do this.





**11)** The street-side jack installation is difficult to show because of the equipment surrounding it, but the curbside jack illustrates the positioning of the motor to the side (instead of facing front), as well as the hole that needed to be cut in the floor for clearance. **12)** After trial-fitting the new jacks, the technician discovered a problem. Because the jacks had to be turned away from the position recommended by Lippert, the bosses that butt against the mounting straps were now located on the wrong side, so the jacks could not be properly secured. Besides that, the bosses on the new jacks were not in the same location as the original jack (top). **13)** The problem was skillfully remedied by the crew at C&S, who fabricated new bosses and welded them to the appropriate areas on the new jacks. The jacks were then repainted for a factory appearance and reinstalled. **14)** The rear jacks are typically much easier to install. Per the instructions, the mounting bracket is located 12 inches behind the rearmost tire, then used as a template to locate the mounting holes.

## EXPERIENCE THE ULTIMATE IN BACKYARD GRILLING

### Weber Q™ 1000 (Mfr. #50060001)

- 189 sq. in.
- Push-button ignition
- 8,500 BTU
- 23½"H x 27"W x 20½"D



28"L x 21"W x 25"H



### Weber Q™ 1200 (Mfr. #51080001)

- 189 sq. in.
- Electronic push-button ignition
- 8,500 BTU
- Work tables
- Temperature gauge
- 24½"H x 41"W x 20½"D



### Weber Q™ 2000 (Mfr. #53060001)

- 280 sq. in.
- Push-button ignition
- 12,000 BTU
- Work tables
- 26"H x 51½"W x 24½"D

### Weber Q® Portable Cart

Mfr. #6557. (not compatible with 100/200 series Weber® grills).



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**15)** After using a center punch to mark the center of each hole, drilling commenced. WD-40 was used to keep the drill bit cool and prevent it from sticking. **16)** Lippert supplies self-tapping bolts that should be torqued to 70 ft.-lbs. As an extra measure of safety, a few drops of red Loctite Threadlocker were applied to the bolt threads prior to installation. **17)** The jack assembly can then be installed and located at the correct height with the adjustment holes. The curbside jack install (shown) went pretty easily, but the street-side unit was a bit of a challenge due to the slideout and its attendant wiring harnesses. **18)** For the Ground Control system to ascertain that the trailer is level, a sensor must be installed near the middle center of the chassis. In the case of this fifth-wheel, that wasn't as easy as it sounded; the trailer was equipped with a full underbelly, and the freshwater tank was located amidships. A cross member offered just enough space for the small sensor to be located.



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19



20



21



22

19) Three long wiring harnesses, one for each jack and one for the sensor, must be routed to the front of the trailer, which took some doing. First the underbelly was pulled down on the curb side, then the harnesses were pulled through one by one by attaching them to the end of an old piece of trim with duct tape. 20) A hole saw was used to cut into a utility box up front, and the wiring harnesses were passed through. A piece of plastic wiring loom was placed around the edge of the hole to protect the harnesses from chafing. 21) The system's control unit must be mounted up front, and, like the rear sensor, must be located in the middle of the floor so it may ascertain when the trailer is level. 22) The wiring harnesses are then attached at the connection points specified in the instructions.

# KANSAS KRV CENTER

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23



24



25



26

23) Power for the system comes from a central wiring location, and the wires are protected by a 50-amp fuse. 24) Finally, the touch pad can be mounted. This can be located anywhere the user prefers, but on this trailer it was placed inside a cargo door and attached to a sheet-metal structure that houses the LP-gas cylinder. 25) Once installed, the system operated flawlessly, easily leveling the fifth-wheel inside of a minute. 26) The trailer trim pieces were then reinstalled and the job completed. 🚐

**Lippert Components**  
574-535-1125  
[www.lci1.com/ground-control-3](http://www.lci1.com/ground-control-3)

**Push-Button Leveling, Part II:** Look for *Trailer Life's* installation of the game-changing Ground Control TT 2.0 for travel trailers this fall.



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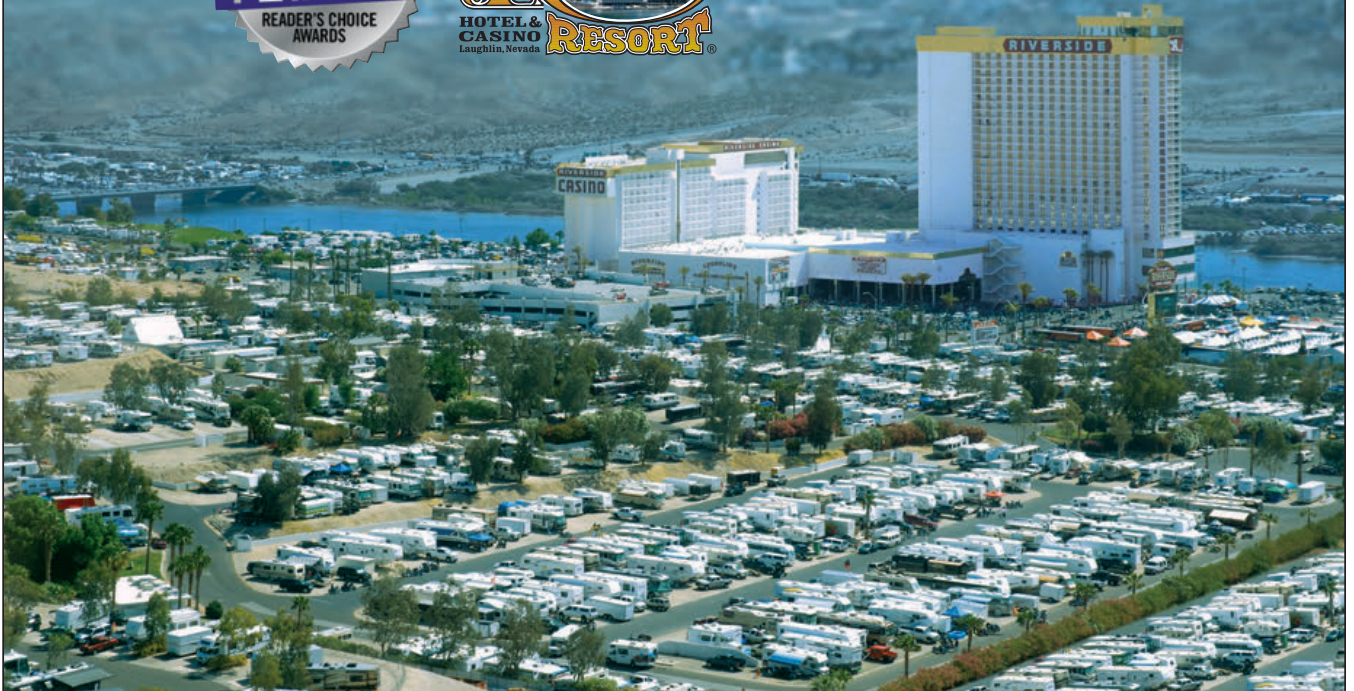
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# KEEPIN' COOL



## TAKE THE HEAT OFF WITHOUT EXCEEDING THE POWER SUPPLY WITH AN EFFICIENT COLEMAN-MACH AIR CONDITIONER

**M**ost of us use our RVs in warm weather, whether it's during the dog days of summer or as snowbirds under the Southern sun. For that reason, air conditioning is not only nice to have, it's practically a necessity in most parts of the country. While the majority of RVs today are equipped from the factory with air conditioning, and many with a single unit are prewired for a second one, some smaller trailers and truck campers don't have A/C installed. Whatever the configuration, RVers have options when it comes to installing a first or second air conditioner.

Most RV air conditioners are roof-mounted 13,500- or 15,000-Btu units (although smaller sizes are available) and come in direct-vent or ducted applications with a built-in or wall thermostat, and sometimes remote-control options. More advanced systems feature multi-zone heating and air conditioning controlled directly from an electronic interface, and some are ready to accept an optional electric-heat add-on.

Replacing or upgrading a ducted air-conditioning or heat-pump system is certainly possible, but it is often too complicated for do-it-yourselfers since it can involve some wiring for the thermostat system. For this article, a direct-vent air conditioner was installed,

but the principles can be applied to replacing or adding to a ducted system.

### SELECTING AN AIR CONDITIONER

In this project, we installed a second air conditioner in a 33-foot travel trailer that was prewired for one. The trailer has a 15,000-Btu ducted air conditioner, but in hot, sunny conditions, the front bedroom is too warm for comfort, so we wanted to take advantage of the second A/C option.

This trailer has a single-zone air-conditioning system, which we upgraded to a Coleman-Mach system a year ago when the previous system failed. This involved replacing all the electronics and modifying the thermostat and 12-volt DC wiring

for Coleman's design. We could have started the process to install a multi-zone system but opted to stay with the single zone, because, upon investigation, we found the RV manufacturer had not extended the ductwork to the bedroom air-conditioner location.

After contacting Airxcel, manufacturer of Coleman-Mach air conditioners, to determine how it recommends selecting an A/C unit, we decided on the 13,500-Btu Mach 3 PS (Power Saver), primarily because of its size and energy-efficiency. The Mach 3 PS has an 11.2-amp full-load rating, whereas the standard Mach 3 Plus runs at 15.3 amps.

When buying an air conditioner, you need to select and purchase the plenum separately. We picked the company's low-profile 9400 Series ceiling assembly with controls on the face of the unit. We also opted to install the Elect-A-Heat kit, a low-power heating element that adds 1,750 watts of heating capability to the air conditioner. While this will certainly not heat your RV, it will remove a chill during those cool autumn nights.



Make ..... Airxcel Coleman-Mach  
Air Conditioner ..... Mach 3 PS (part 48208C966)  
Capacity ..... 13,500 Btu  
Type..... Non-ducted, direct-vent  
Ceiling Plenum ..... 9400 Series (part 9430D715)  
Full Load, Cooling (approximately) ..... 11.2 amps

Full Load, Heating (approximately) ..... 15.6 amps  
Evaporator Air Delivery..... 320 cu. ft./min.  
Coolant..... R-410A  
MSRP/Air Conditioner ..... \$743  
MSRP/Ceiling Assembly ..... \$79  
Warranty ..... 2 years/parts and labor

## KEEPIN' COOL

Rooftop RV air conditioners and heat pumps utilize the industry-standard 14-by-14-inch roof ventilation opening, which is convenient. In this instance, the trailer had a crank-up vent in the opening, which we removed. While it is possible to cut a hole in a roof to install an air conditioner, doing so requires careful consideration and know-how, and should be left to the pros. But if you really want to tackle the job, Airxcel provides instructions with the A/C.

Wiring for the air conditioner is tucked away in a termination box that is easily accessed when the vent trim is removed. Occasionally, with laminated roof assemblies, the box will be on the ceiling adjacent to the vent behind a blank cover, and a connection to the A/C must be made from there.

Whenever installing, replacing or servicing an RV air conditioner, make sure the power to the air conditioner is off. Always follow proper techniques when working with electricity and be cautious when walking on the roof.

### EXTERIOR INSTALLATION

To install the air conditioner, we first had to remove the aforementioned existing roof vent. This was a somewhat delicate procedure, especially with today's TPO roof membranes, which can be more fragile than older EPDM rubber roofing. The sealant covering the screws on the vent was scraped away and the screws removed using a screw gun. Working carefully underneath the flange of the vent, it was pulled up without damaging the roof membrane. The vent had been installed with a strip of putty tape between the flange and the roof.

Once the vent was removed, we carefully scraped off as much putty and sealer as we could, but it was impossible to remove it all. If we were installing a new vent, this would not be a problem, but because we were replacing an old vent with a new air conditioner, which has a foam-rubber seal, we needed to remove all the putty tape so the air conditioner can be removed

later for service, if necessary.

To do this, we cleaned the roof area with acetone, and then covered what sealant we couldn't remove with 4-inch-wide EternaBond tape. This ensures that all the screw holes and any tears resulting from removing the old vent were sealed and provided a clean surface for the new A/C foam seal to compress against. Never seal an air conditioner to the roof using liquid sealant; over time, when the sealant cracks, it will usually leak, and if the unit needs to be removed to be repaired, replaced or resealed, it and the roof will be damaged.

Once the roof opening is prepared, the air conditioner can be set in place with the pointed end of the shroud facing the front of the RV. Getting the unit onto the roof can be quite a challenge, as air conditioners are heavy. You'll need to enlist a helper. The air conditioner must be installed within 15 degrees of level front to back, nose up only, and 15 degrees of level side to

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1) The new direct-vent air conditioner can be placed in this industry-standard 14x14-inch ventilation opening, taking advantage of factory prewiring for a second air-conditioning unit in the bedroom ceiling. The first step is to remove the inside trim bezel and locate the wiring for the air conditioner.

2) After carefully climbing up on the roof, we removed the existing Maxxair cover to expose the vent.

3) The sealant from the vent flange was scraped off with care to avoid damaging the TPO roof.

4) Using a screw gun, the screws were removed — again, taking care not to damage the roof's fragile membrane.

# Quality is in our Nature...



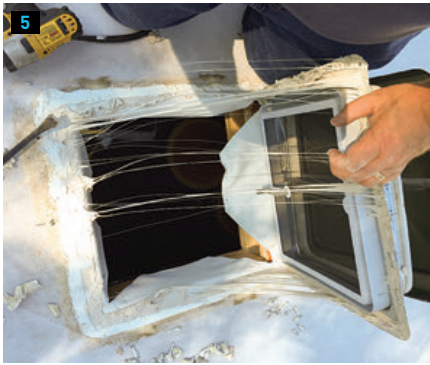
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5) The old crank-up vent was peeled off, removing as much sealant as possible without damaging the roof.

6) EternaBond tape was placed around the opening over the sealant and screw holes, making a clean surface on which to compress the air conditioner's foam seal.

7) The new air conditioner was worked into place, but it was a tight fit.

side. If necessary, you can make a shim to bring the unit up to level.

With the air conditioner in place, work on the roof is done.

### INTERIOR INSTALLATION

From inside the RV, the air conditioner must be centered evenly around the opening. The wiring harness can be tucked inside the opening in the bottom of the unit. Depending on the type of RV, there may be a need to finish off the opening in the roof cavity, as was the case with this installation. A roll of 4-inch aluminum-foil tape, which can be found in the heating section of most home-improvement centers, works well to seal the opening. While it isn't required, strips of luan plywood can be cut to box out the opening, but the tape works just fine.

Coleman-Mach utilizes a fabric duct collar to isolate the intake and exhaust air from the air conditioner, instead of a solid panel. This is attached to the A/C base pan, and is later attached to the ceiling plenum and trimmed.

Securing the air conditioner to the roof is the next step, and this is done with the ceiling-mount frame and four bolts that are included with the ceiling assembly. Always start threading these bolts by hand. Once they have

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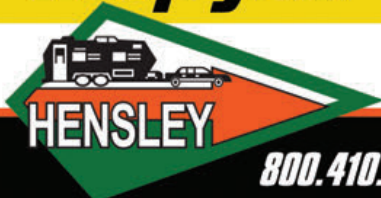
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**8)** The ceiling-assembly parts were checked before work resumed inside the trailer.

**9)** The A/C unit was centered over the opening from inside, and the ceiling-mount frame was installed using the four bolts. The bolts were started by hand, then each bolt was driven with a screw gun until the gasket-indicating tab touched the roof.

**10)** Installing the fabric duct collar to the base pan was straightforward using three provided screws. The collar will be adhered to the ceiling plenum and trimmed later.



been started, a screw gun can be used, since the bolts are quite long. Around the gasket are four small tabs that show the proper compression of the gasket for optimal sealing. According to Airxcel, "Proper tension has been achieved for each bolt when any portion of each gasket-indicating tab has been pulled down even with the roof."

The 9000 Series plenum requires the 120-volt AC wiring to enter through the top, so this is the time to route the wiring. It takes about 24 inches of wire for the installation. Follow the directions carefully, being sure to use proper-size wire nuts, and tape the nuts in place before folding the wiring back into the connection box on the plenum.

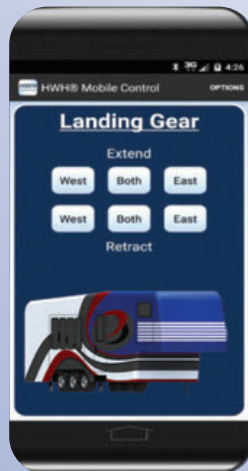
The wiring harness from the roof A/C plugs into the top side of the plenum, next to where the supply wire comes in. The Elect-A-Heat kit is also installed at this point, if desired, and also plugs into the top of the plenum.

Once the wiring is done, testing the air conditioner is recommended before attaching the remainder of the plenum to the ceiling. Make sure all the wiring is tied off and not contacting any sharp edges or the heating element. It's also

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## KEEPIN' COOL



**11** The supply wires and A/C feed connect from the top, so wiring must be done prior to attaching the plenum to the mounting frame.

**12** The fabric duct collar was trimmed and attached to the ceiling plenum using double-stick tape.

**13** The thermostat probe floats freely from the plenum assembly. Care must be taken to make sure it is centered over the top of one of the return air grilles without touching anything; otherwise, air temperature readings could be skewed.

**14** With the light fixture moved and the batten strip trimmed, the installation was completed. This is as far as the light could be moved without having a 1-inch hole in the ceiling. The air seems to flow around the fixture well but may have to be moved if it creates a condensation problem, which may require replacing the ceiling panel for aesthetic reasons.

## STICK WITH IT ➔

Beyond its role in this A/C installation, EternaBond RoofSeal tape is widely used by RVers and professional technicians to make waterproof roof and side-wall repairs without compromising the underlying material. EternaBond installs quickly by hand and can be seated with a roller, and is claimed to adhere to any clean surface except silicone. Because the adhesive is extremely sticky, it's best to remove the backing gradually as the tape is put in place.

Available in white or black in a variety of lengths and widths, EternaBond tape can be purchased at [www.eter nabond.com](http://www.eter nabond.com), RV-supply centers and home-improvement stores. Keeping a spare roll on hand for emergency repairs is a good idea, but note that the product's shelf life, prior to application, is five years. After the tape is in place, it creates a permanent seal.

This installation also calls for a roll of 4-inch aluminum-foil tape, designed for use on seams and ducts. The acrylic-adhesive tape forms a vapor- and moisture-proof seal that, like EternaBond, can last for the life of the RV. Aluminum-foil tape is made by a number of manufacturers, and is available online and in the heating section of most home-supply and hardware stores.





a good idea to double-check that the opening is sealed with aluminum-foil tape, including the area around the 120-volt AC supply wire. Otherwise, you'll be cooling the ceiling space.

Next, the fabric duct collar is attached and trimmed to size. Then you're ready to attach the ceiling assembly. For this installation, we had some other work to do, including moving a ceiling light fixture and removing a batten strip to trim and fit. Test-fitting the ceiling assembly will help determine what needs to be moved or trimmed to finish the installation. The ceiling assembly was used as a template for trimming the batten strip, after tracing the edges and removing the assembly and the strip. Once the strip was trimmed, the assembly was reinstalled for a nice, clean installation.

### REAL-WORLD TESTING

As expected, the air conditioner works quite well. The ceiling-assembly controls are simple and straightforward. The unit also features adjustable vents to control the amount of discharge air. Unlike previous versions, this unit does not offer side-to-side direction change, but the built-in fins are aligned to distribute air nicely, and as a bonus, there are fewer small parts to break.

As mentioned, the RV manufacturer installed a light fixture right in the way of the new air conditioner, even though the ceiling was prepped for A/C. This fixture was moved toward the front of the trailer, which provided just enough room, but a large wiring hole prevented moving it any farther. As it was, several screw holes needed to be filled, but that was better than replacing the entire ceiling panel to conceal a 1-inch hole.

Having adequate air conditioning makes RVing in hot weather much more comfortable and enjoyable. Whether installing a first air conditioner or adding a second one for more complete cooling, it's time and money well spent. 🚐

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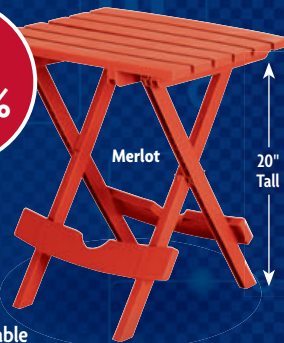


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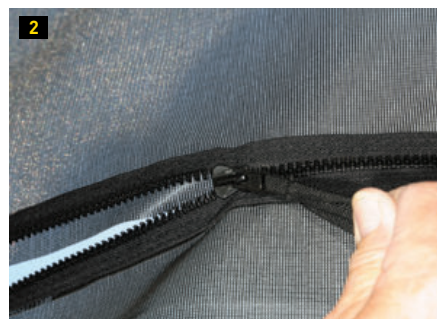
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**H**ow many times have you been parked on that picture-perfect site, and no matter how hard you try to adjust the patio awning's height or position, you just can't seem to block the blinding rays of the sun? Heat buildup on the side of the RV can make it impossible to enjoy sitting out under the awning and often leads to insufferable interior temperatures, taxing the capability of the air conditioner. It's common to see owners rig up makeshift sunscreens. Commercial screens that fit in the awning's roller-tube slot are available, but if the wind blows in, the awning could roll up by itself if fitted with a sensor. It takes paying attention to take everything down so the awning can be rolled up without encapsulating the sunscreen material.

Carefree of Colorado, known for its patio awnings, has created the EZ ZipBlocker that makes adding a sunscreen to any awning super simple. The EZ uses the aforementioned awning roller-tube slot but is creatively designed to unzip at a moment's notice, and a section remains in the slot that can be rolled up with the awning fabric when not in use — without impacting its final resting place or damaging the awning. Precut sizes are offered in 10-, 15- and 19-foot lengths with 7-, 8- or 9-foot drops to accommodate various RVs.

The EZ ZipBlocker is constructed of a weather-resistant open-weave polyester fabric coated with a durable vinyl to help ensure long life and strength while still allowing plenty of flexibility and visibility. The material is designed to block up to 85 percent of the sun's rays.



**1)** A slot in the awning's roller tube is lined up so the polycord on the end of the insert section of the material can be threaded into the tube. Here, the shroud had to be removed first. **2)** Once the insert is in place, the bottom section of the screen is simply connected using a large zipper, which is easy to handle. The screen can be unzipped in seconds. **3)** Hook-and-loop tabs can be used to keep the screen from moving. We elected not to use the tabs so the material can be repositioned freely in response to the sun's location. **4)** Stakes are provided with the kit and can be used to tie down the lower part of the screen using the grommets in the fabric.

Installing the EZ ZipBlocker is not complicated and takes only about 15 minutes. Though you will need the help of a friend and a ladder, it will be for only one time. With the awning fully open, the slot in the roller tube is aligned so it's clearly visible and in a position where the end is open. In some cases, the head shroud may have to be removed to gain access to the slot, as was the case with the test

fifth-wheel. From here, the protruding polycord on the unzipped upper portion of the EZ ZipBlocker is threaded into the open slot in the awning's roller tube. This is where the second person makes

**MADE IN THE SHADE** » The EZ ZipBlocker makes a nice looking addition to a patio awning and provides more shade when the sun is lower in the sky, dropping the temperature significantly. The view through the woven material is still pretty good.





The screen material fits nicely inside the EZ ZipBlocker's provided nylon storage bag.

the job smooth and fast. Have your helper hold the far end up about as far as he or she can reach, with the length of the material stretched out, while you continue threading the polycord toward the opposing end of the roller tube.

Once the top section is in place, the major portion of the screen is connected using a large, easy-to-handle zipper. If desired, hook-and-loop tabs can be used to secure the screen on the roller tube, but we elected to keep it free so we can move it front to back, depending on the sun's location. The sunscreen can either fall freely toward the ground or be anchored using the grommets in the end of the woven fabric.

When it's time to stop using the EZ ZipBlocker, unzip it from the insert that stays attached to the awning. Depending on the length and drop of the material, the upper portion will be configured in 1-, 2- or 3-foot widths. Prices vary depending on size; the 19-footer with a 9-foot drop installed on the test fifth-wheel lists for around \$230 (carrying bag and stakes included). The sunscreen can be used on manual or power awnings.

We installed the EZ ZipBlocker on a fairly hot and sunny day, making it ideal for this test. We thoroughly enjoyed the noticeable temperature decrease in the newly created shaded area. Not only was it a much more comfortable place to relax, but the views were only slightly diminished looking through the black woven material. If you spend any amount of time outside in sunny areas, the EZ ZipBlocker is going to be a product you won't want to be without. 🚚

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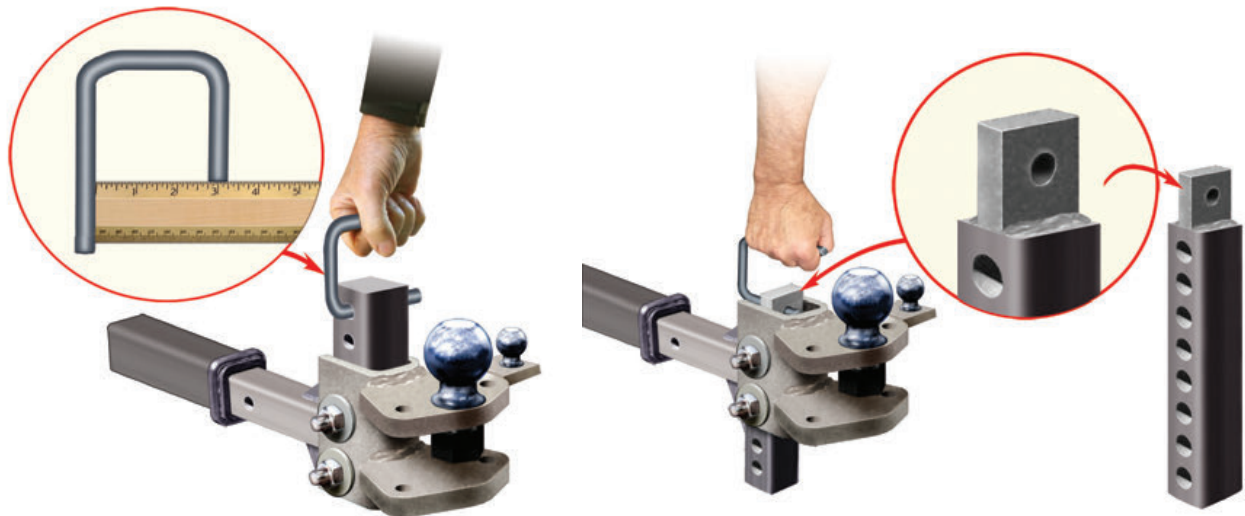
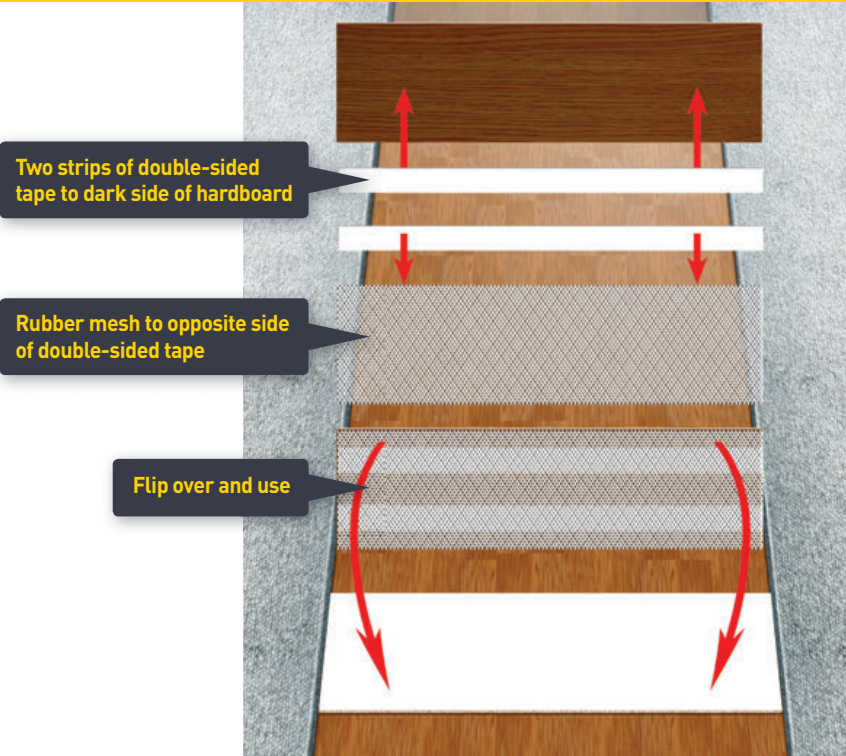
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## Scratch-Free Floor

We recently replaced the old carpet in our Keystone Montana fifth-wheel with vinyl plank flooring from our home center. To protect the new flooring from the slideout without spending a fortune, I purchased a 32x48-inch piece of smooth plastic-coated hardboard paneling at a building-supply store that was cut into six 32x8-inch strips. I also got a roll of double-sided carpet tape and a roll of high-quality nonslip shelf material. I cut the shelf material into strips and, using the tape, stuck the strips to the brown (back) side of the hardboard paneling. I then laid those on the floor where the slideouts ride on top of them. No scratched-up new vinyl flooring! Total cost was about \$25.

**Art Swain, Springfield, Missouri**

*Some nonslide pads can discolor certain types of flooring, so you may want to check with the flooring manufacturer before using. — Editors*



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With this easy-lift method, I have a free hand to balance or steady myself against my truck. I wish I had thought of this 20 years ago. I was able to do this project myself, but it would be a simple task for any welding shop.

**Mike Holzhausen, Greenfield, Indiana**

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

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\*\*Rates and terms may vary with market conditions and are subject to change without notice. APR applied to the loan is the APR in effect on the date the application is received and is valid until 30 days after the loan is approved. APRs may vary with loan term. For a refinance request, RV must be 2007 model year or newer. For a purchase request, RV must be 2009 model year or newer. Maximum loan to value is determined by the following: credit score and model year, with collateral value being established per NADA Used Wholesale Base Trade-in value. Maximum loan term may vary based on model year, loan amount, loan type and lender guidelines. Example of a recreational use RV loan: A 7 year fixed-rate \$45,000 loan. Based on an APR of 4.39%, this loan has 84 monthly payments of \$623.21 each.

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**MSRP: \$25.58/white, \$32.92/smoke**  
**316-832-3400**

[www.airxcel.com/maxxair](http://www.airxcel.com/maxxair)

Circle 162 on Reader Service Card



### Turbo Boost

Owners of 1994 to 2012 Dodge Ram diesels can give their trucks a power boost with a new series of bolt-on replacement SX-E single turbo kits from BD Diesel Performance. According to the manufacturer, the SX-E line's new design enables turbos to spool quicker, flow better and be more efficient than stock turbos on 5.9- and 6.7-liter Cummins engines. BD says the 450-horsepower S358 Single SX-E and 500-horsepower S361 Killer SX-E are ideal for trailer-towing Dodge Ram diesels. SX-E turbo kits for 5.9-liter engines include a downpipe, and 6.7-liter kits include an exhaust manifold and downpipe. The kits are not legal for use on California vehicles.

**MSRP: From \$1,595**  
**800-887-5030**

[www.dieselperformance.com](http://www.dieselperformance.com)

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### DIY RV Wash

If you like to keep your tow vehicle and trailer sparkling clean, you don't need a drive-through RV-and-car wash. Drip Dry Spotless provides all the features you'd pay for at a coin-operated wash bay, including a nine-setting soap gun with Fan and Flat modes. The system has a filter that removes salt, minerals, rust and sediments from the water supply, leaving a clean and dry RV with no spots or streaks, according to the company. The RV System pictured here can be used for washing and filtering drinking water, and includes a refillable cartridge, two carbon filters, a 50-foot expanding-style hose and a water-quality meter.

**MSRP: \$165, \$235/RV System**  
**877-357-8260**

[www.dripdryspotless.com](http://www.dripdryspotless.com)

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## Flaps Down

Rocks, sand and mud kicked up by the rear tires can do a number on whatever's being towed behind your truck. While factory mud flaps offer limited protection for tow-behinds, Luvorne's Textured Rubber Tow Guard for 2-inch receiver hitches puts up a 72-inch-wide wall between the trailer and flying road debris, protecting it from nicks, scratches and other unsightly damage. Made of 3/8-inch-thick recycled rubber and powder-coated steel, the Tow Guard attaches directly to the ball-mount shank via U-bolts and maintains full use of the hitch and any electrical components. The Tow Guard weighs 35 pounds and comes fully assembled. Trucks with dual exhaust may require cutting two 4-inch holes in the rubber flaps.

**MSRP: From \$279**

**605-582-7200, [www.luvnetruck.com/part/255100](http://www.luvnetruck.com/part/255100)**

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## HIGH-WIND TRAILER TIPPING

**Q** There is a lot of information out there about wind speed and the effects while towing a travel trailer or fifth-wheel, but I could not find anything about wind speed when the trailer is parked. We are full-timers and live in a 40-foot fifth-wheel on Beale Air Force Base in Northern California. In the past week, we have had some pretty high winds, and our trailer was rocking and rolling. It got me wondering if anyone has ever tested how high a wind speed it would take to blow our trailer over or move the trailer on the leveling jacks without blowing it over.

I was also wondering at what wind speed we should retract the slideouts. Our trailer's empty weight is 13,500 pounds, and max gross weight is 16,000 pounds.

**Byron McGuirk, Beale Air Force Base, California**

**A** We hear this question quite often, Byron, and there is no one answer. Every RV will behave differently under various wind scenarios. Ideally, you could start by placing a test trailer on a flat surface, blast it with some type of industrial wind machine and measure the wind speed when the trailer starts to tip. That could be a baseline for a flat surface under controlled conditions for that one make and model of trailer, but complications arise in the real world.

A lightweight, compact trailer would likely blow over more easily than a heavier, larger model. Trailer body or



suspension height differences would change each trailer's reaction to wind speed. Cargo in the trailer adds weight, and that changes how well it stays put. Wind striking the RV at any angle other than 90 degrees to the side wall would change the rig's tip reactions. Obstructions such as trees, shrubbery, buildings, geographic features or other RVs in the campground would break up the wind and reduce its impact.

As for the slideouts, I'd leave them out, because they would tend to create turbulence as the wind hits, and that could reduce the wind's effectiveness. The wind should not be a problem for the slideout mechanisms either. But that's all theory, of course!

## RV CARPET REPLACEMENT

**Q** We have a 2014 Keystone Alpine and would like to replace the carpet with linoleum. Can we just tear out the old carpet and have linoleum laid? I was told we couldn't do this without some expensive roller adjustments on the slideouts. Is that correct?

**Steve Haack, Nashville, Tennessee**

**A** I hate to answer a question with "That depends," Steve, but there are several factors at play here. How thick is the carpet, and does it have a pad underneath that increases its thickness? Is the carpet fairly long-nap and thick or close-cropped with minimal thickness? Linoleum is roughly

1/8-inch thick, so that will likely be significantly thinner than your carpet.

It seems a bit drastic that you would need expensive slideout roller adjustments. With few exceptions, slideout rooms are not that precise in their operation or adjustment, and it would likely be at the fully extended position that the rollers are providing some type of vertical alignment between the wall opening, the slideout structure and the gaskets.

The expensive part may be getting the old carpet out from under the slideout rollers and installing the linoleum in its place. If it was the installing shop that told you about the expensive roller adjustment, you may want to

consider getting a second opinion.

Chris Hemer wrote a May 2015 article, "Interior Motives," about Dave and LJ's RV Interior Design in Woodland, Washington, that illustrates exactly what is involved with this type of installation. The article is also posted on the *Trailer Life* website, [www.trailerlife.com](http://www.trailerlife.com). Do a key-word search for "Trailer Transformation."

## BEEPING CO ALARM

**Q** Our carbon-monoxide indicator started beeping intermittently five minutes after turning on the furnace while dry camping. I thought the batteries were charged enough. Back at home, we plugged into shorepower and ran the furnace again with no problems. This is a 2017 unit we have had for just five months. Any suggestions?

**Roger Werner, St. Johns, Florida**

### THE TECH EXPERT



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

**A** Because you have a new trailer, Roger, and it's probably still under warranty, you should take it to your dealer and have the service department check it over. The fact that there is no CO detector beep when plugged into shorepower probably indicates there are no CO leaks and low battery voltage might be the problem. Both the CO detector, mounted near the ceiling, and the propane detector, mounted near the

floor, chirp when the 12-volt DC power supply is low.

You didn't mention the make or model of trailer, but it may be equipped with a somewhat lower-cost converter, and it may not be fully charging the batteries when plugged into shorepower. Have the service guys check it over, as well as the condition of the battery, as these things should be covered by your warranty.

**BLACK-WATER FLUSH FIX**

I am the first owner of a 2004 Winnebago Journey 36G with 97,000 miles. I used the black-water flush this past summer, and water gushed out the bottom of the RV. I later discovered that Winnebago had provided a 1/2-inch drain hole through the floor in the space behind the toilet for such an occurrence.

I removed the 1/8-inch plywood base of the cabinet behind the toilet by cutting each side of the center cabinet support with a multi-tool and lifting up each half of the 1/8-inch plywood to expose the vacuum breaker. I purchased a new vacuum breaker online and installed it with standard sink plumbing tools, but it took a little time in that tight area.

I feel the old vacuum breaker simply stuck open. Some Teflon tape strings were present, but I don't think that would have caused the massive leak. For anyone encountering this problem, I would suggest simply exposing the vacuum breaker and giving it a shot of WD-40, as a quick fix.

**Wally Choate, Camarillo, California**

Thank you for the suggestion, Wally. This process may help some other readers with similar black-tank flush problems.

**SLIDEOUT POWER REDUX**

**Q** In the January 2017 RV Clinic, slideout power was addressed by Chris Dougherty in his response to Bobby Rutherford. My 2007 Keystone Springdale has a decal indicating that the slide will not operate without the battery hooked up. By accident, I discovered that this is not correct, as it works fine on shorepower alone, with no battery on the unit. The lights, etc., on my trailer do not work, even with a charged battery in place, unless hooked to shorepower. Can you suggest what the problem might be and how to correct it?

Secondly, Chris' response indicates that I may be damaging the converter by running the slide with no battery in place. Is this also true in my situation with the battery installed, since it doesn't seem to work?

**David Lusk, Marathon, New York**

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**A** Typically, the converter cannot provide enough amperage to run the slideouts without a battery installed and functional for the reasons detailed in January's "Slideout Power" Q&A. That's the purpose of the warning label you referenced, and the slide should not be powered by the converter without the battery connected.

As for not having any 12-volt DC power flow with the battery installed and no shorepower connection, you need to do some wire tracing to find the cause of the open circuit. Your trailer is old enough that corrosion may be a factor, but I suspect a bad or lost wire connection. Be sure to check the ground connections and the power connections.

With the converter disconnected, use a multimeter to check the voltage at the battery terminals. Open the fuse box and check the power at the point where the battery cable is connected to the power bus. That will tell you directly if the battery is providing power to the fuse panel, although your experience indicates it isn't.

You'll need to inspect the wiring to find the break and repair it to get the battery back online. Be sure to check for an inline fuse, breaker or fusible link between the battery and fuse box.

### HITCH-LUBE ADVICE

**Q** Regarding hitch maintenance, I use caliper-slide lube on my trailer's hitch. Is that a bad idea?

**Tom Clark, Vonore, Tennessee**

**A** It's always a good idea to follow the hitch manufacturer's lubrication recommendations, Tom, as that will help keep your warranty intact, as appropriate, and provide the best long-term performance. You didn't say what type of hitch you were using or where on the hitch you applied the lube. As such, I'd suggest you review your owner's manual and start using the factory lube recommendations. You can check with your local hitch dealer and see if they think the lube you are using is adequate for what you plan to do, and they can give you a yes or no on that.

### BATTERIES, STORAGE AND CHARGING

**Q** We store our trailer outside and pull out the batteries in winter. I recently decided to give them a good charge. I made jumpers to hook them in parallel, figuring I could maintain them together. My charger has a gauge that indicates the current being drawn. When I hooked the charger up to one battery, it drew 8 amps. If I connected

across from the positive on one to the negative on the other, it drew 10 amps. Obviously, both batteries together were allowing more current to flow. I'm wondering which way is correct, or does it matter?

We had the dealer add a second battery when we bought the trailer new last year, and it was larger than the factory one. Will this make a difference?

**Roy White, Niles, Ohio**



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**A** If you don't need to install them immediately, Roy, you're better off taking the time to charge them individually. Each battery has different charging needs due to age and battery size. Charging them in parallel means the charger is sensing the lowest state of charge and trying to bring them both up to full. One battery may be more fully charged than the other or significantly newer, and thus

able to take a better charge. If they are in parallel, the more fully charged battery will be charged first, then the charger keeps pumping in the voltage as it tries to bring up the less-charged battery, which can overcharge the better one.

Charge them separately, then connect them to a pair of small, low-cost maintenance chargers to keep them up to snuff until needed.

**BUNK OUT, TABLE IN**

**Q** I am the second owner of a 2013 Keystone Cougar XLite 28RBS, and it has no warranty. The layout includes bunks in the rear, adjacent to a bathroom. The dealer told me I could remove the top bunk and anything else in the interior of the trailer without impacting the integrity of the structure. When asked, Keystone would not comment on the trailer's construction. In general, are internal bunks or similar furnishings structurally necessary?

We also don't like the trailer's U-shaped table setup. Where can I find fold-out tables like the ones in some RVs? I see articles on RV couches and recliners, but not dining tables. I have looked everywhere, including furniture stores, for a table that will fit through the entry door.

**Curt McCormick, Littleton, Colorado**

**A** The best I can recommend about the table is to continue your search online, Curt, as I'm sure such tables are available. Are you referring to the kind of table with metal legs that can be folded up when the table is dropped down to seat level to reconfigure the dinette area as a bed? Camping World and other mainstream RV accessory sources should have something along those lines.

There are leg kits available that can be added to an existing table, and one of those may facilitate the kind of portability you're looking for. You should be able to unscrew any existing mounting hardware and replace it with the folding legs. RV surplus and salvage warehouses are often chock-full of all kinds of RV furniture, usually leftovers from model-year changes or factory closings, and are a great resource for those small, hard-to-find parts and, yes, furniture.

Keystone has probably been reluctant to commit to an answer about the interior rearrangement because there are so many variables involved. The average RV is built from the inside out, and interior structures such as room dividers and cabinets are integral parts of the RV's body strength. If you remove interior walls, for example, that reduces the side-wall strength and probably also changes the roof (continued on page 106)

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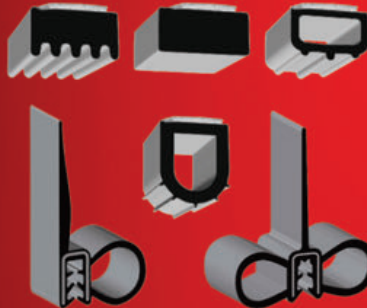


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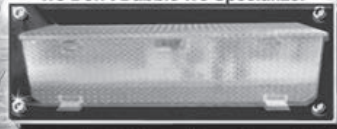


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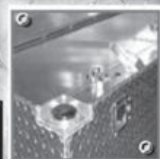
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(continued from page 102)

strength because both of those body parts were tied together via the removed wall.

Removing a single bunk bed wouldn't be as bad because it's a horizontal surface that provides some rigidity for the adjacent walls. Since the RV is out of warranty, that eliminates that as a source of concern. However, I'd be very careful about making any major structural changes, especially to what we call "load-bearing walls" in a house. A visit to an RV service center that's experienced with structural repairs would be a good place to start, as the technicians can see the RV firsthand and recommend what you can change and what you definitely should not.

**HITCH "SLOP" RESPONSE**

Your answer to the "Hitch-Receiver 'Slop'" question in the February 2017 issue missed the obvious answer. John Goldsmith had been pulling a lighter trailer, and when he went to the larger trailer, he did not increase the size of the ball hitch to the larger size required for the larger trailer. Perhaps he had a 2-inch ball and should have gone to a 2<sup>5</sup>/<sub>16</sub>-inch ball.

**Dale Mueller, Katy, Texas**

In regard to "Hitch-Receiver 'Slop,'" a trick I learned from my brother-in-law was to run beads of weld along the top and sides of the hitch, and then grind them to a proper fit with an angle grinder. I work on one dimension at a time and use a low-cost MIG welder to run the beads.

I have a 2004 Trail-Lite 8263S that weighs 5,680 pounds loaded. I have towed it more than 130,000 miles, and the hitch is just starting to loosen. I use a locking hitch pin that has a sleeve to fit the hole, and I lubricate the pin. What little wear I can detect seems to be on the sleeve.

**Ken Kleiber, Santa Fe, New Mexico**

It's possible, albeit unlikely, that the solution would be changing to a larger hitch ball, Dale, because John talked about "the 'slop' developing when inserting the ball mount into the receiver." That's pretty specific. You bring up a good point,

though, that it's always a good idea to be sure the hitch ball is correctly sized for the trailer, and swapping to a larger trailer makes that extra important.

Ken, carefully welding beads on the shank of the ball mount to eliminate some of the slop, or play, when inserted into the receiver is an effective way to address the problem. Care should be taken to avoid heating the shank too much when running the beads so as to avoid damaging the steel temper, which is part of its strength. Small weld beads as you describe should work fine.

**TRUCK BOUNCE WHEN TOWING**

**Q** I have a 2011 Chevy 2500HD crew cab diesel that I use to pull my fifth-wheel. When going down the highway and hitting a bump or dip in the road, it feels like the rear end bounces a tiny bit with the fifth-wheel attached. I am guessing I might need to add airbags or some other aftermarket rear-suspension product to correct this, but I don't want the ride to be stiff without the trailer attached. Any suggestions on what to consider?

**Rick Doyle, Richmond Hill, Georgia**

**A** The fact that your truck is bouncing a bit when you hit a bump indicates the springs are flexing and doing their job, Rick. If they didn't flex, your ride would be stiff and unyielding, and you probably wouldn't like that at all. You did not describe your truck's ride as too stiff, so in this case, as long as the truck's aft end is not sagging excessively under the load, adding airbags might not help much. Airbags are a big help with supporting weight in a ride-comfort and truck-body attitude-friendly manner, but if you don't need that support, you may not need the airbags.

Per our usual advice, if you need the support, airbags are a good idea when you don't want your truck's unladen ride to be too stiff. SumoSprings would also be a terrific option for your situation. Alternately, I'd recommend good-quality aftermarket shock absorbers such as Bilsteins, which can help damp out the oscillations that make your rig feel bouncy.

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## IN-THE-WIND TOWING SOLUTION

I have a 2013 Ford Expedition with a 9,000-pound tow rating and tow a light-weight 20-foot trailer. The Expedition was awful towing in the wind. I have a commercial driver's license and have been towing all my life. The original tires on the Expedition were 275/55R20, and the door tag reads that they should run at 36 PSI. I switched to 285/22R20 load range E tires and run 50 PSI in the front and 60 PSI in the rear when towing. Now I have no more issues with wind.

Penland Parks, Napa, California

The original-equipment tires that come on an SUV like the Expedition tend to lean more toward occupant comfort and handling safety, and, although fully rated for the job, they may be less specifically chosen for towing applications. Installing those load range E tires has clearly been a good idea, in that they helped solve the towing instability. The tires probably have significantly stiffer sidewalls, and combined with the higher inflation pressure, they do the job.

In addition, you should check the maximum allowable tire-pressure rating on the wheels to make sure they can safely accommodate the new tires. The rating will be stamped in either the rim or spoke area, probably on the backside of the wheel for cosmetic reasons. If the wheels aren't rated for those 50- and 60-PSI pressures you mentioned, you should consider upgrading the wheels as well.

Thank you for passing along your experience.

## ON-THE-ROAD INFLATION

**Q** I have a question regarding tire inflation, specifically what equipment is commonly used to add pressure to tires while on the road. Although I have been RVing for a number of years, it has been exclusively in a truck-conversion motorhome with my husband. I am now planning to do some traveling of my own in a Winnebago Micro Minnie 1706FB dual-axle trailer towed by a Jeep Grand Cherokee.

I am aware that there are 12-volt DC inflators, but it seems that one would

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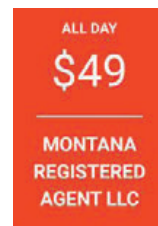
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have to work really hard if all eight tires needed some air after sitting in a campground for a couple of weeks. I understand they tend to overheat. A portable 120-volt AC air compressor (with a tank) that is small and therefore not very heavy seems like a good option, but it's a bit frustrating trying to determine what is a good brand.

**Carole Anderson, Alamogordo, New Mexico**

**A** Some of the cheaper, lower-powered 12-volt DC air compressors could easily overheat, Carole, but those devices are better for smaller items like bicycle tires or a single RV tire. If you need to add air to all eight tires, you'll need something more robust.

There are a variety of heavy-duty 12-volt DC compressors available, but you'll be paying a bit more money for them. Viair Corporation, for example, offers a variety of 12-volt DC portable air compressors, as well as models that can be permanently mounted on the vehicle. Another option is to do an internet search for "overland expedition equipment," and you'll see links to companies that sell high-quality 12-volt DC air compressors to the serious off-pavement adventure crowd. Make sure the compressor is constant-duty rated.

If requiring a 120-volt AC connection for the compressor is fine with you, then you have a lot of choices. Compact, portable compressors are available at home-improvement centers and online. Choose a known brand, such as Campbell-Hausfeld, DeWalt, Makita or Porter-Cable. I recommend steering clear of discount models of unknown origin. Even the small "pancake tank"-style compressors would be more than enough to bring the tires back up to pressure.

It's great to see you're paying that kind of close attention to tire pressures, because that diligence will reward you in the long run. 🚗

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# Take the Plunge

Waterfall magic at New York's Watkins Glen State Park

**W**e love sunny days in our travels, but on our RV trip to Watkins Glen State Park, crown jewel of western New York's Finger Lakes, we found ourselves blessed with a series of downpours. Brooding skies threatened as we began our hike on the magical Gorge Trail, and within moments we were dashing from one rocky overhang to the next to avoid getting drenched.

For eons, the powerful forces of Glen Creek have cut through the canyon's soft rock like a knife, leaving behind endless turquoise pools and shimmering cascades. In classic New York form, we shared the experience with hundreds of other people on the trail but soon forgot the crowds as we stood spellbound by the crystalline water.

Our spirits soared when the path's curving contours took us from dreamy pools to eye-popping waterfalls. The water flowed with abandon, swelling, surging and spilling over each rocky plateau in the ravine.

Cavern Cascade, a tall, thin chute, pours right over the trail. Hikers waited their turn to run underneath, and laughter filled the gorge as we each scurried across. At Rainbow Falls, water seeped out of the mossy rocks and fell in a thin veil of diamonds into the aquamarine pool below.

Watkins Glen State Park makes an ideal RV excursion. RVers can set up camp inside the park within walking distance of the gorge or near the shores of Seneca Lake and Glen Harbor Marina at W.W. Clute Memorial Park and Campground. 🚐



## Over the Rainbow

In glorious *Wizard of Oz* Technicolor, Rainbow Falls tumbles past mossy outcrops into an emerald-green pool. The waterfall is one of 19 along the 1½-mile Gorge Trail, centerpiece of Watkins Glen State Park. To beat the crowds, arrive early.



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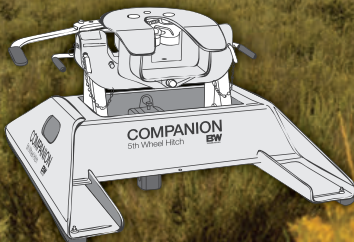
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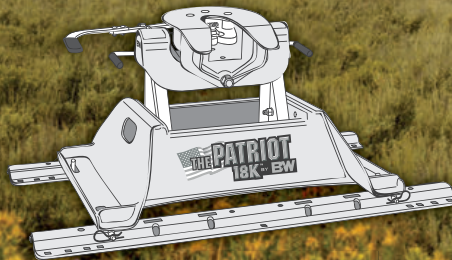
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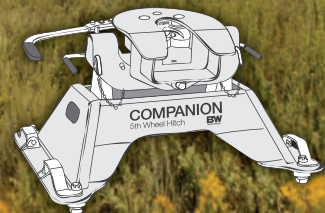
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OEM COMPANION SLIDER**



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