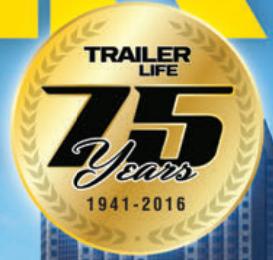


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20



30



52

FEATURES

20 2017 Ford Super Duty

With a new aluminum-alloy body, class-leading capacities and exclusive features, the 2017 Super Duty is back on top

26 Space Craft V-400

Have it your way with this Missouri company that specializes in building big and custom fifth-wheels for full-time living

30 Back at the Ranch

Paying a call at the Northern California home of author and adventurer Jack London a century after his death

35 Take a Load Off

Overloading a vehicle can have a number of consequences, so understanding weight and loading is essential to safe towing

40 Now Playing in Nashville

In the rolling hills of central Tennessee, the Old South meets the present in a city with more to note than music

48 Smart Trailer Braking

Intelli-Hitch takes the guesswork out of controller setup using a sophisticated microprocessor built right into the ball mount

52 Lights, Camera, Action!

Backing a trailer just got easier with Furrion's wireless RV observation system with infrared night vision

.....
The nearly 700-mile-long Cumberland River weaves its way through Nashville and reflects downtown Music City. Page 40



DEPARTMENTS

6 Driver's Seat

The Truck Wars Rage On

8 Letters

Readers respond loud and clear

11 Around the Bend

News, events, places and trends

16 75 Years of Trailer Life

A tribute to the magazine's long history

18 RV Resolutions

Trailer Life is your referee

58 Hands On

Poli Glow Exterior Care

60 10-Minute Tech

Now why didn't I think of that?

62 New Products

Goodies to improve the RV lifestyle

64 RV Clinic

Answers from the Trailer Life tech team

73 Free Travel Information

Help with trip planning

74 America's Outback

Butch Cassidy and the Wild Bunch

.....
👉 **Colorado Teardrop's 14-foot Summit is designed for extreme off-road camping. Page 12**



On the cover: Testing a Space Craft custom fifth-wheel near the iconic Gateway Arch in St. Louis, Missouri. Shawn Spence Photography



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The Truck Wars Rage On



Ford's 2017 Super Duty ups the ante in technology and towing capability

American drivers have a love affair with pickup trucks. What used to be considered utilitarian, pickups are now highly sought after as a popular alternative to cars. Just look at the sales stats. The Ford F-150 has been the number-one-selling vehicle for as long as I can remember, and sales of new trucks in general are brisk. I even bought one this year, a Ram 3500 dually 4x4, which is my fifth new truck.

I made the decision to buy the Ram after comparing towing capability, drive-trains and creature comforts. I carefully selected the options, leaving out a number of luxury items that I can live without or never use. After a little bragging on how I was able to keep the costs under the sticker price of a Corvette, I have to admit that I could have added a few items. Mind you, nothing that affects towing prowess, just features that could make life on the road more convenient and comfortable.

While Ram has come a long way since I bought my first one in 1994, my eyes rolled when I heard about the 2017 Super Duty trucks [see page 20]. In a word, wow. Ford pulled out all the stops, and I'm having a few withdrawals after buying a new truck just a few months ago. Maybe I should have waited!

Most of us will never need a truck that's rated to tow 27,500 pounds, but those who own big fifth-wheels, like the Space Craft featured on page 26, will appreciate the versatility. As the horsepower and torque wars continue to rage among truck builders, trailer enthusiasts are the big winners. This year Ford is again on top, but we can only imagine what GM and Ram are thinking.

Author Chris Hemer came away from his first encounter with the new Ford truck with a shift in loyalty. He's been a Ram fan for many years, and he was blown away by the new Ford. What's not to like? Cabin improvements are easy to compare to luxury cars, and the ride is no longer a compromise, although the new suspension and aluminum body make it capable of handling more weight. Skeptics were pretty verbal when Ford shifted to aluminum for its F-150, but they quieted down soon after realizing the tow-rating benefits of less weight.

Be prepared for sticker shock, though. The 2017 Super Duty can be dolled up enough to run in the mid-\$80,000s, but you're getting a technologically advanced pickup truck unlike anything we've seen to date.

The best-in-class trophy will likely be passed to the new Ford, but don't expect Chevy and Ram to sit still. It's all good news for trailer enthusiasts. 🚚

— Bob Livingston, publisher

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TIME TO EXPLORE

Columbus Day, celebrated October 10 this year, commemorates explorer Christopher Columbus' arrival in the New World in October 1492. In light of his voyage, this is a good time to get your RV out for your own adventures.

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Front-Kitchen Fiver

Regarding “One-of-a-Kind Fiver,” Chris Dougherty’s test of the Keystone Montana 3820FK in the August issue, we bought this rig a few months back and love it! We had a 33-foot 2002 Keystone Challenger travel trailer and liked the idea of keeping the front-kitchen floorplan in our new fiver.

We have many fond memories of camping in the Challenger, and we’re beginning to make new memories in the Montana. Our two girls, ages 26 and 27, still get together with us to go “camping,” and this new fifth-wheel has plenty of room for everyone, now that Amanda is married and Bree has a boyfriend.

John Kopp, San Clemente, California



Mount Washington’s Tall Tale

We enjoyed “New Hampshire’s Little Engine That Could,” Emily Fagan’s August article about the Mount Washington Cog Railway. Unlike the Fagans, we were unable to get to the top because it had snowed the previous night — we’re looking forward to doing that next time. Here’s a photo we took of the Half-Way House, which gives an idea of the steep incline, as the building’s foundation is level.

**Rich and Marcia Leider
Las Vegas, Nevada**

While I found “New Hampshire’s Little Engine That Could” very informative and have included this destination on my New England bucket list, I was taken aback by the statement, “Mount Washington is the tallest peak in the eastern United States.” A lifelong Tar Heel can’t let that one pass uncontested.

**Darryl Nester
Wilmington, North Carolina**

Mini-Truck Memories

“Running on Empty,” August’s 75th-anniversary column, brought back many memories. In 1969, while I was in the Air Force and based at Vandenberg in California, I purchased a Datsun pickup and salvaged an old RV trailer that I tore apart and remade into a truck camper. We traveled a lot around California before returning to Illinois in 1970. In 1971 I purchased a new Toyota mini-truck and drove it, with the camper, back to California to purchase a new Six-Pac truck camper. Not wanting to part with my homemade camper, I towed it back to Illinois on a trailer, as shown in the photo.

We’ve come a long way since then and now tow a 32-foot Grand Design Reflection fifth-wheel with a diesel Ram 2500, but we still enjoy the RV lifestyle and reading *Trailer Life*.

John Tunnell, Oswego, Illinois



At 6,288 feet, Mount Washington comes out on top in the Northeast, but North Carolina’s 6,684-foot Mount Mitchell is the tallest peak in the East. — Editors

Not the Reel Deal

We’ve gleaned a lot of helpful tips over the years from 10-Minute Tech, but I had to chuckle at “Hooked on Fishing” in the August issue. Jim Robben’s idea for holding fishing poles is a great one, and we’ll probably use it, but the illustration shows bait-casting rods with the spinning reels mounted upside down and backward — you won’t catch any fish that way!

Will Morden, Mechanicsville, Virginia

Getting to Grand Teton, Yellowstone and Glacier

I read August’s “The National Park Highway” with interest, as I will be making the trip to the parks this fall. I will pick up U.S. Route 89 in Ogden, Utah, about two blocks from my home. The highway referenced as starting in Evanston, Wyoming, is Wyoming State Highway 89, not U.S. Route 89.

Jack Curtin, Ogden, Utah

If you took Utah Route 30 to Bear Lake and connected to U.S. 89 in Garden City, you’d have a more scenic drive.

Richard A. Drosesbeke, Laketown, Utah

After starting in Evanston and twice crossing the state border on its way north, Wyoming Highway 89 continues as Idaho Highway 61 for less than a mile before connecting with U.S. Route 89, which passes through the three national parks. We hope this clears up any confusion caused by the matching road numbers. — Editors

“The National Park Highway” stated that “Motorboats up to 10 horsepower are allowed on Jenny and Jackson lakes” in Grand Teton National Park. That is true of Jenny Lake, but Jackson Lake has no restrictions on motor size or type of boat, other than to prohibit personal watercraft. First-come, first-served Colter Bay Village Campground is not a full-hookup campground, but neighboring Colter Bay RV Park is, and it takes reservations.

John A. Lichty, Lander, Wyoming

A chart comparing features at the four campgrounds operated by Grand Teton Lodge Company can be found at www.gtlc.com/rv. — Editors

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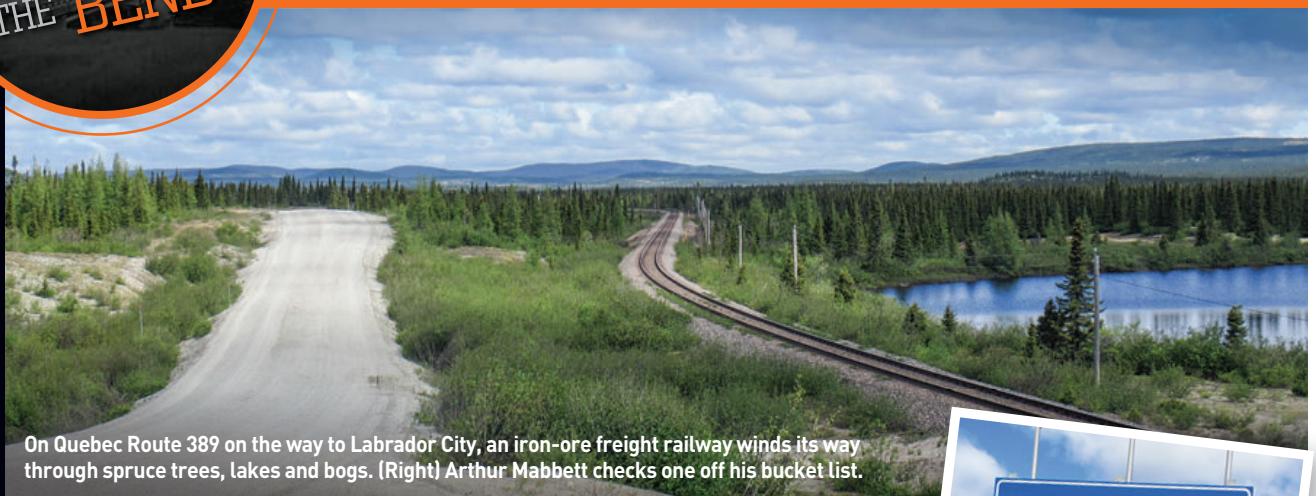
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On Quebec Route 389 on the way to Labrador City, an iron-ore freight railway winds its way through spruce trees, lakes and bogs. (Right) Arthur Mabbett checks one off his bucket list.

The Loneliest Road

Roughing it on the Trans-Labrador Highway in Canada's easternmost province where challenging conditions meet adventurous RVers

article and photos by Arthur and Beverly Mabbett

In June of last year, we checked one more destination off our bucket list and drove our Chevrolet Silverado 3500 HD with a Lance 1181 truck camper over the Trans-Labrador Highway (TLH) in a remote region of northeastern Canada. Summer temperatures in Labrador average 50 to 68 degrees Fahrenheit and can reach the high 80s, but winter is brutal with icy road conditions and large amounts of snow, so if this is on your bucket list, plan accordingly.

The TLH runs more than 700 miles on routes 500 and 510 from Labrador City on the western provincial border to Blanc-Sablon in easternmost Quebec. We drove 365 miles from Baie-Comeau, Quebec, on the Gulf of St. Lawrence, to Labrador City on Route 389, which traverses hilly regions and is rough and narrow in places. Another option is to take the ferry from St. Barbe, Newfoundland, to Blanc-Sablon and start the drive on the other end of the TLH.

Both Route 389 and the TLH are rugged wilderness roads with limited facilities, but they are the primary

roads and serve the hydropower and mining industries year-round. There is no cell service here, although a few SOS telephone booths can be found along the route. For safety, Labrador's provincial government offers a free satellite-phone loan program, but we traveled with one of our own.

Route 500 is paved but has narrow, soft shoulders and only a few primitive rest areas between Labrador City and Happy Valley-Goose Bay, Labrador's largest community with a population of 7,552 (Labrador City comes in a close second) and a NATO flight-training center. The route traverses a flat to moderately hilly region with many ponds, lakes and streams. Roughly midway, Churchill Falls offers basic supplies, a 245-foot namesake waterfall and tours of one of the world's largest underground hydro-electric plants.

From Happy Valley-Goose Bay to Blanc-Sablon, Route 510 was mostly gravel when we traveled it but was due to be paved this past summer. The route passes through the fishing village and UNESCO World Heritage



Site of Red Bay and has detours to other coastal communities.

As you can imagine, the trip was a challenge. Biting flies and mosquitoes are out 24/7 in the summer, and fuel stations are few and far between. Other than the campground at Pinware River Provincial Park near the TLH's eastern end, campsites are nonexistent, but six villages along the way allow overnight RV parking.

One of the truck camper's bumper struts broke, and we lost all the nuts holding the truck bed's camper tie-down brackets and damaged the camper's lights. But the scenery more than made up for it, and we had the experience of a lifetime.

Pinware River Provincial Park

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www.env.gov.nl.ca/env/parks/parks/p_p_

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Take advantage of the *User Guide for the Trans-Labrador Highway, Routes 500/510*.

Take It to the Summit

Colorado Teardrops expands its line of small travel trailers with the Summit, designed for extreme off-road camping. The rugged Summit has 35-inch BFGoodrich Radial T/A off-road tires, a full skid plate, nerf bars, corner stiffeners and a 3,200-pound torsion axle. The Summit is insulated for comfortable use in extreme weather, according to the company, and it's engineered to support 1,500 pounds on the roof to carry bikes and other sporting goods.

The floorplan features bunk beds that convert into a couch, plus a 60x78-inch queen bed, all wrapped up inside an interior body length of 10½ feet. Inside cabin height is 4 feet 8 inches. The compact, aerodynamic teardrop trailer weighs 1,800 pounds and is just under 7 feet high, so it can fit in most garages. Outside, tucked away in back, are bifolding doors that open to reveal storage and shelving that's designed to be used as an outdoor kitchen (appliances not included). The doors are strong enough to support coolers, there's room for stowing food, and a sliding shelf can hold a campstove. Base price is \$21,100. Colorado Teardrops, 720-432-6817 www.coloradoteardrops.com



Kentucky Heritage Festival

The town of Gravel Switch, Kentucky, celebrates its rural past each fall with the Forkland Heritage Festival and Revue, October 14 and 15 this year. Descendants of early settlers will perform living-history skits and bring historical figures to life, in keeping with the 2016 theme, "45 Years of Keeping Our History Alive."

Festival-goers can walk through the Abraham Lincoln Museum, see antique steam and gasoline tractors, muse over the Salute to Servicemen display and wander through a tepee filled with relics. Other activities include horse-drawn wagon rides, sorghum-molasses making, woodcarving, spinning, weaving, and art and classic-car shows. 859-324-2944, www.forklandcomctr.org



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RV Show Returns to Pomona, California

The West Coast's longest-running RV show takes place in Pomona, California, October 7 to 16, featuring more than 1,375 2017 RVs from 20-plus dealers. Stop by to chat with manufacturer representatives of travel trailers, fifth-wheels, toy haulers and Class A, B and C motorhomes spread out across 1 million square feet of display space.



Look for the exhibitor tent with RV parts and accessories, listen to live music from popular country bands and mariachis, ride the free Ferris wheel, reminisce in vintage campers, and pose for selfies with celebrities and athletes including baseball great Steve Garvey, Hall of Fame basketball player James Worthy and former NFL player Eric Dickerson (check the website for days they will attend the show). Enter the drawing for a 2017 Lance 1475 lightweight travel trailer and a \$1,000 gift certificate for parts and service at Richardson's RV Center.

The entrance to the California RV Show is Gate 9 at the Fairplex, and the event is open daily from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Adult admission is \$10, and kids 17 and under and active military personnel with ID are admitted for free. Parking is \$10 per vehicle. Visit the California RV Show's website to save \$1 off admission. Pets are free and welcome.

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GM Boosts Truck Production

General Motors reports that the company recently boosted production of pickups and SUVs. Silverado and Sierra truck sales are rising, and the company said it wants to be ready for the traditionally brisk fall truck market. Dealers said they could be making more sales if the factory delivered more pickups. GM North American President Alan Batey said the automaker should "run at or very close to record levels," citing low interest rates, the age of vehicles on the road and strong consumer spending. "We wish we had a little bit more inventory right now," Batey told reporters. "We've got a slightly better production plan in the second half [of the year] than the first half." 313-556-5000, www.gm.com

CAMPGROUND CENTENNIAL



100th Anniversary of First-Developed Campground

Opened in July 1916, Eagle Creek Campground in Oregon's Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area was the first U.S. Forest Service campground to provide basic amenities for campers. The park, built at the dawn of the tradition of car camping, featured a ranger station and a full-time ranger during the camping season, picnic tables, cookstoves and restrooms. Eagle Rock Trail, carved from the cliff face the same year, is one of the most scenic hikes in the gorge. The history-making campground continues to welcome campers to the Douglas fir and maple forest with 17 rustic campsites (no hookups) and a 20-foot RV-length limit. www.fs.usda.gov/crgnsa

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Thrills and Chills

As families prepare to celebrate Halloween while camping in their RVs, many RV parks and public campgrounds are getting into the spirit with spooky scenes, hayrides, trick-or-treating around the campground, and contests for the best costumes, carved pumpkins and decorated campsites. For a hair-raising good time, pack up your RV with costumes and decorations, bring your imagination and treats, and join the celebration. Here are a few places where RVs and Halloween fun go together:

Georgia: Jackson's **High Falls State Park** hosts Spooky Halloween, October 29, with a hike to the falls, a costume contest and s'mores roasted under the light of the moon. www.gastateparks.org/highfalls

Kentucky: **Fort Boonesborough State Park** in Richmond brings out the pumpkins, goblins, lights and displays at its 1½-mile Halloween Lights Drive Thru, September 30 to October 22, and its 22nd annual Halloween Fest, October 11 through 23. www.parks.ky.gov/halloween

South Carolina: Myrtle Beach's **Ocean Lakes Family Campground** celebrates on three fall weekends — October 14 and 15, 21 and 22, and 28 and 29 — with the Great Pumpkin Search, the Creepy Site Crawl, a Monster Mash party, pet costume contests and other fun events. www.oceanlakes.com

Throughout North America: **Jellystone Park Camp-Resorts** claims its network of 75 RV parks creates "the spookiest, most scare-iffic Halloween celebrations" with events taking place at resorts across the United States and Canada. Check the website for details. www.campjellystone.com/explore/activities/theme-weekends/halloween



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End-of-the-Millennium RVing

From soaring stocks to quintuple slideouts, the 1990s struck it rich



Trailer Life celebrated its golden anniversary in 1991 at the dawn of a decade when stocks boomed, dot-coms bubbled, and the RV industry got its groove back. Ever-roomier recreational vehicles met the needs of baby boomers, snowbirds and full-timers, beefing up square footage with as many as five slideouts. Even truck campers adopted slideouts, and a new breed of hybrid trailers boosted sleeping quarters with soft-sided bed platforms springing from otherwise solid walls. Toy-hauling trailers with ramp doors opening to a garage full of motorized playthings turned heads and lured RV rookies to join the ranks.

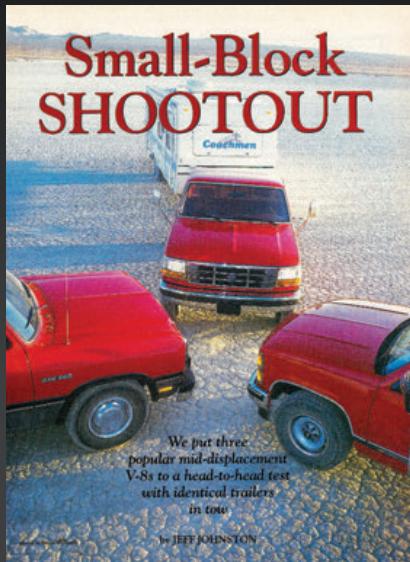
In the 1980s, pickup trucks had become the go-to tow vehicles, and the magazine continued to test the best and report on technical innovations, increasingly comfortable cabs and, of course, towing prowess. In "Small-Block Shootout" (April 1993) and "Triple Turbo Towdown" (July 1994), the Big Three duked it out in head-to-head comparisons of gas and diesel pickups pulling identical trailers.

Sport-utilities took center stage in the '90s, and *Trailer Life* obligingly reported on the trendy tow vehicles with "the heart of a truck and the

amenities of a car." In October 1990 the editors put the new Ford Explorer through its paces, predicting it was "destined to be a winner," and in December 1991 they tested the re-engineered GMC/Chevy Suburban, saying it "inspired driver confidence." Between then and a survey of 25 tow-worthy SUVs four years later, the Explorer would become America's best-selling sport-utility, but it was the 7.4-liter V-8 Suburban 2500 that the magazine crowned "king of the hill" for its 10,000-pound tow rating. That roundup of 1995 SUVs also

showcased AM General's \$40,000 civilian Humvee, called "a humdinger of a tow vehicle." By the time the turbo-diesel Hummer made a splash on the August 1998 cover towing a 24-foot Coachmen Catalina Lite at California's Pismo Beach, General Motors had taken over the brand, and the sticker price had nearly doubled.

Considering the Hummer's 8.5 miles per gallon towing the Catalina and the following year's introduction of the Ford Excursion, nicknamed the Ford Valdez for its hungry fuel consumption, it didn't hurt that the price of gas remained low throughout the '90s, fueling the rise in U.S. sport-utility ownership from 7 million in 1993 to 20 million in 2000, just as fees at the pumps suddenly took off and the value of stocks tanked. But that's the story of the next decade. 🗨️



Battle of the Tow Vehicles

(Above, left to right) In a Big Three showdown, *Trailer Life* put similarly equipped 1993 pickups to the test towing trailers on Southern California's desert highways and mountain passes, and called Dodge the clear leader "for brute power." As sport-utility vehicles came into vogue, the editors hitched up a pair of 1992 Suburbans (the GMC K1500 and Chevy C2500) and the first-generation 1991 Ford Explorer.



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Freezer Crackdown

When the appliance manufacturer recommended replacing their travel trailer's refrigerator at their expense, a New Mexico couple asked RV Resolutions to forward their request for at least partial reimbursement:

▶ Within a year and a half of purchasing our 2013 Keystone Premier trailer, the inside coating in the refrigerator's freezer compartment started to crack. The two-year warranty lapsed by the time the protective coating was coming off in chunks, exposing the metal underneath.

We called Atwood, and the representative recommended replacing the refrigerator before it started to rust but declined to help. Although we find it inconceivable that the freezer's protective coating lasted only 18 months, we ordered a new fridge at a cost of \$1,800. Under the circum-

stances, we think Atwood should help with the replacement cost.

Louis and Rita Nolan
Rio Rancho, New Mexico

Shortly after RV Resolutions contacted Atwood and its parent company, the Nolans sent this thank-you note:

▶ Thank you for intervening. Your team did an outstanding job representing us in a timely manner. After receiving the letter you sent on our behalf, the customer-service director for Dometic's American RV division, Judy Schultz, offered to cover the cost of a new refrigerator. Atwood reimbursed us \$2,330.86 for the new unit and all associated costs.

L. and R.N.

Not OK in Oklahoma

A frustrated *Trailer Life* reader turned to RV Resolutions after getting what he called "the runaround" from his fifth-wheel manufacturer's warranty department:

▶ I purchased a new Dutchmen Voltage in January 2015. That August, after finding that the right tires on the back two axles had worn smooth from the outside to the middle, I took the fifth-wheel to the nearest Keystone warranty dealer. After three weeks, I called the service center and was informed that they could find nothing wrong with the axles. The mechanic recommended taking the fifth-wheel to Tulsa Auto Spring Company. As for the warranty, he said the axle shop could deal with Keystone directly. I didn't like the sound of that, so I called Keystone and was told that Keystone would call the dealer and have them take pictures of the axles and tires.

After two more weeks went by, I called Keystone, and the rep said the photos had not been sent. I called the dealer and was told they were too busy to take photos. Keystone then suggested taking the fifth-wheel to another warranty dealer. I called that dealer and was told I would have to wait a couple of weeks before bringing

it in. I was also told that, if there was a problem with the axles, it would probably need to be towed to Tulsa Auto Spring.

Instead of waiting another two weeks, I took the fifth-wheel straight to Tulsa Auto Spring, and the mechanics found that the back two axles were toed in ¼ inch, causing the wear on the tires. I paid the \$357.78 repair bill and mailed it to Keystone's warranty department. After getting no reply, I called Keystone, and the rep asked for photos of the axles and provided a mailing address. I crawled under the trailer, took pictures and mailed prints to the address. Two weeks later, I got the package back in the mail, marked undeliverable. I called Keystone and was told I had to mail the photos to the company's post-office box, not the street address I had been provided. I have now sent the package via registered mail.

I think the idea is to give customers the runaround until they

give up. The money isn't going to break me, but the principal of the thing might.

Harold Imke, Vinita, Oklahoma

Imke sent the following note after RV Resolutions petitioned Keystone twice on his behalf with no response:

▶ After your second letter to Keystone, a rep called to say I had not included the serial number of the axles in my photos. I told them they should have told me they needed those in the first place. In the meantime, I discovered a problem on the ramp door. I called Keystone to see if there was a fix, and the rep knew nothing about it. I then called Mohave RV in Fort Mohave, Arizona (not one of Keystone's approved warranty dealers), and the shop knew exactly what I was talking about and said there was a recall. They ordered the kit and fixed the problem.

H.I. ☛

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.



DESERT KALEIDOSCOPE

Dreams take flight at New Mexico's hot-air-balloon spectacle

It's up, up and away this fall as 550 hot-air balloons fill the Southwestern sky at New Mexico's Albuquerque International Balloon Fiesta, the world's largest ballooning event. To help Good Sam members make the most of the 2016 festival, for the first time in years the club is staging a Balloon Fiesta Rally, October 7 through 10, hosted by Fantasy RV Tours.

The annual festival provides breathtaking visuals of hot-air balloons in all shapes and sizes, launched from Balloon Fiesta Park's 78-acre field. Each morning, spectators rise early to see hundreds of balloons greet the sun in a series of harmonious lift-offs. After sundown, the park transforms into a dazzling light show, as countless burners ignite simultaneously and colorful balloons illuminate the night.

Good Sam members will circle their wagons within walking distance of the launch field for the four-day rally. In a nearby tent, Fantasy RV Tours will serve morning coffee, snacks and catered meals, and showcase evening entertainment.

The Albuquerque Balloon Fiesta is a bucket-list event that attracts people from all over the world, and the Good Sam Club is proud to be part of it once again.

FROM ALBUQUERQUE TO ARIZONA

Good Sam members who aren't able to make it to New Mexico this fall can get their hot-air-balloon fix one state to the west at the 2017 Havasu Balloon Festival and Fair in Lake Havasu City, Arizona, January 13 through 15. For the fourth year in a row, members can take advantage of Good Sam's discounted registration fees and camp in the club's reserved RV parking area on an island with wonderful views of the balloon ascensions and free shuttles to the fairground.

► Learn more about upcoming Good Sam events at www.goodsamclub.com/events.



Rally-going Good Sam members see the Southwest at its best.

Giving Back

Members make a difference on Good Sam Cleanup Days

At this year's Good Sam Cleanup Days, May 14 and 15, members hauled out their Hefty bags and picked up trash on public lands, just as they have for the past 21 years. Among Good Sam chapters taking part in the 2016 event, the Capitol Gypsies of Boise, Idaho, were chosen at random to receive \$25 Camping World merchandise certificates for each participating family. The chapter did its part for the environment by planting flowers and raking leaves and branches at Lucky Peak State Park, east of Boise.

In the upper Midwest, North Dakota's Missouri River Breakers chapter spent Cleanup Days tidying up the campground and 4 miles of roadside ditches at Hazelton Recreation Area with help from local students. At the end of the day, the Missouri River Breakers thanked the youthful volunteers with a hot dog and ice cream feast. Because of Good Sam members' efforts at Hazelton each May for the past 15 years, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers-managed site now has a playground, a horseshoe pit and some electric RV hookups, says the chapter's president, Verda Seeklander.



Cleanup crew: Members of Idaho's Capitol Gypsies spruce up Lucky Peak State Park.

► For more information about how Good Sam members can give back, visit www.goodsamclub.com/volunteering.



◀ **GOOD SAM DAYS** Camping World is celebrating the Good Sam Club, October 7 through 16, during Good Sam Days at store locations nationwide. Members can check their Camping World October savings mailer for exclusive members-only coupons and save even more during this 10-day event. www.campingworld.com

LIGHT-HEAVYWEIGHT CHAMP

A NEW ALUMINUM-ALLOY BODY, CLASS-LEADING CAPACITIES AND EXCLUSIVE FEATURES PUT THE FORD SUPER DUTY BACK ON TOP. CAN ANYONE BEAT IT?

The end, it seemed, was near.

It was going on 18 years since Ford's Super Duty had undergone a complete revision, and its age was starting to show. For the 2016 model year, it had lost the capacity crown to archrival Ram, who had thrown down the gauntlet with a lofty 31,210-pound max tow rating in its Cummins-powered 3500. Worse yet, the current Super Duty platform simply could not support a bump in tow rating or payload without adding more weight in the form of heavier-

duty components, which would create other problems.

"Because Class 3 is defined as a 14,000-pound-and-below gross vehicle weight rating (GVWR), and sufficient payload is required for tongue weight, curb weight was *the* constraint in future growth," explained Super Duty Vehicle Engineering Manager Dennis Slevin. "For example, a 32,500-pound trailer requires at least 4,875 pounds in payload to allow the rating. Therefore, future max-trailer-tow-rating growth is tied not only to powertrain capability but also lower curb weight."



PHOTO COURTESY OF THE MANUFACTURER

To stay on top, Ford would have to reduce the weight of its Super Duty so it could then “reinvest” in the platform with more robust components designed to ensure superiority in the Class 3 segment for the foreseeable future. Along the way, Ford saw an opportunity to put an end to all the challenges RVers face when hitching up and towing, making the Super Duty not only the most capable but also the most technologically advanced truck on the market.

Light Makes Might

Ford turned the truck world on its head when it announced the all-aluminum F-150. But what few of us knew at the time was that plans were already being drawn up for the next-generation Super Duty, which would also be crafted of the high-strength alloy. In fact, it would use the *same cab* as F-150 models, from the A to C pillars, helping to improve the production efficiency of both truck lines. The Super Duty SuperCab model is now 6 inches longer, while the Crew Cab grows by 3 inches. And the rear load floor is now completely flat — no more transmission hump.

In total, Ford maintains that the aluminum panels (which also include the fenders, hood and bed) save up to 350 pounds over the previous generation (depending on the model and selected equipment) and have higher dent and ding resistance than steel. Multiple panels of aluminum alloy are riveted and bonded together for strength, while hydroformed tubes from the A-pillar base over the doors and to the back of the cab roof ensure structural integrity. The Super Duty's bed is significantly stronger than the F-150's, however, with thicker panels and cross members.

First and foremost, the weight savings allowed the 2017 Super Duty to be underpinned by an all-new steel frame



TRAILER CAMERA KIT

An available trailer camera is powered by a second receptacle in the truck's rear bumper.

that is reportedly up to 24 times more rigid than before. Made from 95 percent high-strength steel — or six times more than the previous model — it features fully boxed frame rails and up to 10 cross members. Obviously, this increases torsional rigidity, but it also nets an improvement in noise, vibration and harshness (NVH). In our brief drive of several Super Duty models, we can attest to the truck's limo-like interior sound isolation.

Attached to the new backbone is a massive new hitch structure that enables the use of a 3-inch receiver and a maximum conventional trailer weight rating of up to 21,000 pounds. That means, if you plan to tow a travel trailer with your new Super Duty, a weight-distributing hitch platform will probably no longer be necessary. Because there are no ball mounts currently on the market that can carry so much weight, Ford supplies a high-strength-steel hitch pin, as well as 2- and 2½-inch inserts that nest within each other, so more common ball mounts can also be accommodated.

The 2017 model continues to employ the proven Twin I-Beam front suspension on 2WD models, while 4WD models get mono-beam front suspension with redesigned front radius arms. Both models benefit from new front and rear springs, retuned

front and rear shocks, bigger stabilizer bars and upgraded rear suspension joints and bushings. Thanks in part to the new Dana M300 rear axle, dual-rear-wheel F-350 models post some pretty incredible numbers: a maximum gooseneck tow rating of 32,000 pounds, a maximum fifth-wheel tow rating of 27,500 pounds, a payload of up to 7,630 pounds and a gross combination weight rating (GCWR) of up to 40,000 pounds. Not that it matters to RVers, but the F-350 also tops the charts with a 7,500-pound front gross axle weight rating (GAWR).

Naturally, the new Super Duty is offered with a second-generation 6.7-liter Power Stroke that is more powerful than before. The Ford-engineered and -built power plant now generates 440 horsepower and a whopping 925 lb-ft of torque, thanks to a larger turbocharger and down pipe, as well as new fuel injectors and pump. The standard 6.2-liter gasoline V-8 engine offers 385 horsepower and a best-in-class torque rating of 430 lb-ft. It is mated to an all-new TorqShift-G six-speed automatic transmission in F-250 models and a standard TorqShift six-speed auto in the F-350. Paradoxically, the gasoline 6.8-liter V-10 is still offered in chassis-cab models, even though it makes less power and torque than the V-8.

PHOTOS BY CHRIS HEWNER

F-350 DRW MODELS POST SOME PRETTY INCREDIBLE NUMBERS, INCLUDING A MAXIMUM FIFTH-WHEEL TOW RATING OF 27,500 POUNDS AND A GCWR OF UP TO 40,000 POUNDS.



HITCH ⤴

The new hitch structure with a 3-inch receiver is capable of 21,000 pounds of weight-carrying capacity. It includes a high-strength ball mount and sleeves for 2- and 2½-inch hitch shanks.

Adaptive Steering and Cruise Control

Variable-ratio steering is nothing new, but its application in a pickup certainly is. Utilizing an actuator, gearbox and electronic control unit (ECU) inside the steering wheel, Ford's Adaptive Steering system changes the ratio between the driver's steering inputs and how much the front wheels turn. At low speeds, the system reduces the amount of steering input required to change direction. At highway speeds, it reduces the truck's sensitivity to steering inputs, helping to improve stability.

In addition, a different steering algorithm is employed when Tow/Haul mode is selected, providing more linear steering response and better stability. During our test, Ford engineers were able to switch the system on and off for comparison (Adaptive Steering can't be disabled in production vehicles). Perhaps the best thing we can say about Adaptive Steering is that it's totally seamless — we didn't notice it when it was on, but we definitely felt its absence once it was switched off. According to Tim Cannon, Ford's Adaptive Steering engineer, the steering wheel requires 650 degrees of rotation lock-to-lock at low speeds without Adaptive Steering, but with it,

total rotation is only 450 degrees.

Using cruise control while towing has always been considered somewhat of a no-no, but the system in the 2017 Super Duty is actually designed for it. Using radar, the available Adaptive Cruise Control system measures the distance between the truck and the vehicle in front of it, and works in concert with the truck's powertrain, brakes and integrated trailer-brake controller to hold the selected speed. It will also issue a collision warning and apply the brakes in a panic-stop situation.

When equipped with the Power Stroke diesel, the engine's exhaust brake also comes into play and even offers two positions: Normal and Auto. Auto mode is especially useful when Adaptive Cruise Control isn't activated (or the model isn't so equipped); if the vehicle in front of you slows on a downgrade and you apply the brakes, it helps slow the vehicle. Then, when the brake pedal is released, it will continue to hold that speed until you apply throttle again.

Camerarama

Visibility is key when towing, so the new Super Duty is offered with an Ultimate Trailer Tow Camera package that incorporates up to five cameras. These can be used individually, as well as to provide a 360-degree bird's-eye view when the images from all cameras are stitched together. There is a front camera in the grille (with its own washer that activates with the windshield washer to keep the lens clean), a camera in each side-view mirror, a center high-mounted stop light (CHMSL) camera that looks down into the bed, and a tailgate camera with its own LED light.

In addition, there is a forward-looking camera for the lane-departure warning system, and an available



DISPLAY ⤴

The center screen allows the user to switch between camera views.

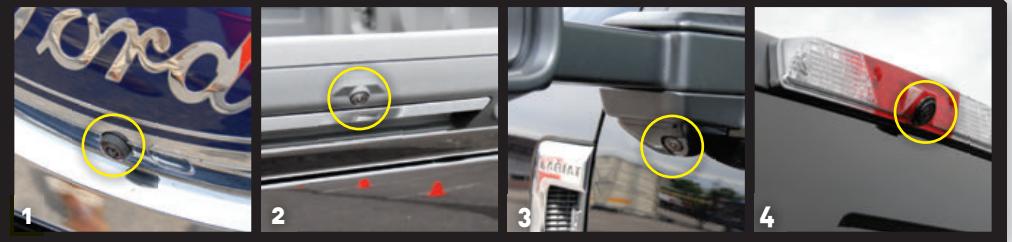
"customer-placed" trailer camera that provides a clear view behind the trailer. This latter piece of equipment is offered as a kit and is hardwired to the truck via its own 12-pin electrical connector in the rear bumper.

While it may seem like overkill to some, the cameras provide some very real benefits, especially for RVers. The front camera offers a 180-degree view and is especially useful when maneuvering around obstacles that would otherwise be hidden by the vehicle's height and enormous hood. This was demonstrated in a street scenario, where we pulled within inches of a plastic traffic pylon, and on an off-road course, where we were able to clearly identify drop-offs and obstacles in our path.

Tailgate cameras are not uncommon these days, but the one in the 2017 Super Duty does a pretty neat trick — it

CAMERAS ⤴

A front camera with a washer (1), a tailgate camera with an LED light (2), a camera under each side-view mirror (3) and a CHMSL camera aimed at the cargo box (4) improve visibility when hitching and towing.





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LIGHT-HEAVYWEIGHT CHAMP: 2017 FORD SUPER DUTY

works with the side-view mirror cameras as part of the new Trailer Reverse Guidance (TRG) system. In addition to providing dynamic guidelines that aid in backing up and connecting a trailer, the tailgate camera can actually read. A target sticker that resembles a checkered flag is placed on the trailer's A-frame in a specific area, then the owner jots down four key dimensions that allow the system to calculate the position of the trailer. These figures are entered into the system's brain via the Productivity Screen in the truck's dashboard.

When backing, the side-view-mirror cameras provide a view of either side of the trailer — but as you begin to turn, the tailgate camera begins monitoring the movement of the target sticker and the side-view cameras begin adjusting the display for the best view. A color-coded representation of the truck and trailer warns when the trailer angle is too tight and there is a risk of jackknifing. When equipped with the trailer camera, the driver can toggle between side and rear

BLIS

The Blind Spot Information System includes radar sensors in each taillight lens that shoot a signal down the sides of the trailer.

views to expertly back the trailer into place without the help of a spotter.

Another cool feature of the tailgate camera is called Straight Line Backup Guidance. When selected on the center touch screen, the system again uses the target sticker to determine the angle of the trailer. A dynamic steering-wheel icon is overlaid on the rear-view display and indicates which direction the steering wheel should be turned to keep the trailer backing in a straight line. Keep an eye on that icon, and you can back up perfectly straight for as long as you like.

Unfortunately, TRG and Straight Line Backup Guidance don't work with a fifth-wheel, because movement of the target decal in this application would be more difficult to detect. However, the tailgate camera's dynamic guidelines help you



back into position, at which point you drop the tailgate with a dash-mounted button, then switch to the CHMSL camera view. The CHMSL camera provides a clear image of the cargo box and has a zoom feature so you can guide the pin box right into the saddle. Learning how to toggle between all of these views takes some practice, but it beats constantly entering and exiting the cab.

One other thing: Whether connecting a travel trailer or a fifth-wheel, you no longer have to perform a safety check for the lighting, because the Productivity Screen will tell you if any lights on the trailer are not functioning. Pretty cool.

Quality is in our Nature...



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Driver-Assist Technologies

Blind-spot monitoring systems are becoming more and more commonplace in passenger cars, SUVs and some pickups, but the Blind Spot Information System (BLIS) in the 2017 Super Duty takes it one step further with trailer coverage. Radar sensors in each taillight lens of the truck shoot a signal down the sides of the trailer, alerting the driver to vehicles that may not readily be seen in the side-view mirrors. As with TRG, one-time setup for the trailer is required on the truck's Productivity Screen.

To us, lane-departure warning systems are an unnecessary feature in passenger cars, but in the Super Duty, this option makes sense. Hauling a large trailer on a narrow road can result in some unintentional lane crossing, so the aforementioned forward-facing camera behind the rearview mirror monitors lane position, and the system will vibrate the steering wheel and display a departure warning in the instrument cluster if the vehicle starts to drift.

Other Cool Stuff

There isn't enough space to talk about all the great features in this new truck, but here are some other things worth mentioning.

More Range: The new Super Duty Crew Cab long-box models come with a 48-gallon fuel tank.

Trailer TPMS Kit: Trailer-tire pressure can be monitored from the integrated display in the truck. The kit includes four TPMS sensors that attach to the valve stems, a trailer-mounted TPMS module, a wiring harness and other hardware. The system requires one-time setup on the truck's Productivity Screen in the dashboard.

Enhanced Upfitter Switches: Relocated to the overhead console, there are now six switches for controlling ancillary items, including four 25-amp (ignition-switched) and two 40-amp (ignition or battery).

LEDing the Way: The 2017 Super Duty makes extensive use of LED technology, including Quad Beam

LED headlights and taillights, side-mirror spotlights, puddle lamps, cargo-box lights and the aforementioned tailgate light.

Smarter Stowage: Features include a remote tailgate release with a power lock, a next-generation tailgate step and stowable loading ramps.

All-New Interior: All three 2017 cabs are longer than previous models and feature fresh seat designs with new materials and colors. Available features now include SYNC 3, push-button start and a twin-panel moon roof on Crew Cab models. The available 8-inch Productivity Screen provides vehicle information, customized views and enhanced towing displays.

The 2017 Super Duty is an amazing achievement that represents the future of heavy-duty pickups. The ball is in your court, GM and Ram. 🚚

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article by Bob Livingston photos by Shawn Spence Photography

Big and Custom

Space Craft specializes in building fifth-wheels for full-time living for customers who want it their way, without compromise



Fifth-wheel trailers offer the utmost in livability, and those who embrace the full-time RV lifestyle look for floorplans that offer exceptional space and comfort. RVers who use their fifth-wheels 365 days a year are usually pretty particular about floorplans, storage and durability to withstand the rigors of living on the road. And it's quite possible that certain requirements are not met by the plethora of models — and floorplans — that are on the market professing to be earmarked for full-timers.

Another consideration is warranty exclusions when the fifth-wheel is lived in full time; some manufacturers use fine print to provide legal warning against such a practice, even though the trailer is big enough and has the right features. But Space Craft, a company tucked away in the small Missouri town of Concordia, is openly enthusiastic about building fifth-wheels that can withstand the demands of full-time,

four-season living and will build just about anything a customer requests.

The name is a misnomer, if one has a spaceship on his or her mind, because there's nothing compact or confining about a fifth-wheel from Space Craft, a company that hangs its hat on the slogan "The Ultimate in Personal Space." If you peruse the Space Craft brochure, you'll see a number of suggested floorplans, but buyers are not obligated to take what's offered. These are sample plans that are only a starting point from which customers can embellish to suit personal needs, or they can start with a blank piece of paper. In many cases, customers come in looking for a 36-foot fifth-wheel, and by the time the smoke clears, the trailer is stretched to 50 feet. Space Craft commonly builds fifth-wheels up to 51 feet.

We tested the V-400, which was built as a show trailer and representative of what the company can do. After living



(Above left) The rear living room is exceptionally spacious with the opposing slideouts extended. (Above right) This configuration could easily accommodate a kitchen island for more meal-prep space. A handsome mosaic backsplash adds class above the galley counter.

in this fifth-wheel at Casino Queen RV Park in East St. Louis, Illinois, in the shadow of the famous St. Louis Gateway Arch, we were in no way disappointed by the two-bath, rear-living-room plan but could see how adding personal touches would make the full-time experience even more enjoyable.

There's no getting over the fact that this fifth-wheel looks and feels big, because its 40-foot, triple-axle profile is not unassuming. There are not many rounded edges to tone down the exterior lines, but once you step inside, it's clear that these people know how to build fifth-wheels with exceptional spaciousness and value.

One of Space Craft's interior-design trademarks is the molded-fiberglass ceiling. Its curvy lines and smooth texture take some getting used to, but after a while, they become welcome assets for those who like a clean look. Don't expect sculpted fixtures and glitz; the ceiling is understated but practical. There's no risk of staining, and its matte finish is still bright enough to reflect beautifully the illumination from the generous number of LED fixtures, as well as ambient light.

Another design element that sets this fifth-wheel apart from the majority is the use of painted interior walls. This gives the appearance of a contemporary stationary home, where paint and contrasting wood molding are used to personalize the decor. It's very effective here and works nicely with the high-quality leather furniture and solid cherry cabinets. Add in the mosaic backsplash in the kitchen and the solid-surface countertops, and you have an interior that is stately and indicative of the \$160,000 price tag. Luxurious upgrades like power MCD blinds with a re-

mote control, cherrywood window boxes, solid-wood cabinetry with fancy cabinet pulls and well-made drawers further support the highline price tag.

It's hard to plunk down a large sum of money for a fifth-wheel without delving into the techniques used to build the chassis and body. This is an area where Space Craft excels, since it can devote the time necessary to do it right — and the company claims it builds the most heavy-duty chassis in the business. There are no daily quotas in this manufacturing facility, since these fifth-wheels are factory-direct, and the process involves the buyer on an intimate level.

To build a fifth-wheel with a 23,000-pound gross vehicle weight rating (GVWR), the chassis and the frame must be stout. The chassis is built from scratch, incorporating three 6,000-pound axles, a torsion-type suspension and electric-over-hydraulic disc brakes, an option that's highly recommended.

To get the chassis rigidity needed to handle the long lengths and weight, 4-inch I-beams are tied to a network of 2x4-inch and 2x6-inch gusseted vertical steel tubes forming the cavity for pass-through basement storage, which supplements the front Big & Tall storage compartment. Six-inch I-beams are used to strengthen the front area where the kingpin box is mounted.

Laminated walls, supported by a 1½-inch aluminum framework, are comprised of gel-coated fiberglass with a ½-inch luan backer on the outside and paneling on the inside. Polystyrene block foam insulates the walls, and the company claims an R12 rating, which makes the fifth-wheel suitable for four-season



Easy Entrance

(Top to bottom) The stairway is concealed in the compartment below the entry-door threshold. The steps unfold as the stairway is pulled out from the compartment and guided to the ground. From the top of the entryway, the handrail is too low for occupants to reach.

travel. Once the walls are assembled, they are subjected to three passes through the pinch-press rollers to ensure that delamination will never be a problem. The slideout rooms are built with the same process to prevent hot and cold spots, matching the rigidity of the main framework.

The floor is comprised of 2x4-inch studs, and the voids are stuffed with 3-inch fiberglass insulation. On top is a 3/4-inch tongue-and-groove Sturdi-Floor where a 7/16-inch pad is laid if carpet is desired. The test fifth-wheel had vinyl-plank flooring throughout, something many owners are opting for these days. Durable carpet on 5/8-inch plywood lines the basement storage area and 1/2-inch Celotex Tuff R foam insulation promotes temperature stability. This product is commonly used to insulate homes, which again demonstrates how Space Craft looks outside the box when sourcing materials for its fifth-wheels.

The resultant basement area is huge, nicely finished off and organized. It's also heated, which complements the floor's cold-weather rating of R19. The entire underbelly is enclosed with fiberglass, except where access is needed. Here, aluminum panels are integrated into the underbelly.

Up top, the molded-fiberglass roof is insulated with 3 1/2-inch fiberglass batting, and Tuff R panels are added to get to an R17 rating. The ceiling portion has 1x2-inch arched aluminum rafters that are fiberglassed into the mold. Obviously, the company is big on applying R-factor insulation ratings to the structure, since



(Above, from left) The king-size bed fits nicely in the bedroom without making the area feel confining. A master bathroom in the very front features a large garden shower with body jets. The sink counter is on the small side, so the adjacent closet was used to store toiletries.

most of its fifth-wheels are used full time, and not only in snowbird country. Dual-pane, flush-mounted and tinted windows add to the comfort index.

Fit and finish are tight, and it's easy to get the feeling that this fifth-wheel will last for the long haul. You don't experience flexing in the floor when walked on, the doors close easily, and the solid-wood cabinetry is finished off to reflect the fifth-wheel's luxury status. There's no *boing* when you open the cabinet doors, and all the drawers have soft-close hardware.

Space Craft's approach to building these fifth-wheels is to provide time-tested materials and components that will stand up under hard use. For example, the light switches are the rocker style commonly found in homes and are far better than most switches used in the RV industry, but here's an area where multiplexing might be a better choice. While the test fifth-wheel was rather conventional, it yearns for a few must-have options like instantaneous hot water, hydronic heating and an up-

graded entertainment system — items that can be requested by the buyer.

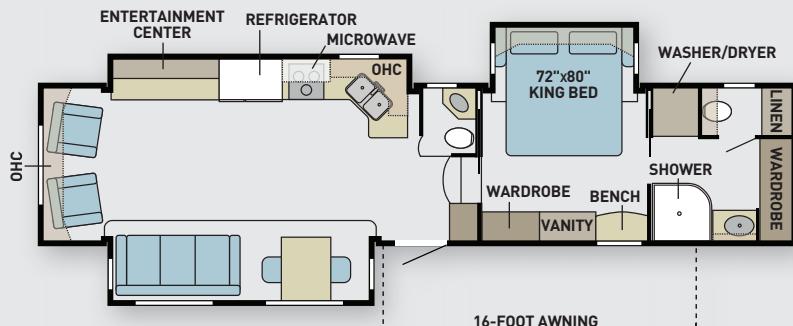
Nevertheless, the livability inside this fifth-wheel is excellent, except for the size of the half-bath on the main floor. The home-style toilet is surely welcome, but the room ironically needs more "space." Here's another example that illustrates how potential owners are free to make changes to suit their needs and can opt for more room around the toilet.

Open up the slideout rooms, though, and the living room and kitchen make into a great room with exceptional space to spread out. I suspect most potential owners will elect to fill some of this open area near the galley counter with an island structure. The galley counter in the demo fifth-wheel was too small to prepare elaborate meals or entertain. Again, this is all personal preference.

The rear section of the interior is devoted to the couch in the curbside slideout, swivel rockers against the back wall and a big-screen TV mounted above a large fireplace. The couch has integrated recliners that operate smoothly and allow your body to vegetate on soft cushions. The orientation is designed to allow TV watching without neck straining, but it's hard to stay awake when the chairs are in their prone position. Big windows really bring in the outside scenery and plenty of light, and when it comes time for privacy, it takes only one push of a button to close down the window coverings.

Next to the couch is a freestanding table and chairs made of solid wood that are comfortable and representative of the quality of the furnishings inside this fifth-wheel. Overhead cabinets

SPACE CRAFT V-400



SPECIFICATIONS

SPACE CRAFT V-400

Exterior Length	40'
Exterior Width	8' 6"
Exterior Height	13' 3"
Interior Width	7' 11¼"
Interior Height	7' 10" and 6' 7½"
Construction	1½" aluminum tube with 1½" polystyrene insulation walls, fiberglass ceiling with fiberglass insulation, Celotex and wrapped with ¼" polystyrene, 3" floor with fiberglass insulation, fiberglass roof
Freshwater Cap.	100 gal.
Black-/Gray-Water Cap.	45 / 45 gal.
LP-Gas Cap.	20 gal.
Water-Heater Cap.	17 gal.
Refrigerator	12 cu. ft.
Furnace	(2) 31,000 Btu
Air Conditioner	(2) 15,000 Btu w/heat pump
Converter	80-amp
Battery	12-volt AGM
Tires	235 / 80R16 LRE
Suspension	Torsion, disc brakes
Weight (freshwater, water heater, LP-gas full; no cargo)	19,000 lbs.
Hitch Weight	4,920 lbs.
Axle Weight	14,080 lbs.
GVWR	23,000 lbs.
GAWR	(3) 6,000 lbs.
Cargo Carrying Cap.	4,000 lbs.
Base MSRP	\$96,320
As-Tested MSRP	\$160,000*
Basic Warranty	1 year/full warranty (upgradable to 3 or 5 years), 5 years/fiberglass roof, 10 years/frame

*Factory-direct price

Space Craft Manufacturing

888-463-7520, www.spacecraftmfg.com
Circle 134 on Reader Service Card

complement the storage facilities in the entertainment structure and wrap around the entire area. The galley cabinets are uniquely shaped to handle a lot of groceries but are on the deep side, so shorter people may have difficulty reaching into the back.

Ascending the stairway, flanked by the half-bath on the left and a closet on the right, leads to the master-bedroom-and-bath suite. Here, a king-size bed is tucked into its own slideout room and on a platform that can be lifted to reveal a large storage area. The headboard is soft, and nightstands on both sides are large enough for essentials. Sleeping on this bed promotes plenty of rest, and the whole room is eye candy for those who relish hanging out in a nice master bedroom.

Across from the foot of the bed are a wardrobe, a vanity, and a bench that works great for dressing. An LED TV is built into the cabinetry, and there's room for audio/visual components. There aren't a whole lot of windows in this room, but the LED fixtures provide plenty of light. At night the room is private and heavenly. Sliding doors allow occupants to isolate the bed and/or the front bathroom.

The very front is dedicated to the master bath, which is fully equipped to include a stacking washer and dryer in one of the closets. A corner shower is the focal point, and the curved door leads to a large stall that's been decorated smartly.

A nice surprise were the body jets built into the shower wall. It's a great idea, if you travel in areas not subjected to water shortages, and in theory should provide a soothing shower for those who like to linger (here's where the aforementioned instantaneous water heater comes in handy). While the jets were positioned in the right places, there was not enough water pressure — from the demand pump or when hooked up — to push the water out with enough force to invigorate the skin. Meanwhile, the regular shower wand is of good quality but positioned in a place on the wall that made it difficult to direct water comfortably for washing our bodies. A little more work in

this department will likely result in improvements that could really add pizzazz to showering in this fifth-wheel.

Next to the shower is a sink with a smallish countertop, which allowed little room for spreading out toiletries. We used an adjacent shelf in the wardrobe closet for extra counter space. The closet is plenty big to handle a decent-size wardrobe, and the linen closet inside the toilet room keeps towels and sheets organized. A macerating (vacuum) toilet fills most of this room, but there's still plenty of space to get the job done. An overhead cabinet handles essentials.

Getting into the interior takes a bit of climbing, because the floor is quite a distance from the ground. To get in and out without taking big steps that may be problematic for some folks, or even dangerous at times, Space Craft employs a retractable step system that is light years better than the typical folding steps. Here, the frame is pulled out of a concealed compartment right below the door threshold and unfolded to the ground. Handrails are then bolted to the steps for stability. When the steps are stored, the railings are easily placed in one of the rear exterior compartments.

When deployed, the steps are evenly spaced with large platforms, but we discovered a couple of issues that, with small modifications, could make it work perfectly. Screwing in the bolts to secure the railings is hard on your fingers, and we would rather not use a wrench; some type of wing nut or similar fastener would really help. We also found that the railing is too far from the doorway. Occupants leaving the trailer have to step down first before reaching for the railing, which defeats the purpose.

There's plenty of room to store the many items full-timers will need to bring along, especially when stacking items in the big locker up front. If a generator is not ordered, then the very front compartment offers additional space for necessities.

Access to the battery, switches for the electric dump valves and Big Foot leveling system is excellent, but we suggest that latches be added to hold open

the doors that are near or under the slideouts. Holding the doors open while bending down under the slideouts is hard on the body.

Participating in the build process is very rewarding. It gives you control over expectations, and the final result is a fifth-wheel that will provide years of service without compromises or disappointment. Space Craft's mantra is to produce high-quality fifth-wheels. Over the years the company has nearly perfected the process by building strong partnerships with discriminating clients who pursue the full-time RV lifestyle, and it shows. 🚐

article and photos by Peter Lewis

BACK AT THE RANCH

PAYING A CALL AT THE NORTHERN CALIFORNIA HOME OF AUTHOR AND ADVENTURER JACK LONDON A CENTURY AFTER HIS DEATH

Trailer *Life* readers are adventurers. To varying degrees, certainly, but adventurers, nonetheless. Whether we read about destinations and travel there vicariously or actually load up the RV and go, we love the great outdoors, seeing new places and making new friends.

We had a kindred soul in Jack London, the great American writer and adventurer who died 100 years ago at the age of 40. Although London's passing isn't a cause for celebration, his life is, and a good way to commemorate it is by visiting his home outside the village of Glen Ellen in Northern California's Sonoma County. London, who traveled the world to places both wild and civilized and could have made his home anywhere, loved this place best.

When London and his second wife, Charmian, settled into what they called

Beauty Ranch in 1905, London was already rich and famous, and wanted to try his hand at farming. Starting small, he acquired about 40 acres, eventually adding more until the ranch encompassed 1,400 acres. After his death in 1916, Charmian continued to live there until she died in 1955. In 1959 some of the property, including the couple's homestead, was deeded to the State of California by London's nephew. Later acquisitions brought total state holdings close to the original acreage.

Beauty Ranch is now Jack London State Historic Park, and it's a good place to start a centennial exploration of London's life and times. The park sits in the Sonoma Valley, also known as the Valley of the Moon, which stretches between the cities of Santa Rosa and Sonoma and is bisected by State Route 12.

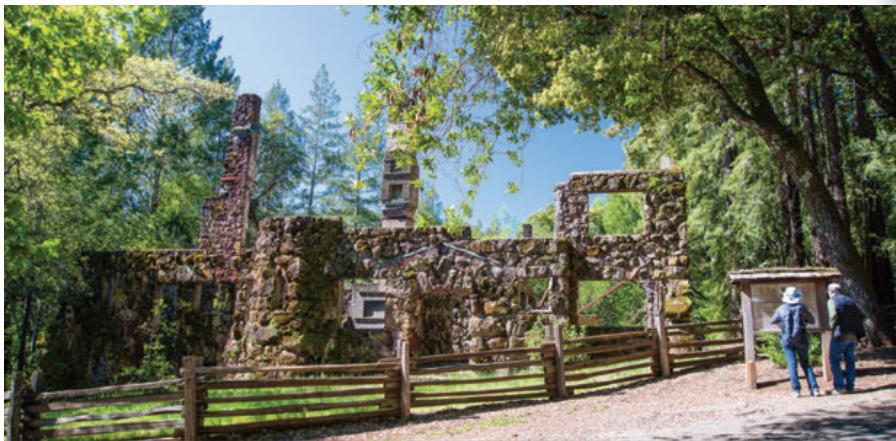


(Above) Jack and Charmian London posed at Beauty Ranch with their dog, Possum, shortly before London's death in 1916.

(Below) The building on the right, the Stallion Barn, housed London's beloved Shire horses.

On the left is a manure pit, as London was committed to replenishing the soil that had been depleted by earlier farming.



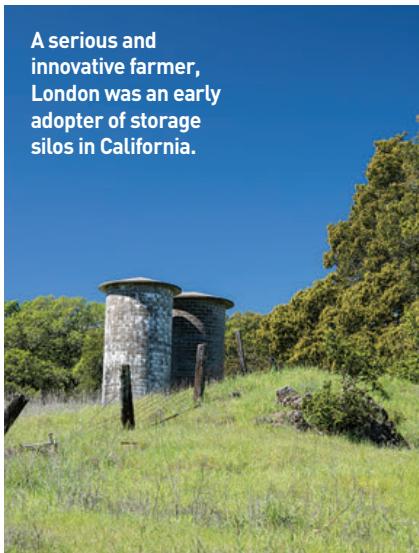


The 15,000-square-foot, four-story Wolf House had 26 rooms and nine fireplaces, and was built of unpeeled redwood logs and lava rock to better survive a fire. Nevertheless, the home burned to the ground in 1913, a month before the Londons were to move in.

THE TIMES OF LONDON

Jack London was born in San Francisco in 1876 of impoverished parents, his mother, Flora Wellman, being of a mystical bent and fond of séances. Neither London nor historians were ever able to confirm his father's identity, although his mother claimed it was astrologer William Chaney. Later in 1876, they moved to nearby Oakland, and Wellman married John London, who was a kind man but frail from a lifetime of physical labor. As a result, his adopted son found it necessary to help provide for the family by working in factories and other low-paying jobs, starting at the age of 14.

London's attempts at garnering a formal education were obstructed by the need to work, so he was largely self-taught. That lifestyle led him to become an outspoken socialist, as all capitalism had offered were long hours, little pay



A serious and innovative farmer, London was an early adopter of storage silos in California.

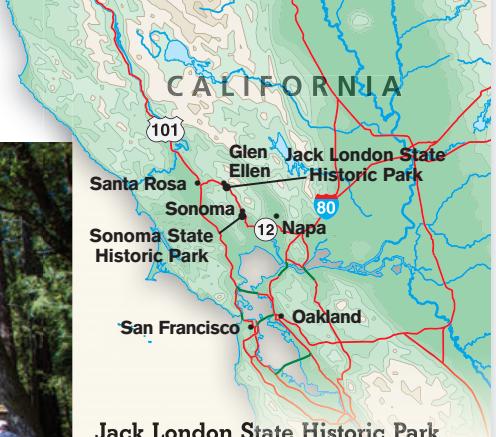
and exploitation by his bosses. After working in a pickle cannery for 10 cents an hour, London borrowed money to buy a sailboat and tried his hand as an oyster pirate, raiding corporate-owned oyster farms and eluding the authorities employed to catch him. That profession taught him to be an expert sailor, a skill that would serve him well in later years.

By 15, when other teenagers were sitting in classrooms, London was carousing and drinking with men twice his age and learning that only the tough survive. At 17 he became an able-bodied seaman on a three-masted schooner and endured a raging typhoon that served as the basis for his first story written for public consumption, *Typhoon on the Coast of Japan*.

At 18 London was imprisoned for vagrancy. At 19 he was given his first toothbrush, an important development because his neglect of dental hygiene had caused embarrassment and may have contributed to the ailments that would haunt him later in life.

At 21 London traveled to the Klondike region of northwestern Canada and spent a year mining for gold, bringing home about \$5 worth but having experiences that inspired his 1902 story "To Build a Fire" and launched a writing career that was without equal in his day.

Publication of *The Call of the Wild* in 1903 and *The Sea Wolf* in 1904, after their serialization in the *Saturday Evening Post* and *The Century*



Jack London State Historic Park

Both a state historic park and a national historic landmark, Jack London's Beauty Ranch is open to the public from 9:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily, except Christmas. The park's 1,400 acres include the House of Happy Walls Museum, Jack and Charmian London's cottage, the Wolf House ruins, the Pig Palace and 29 miles of hiking trails. Guided tours of the ranch, museum and ruins are given on weekends. The park is located in Glen Ellen, about 20 miles north of Sonoma and 50 miles north of San Francisco.

As part of this year's centennial celebration, Jack London State Historic Park and the Sonoma Community Center have partnered to stage the Jack London Classic Film Fest, November 3 through 5, showcasing three memorable film adaptations: *The Call of the Wild* (1935), *The Sea Wolf* (1941) and *White Fang* (1991). Screenings take place in Andrews Hall at the Sonoma Community Center.

707-938-5216

www.jacklondonpark.com

Sonoma State Historic Park

The park embraces a series of sites in Sonoma's central plaza: Mission San Francisco Solano, the Blue Wing Inn, the Toscano Hotel, the Sonoma Barracks, and two homes of General Mariano Guadalupe Vallejo, Casa Grande and Lachryma Montis. The park's exhibits, museum and gift shop are open daily, except Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year's Day. Restaurants and shops also occupy the central plaza.

707-938-9560, www.parks.ca.gov

Magazine, respectively, cemented London's stature as the most popular writer then working. In 1904 he covered the Russo-Japanese War for the *San Francisco Examiner*, and in 1906 he reported on the devastating San



(Above, from left) Despite its location in the heart of Sonoma Valley wine country, family-friendly Sugarloaf Ridge is an alcohol-free state park and campground. Sonoma City Hall, a national historic landmark, anchors the town's central plaza.

Francisco earthquake for *Collier's*. At one point he was earning about \$10,000 per month. All of this merely touches on a life lived to the fullest.

VALLEY OF THE MOON

London married Charmian and bought their property in Glen Ellen in 1905. He proved to be a serious farmer and soon thought of his writing as a way to support that profession. Rising early, at about 5:30 a.m., he wrote 1,000 words before stopping to eat and starting chores on the farm. The Londons lived in a cottage while making plans to build their dream home, to be called Wolf House after London's nickname.

In 1907 the couple set off on what was to be a seven-year sail on his sloop, the *Snark*, a trip that was cut short after two years because of health issues, a harbinger of things to come. In 1913 Wolf House burned to the ground a

month before he and Charmian were to move in, and on November 22, 1916, London passed away in Charmian's arms in their cottage at Beauty Ranch.

The best place to start a tour of Jack London State Historic Park is the House of Happy Walls, a beautiful stone structure that Charmian built to live in after London's death and now serves as a museum and visitor center. It is filled with souvenirs from London's travels and exhibits that detail his literary exploits. Photographs, manuscripts, first-edition books and more will enthrall the enthusiast.

Outside, an easy half-mile trail leads to the remains of Wolf House and the site of London's grave. His headstone is a lone lava boulder collected for but never used in the Wolf House construction. Charmian's ashes were scattered nearby.

About a mile away are the remains

London didn't consider growing grapes a profitable business, but much has changed, and his heirs now cultivate several red varieties on land he once farmed.



CAMPING IN JACK LONDON COUNTRY

Jack London and Sonoma state historic parks don't offer campsites, but the surrounding area has plenty of RV parks and state, county and regional campgrounds that do. Here's a sample.

CALISTOGA

Bothe-Napa Valley State Park
707-942-4575, www.parks.ca.gov

Calistoga RV Park

707-942-5221
www.calistogarpark.org

KENWOOD

Sugarloaf Ridge State Park
707-833-5712, www.parks.ca.gov

NAPA

Napa Valley Expo RV Park
707-253-4900
www.napavalleyexpo.com/rv-park.php

NOVATO

Novato RV Park
800-733-6787, www.novatorvpark.com

PETALUMA

San Francisco North/Petaluma KOA
707-763-1492, www.petalumakoa.com

ROHNERT PARK

Wine Country RV Park
707-795-9333
www.winecountryrvparksonoma.com

SANTA ROSA

Sonoma County Fairgrounds RV Park
707-293-8410
www.sonomacountyfair.com/rv-park.php

Spring Lake Regional Park

707-539-8092
www.parks.sonomacounty.ca.gov

WINDSOR

Windsor Wine Country RV Park
707-838-4195
www.windsorwinecountryrv.com

VALLEJO

Solano County Fairgrounds RV Park
707-551-2007, www.scfair.com/rv.html

Tradewinds RV Park
707-643-4000
www.tradewindsrvpark.net

Vallejo Mobile Home Community and RV Park
855-433-7275, www.vallejorvpark.com

of the farm and the London cottage, which looks and feels like a place a writer would enjoy. London eschewed things mechanical, using draft horses for power and housing them in stone outbuildings that still stand. He raised Duroc pigs in what he called the Pig Palace, a facility he designed to be clean and efficient. Two silos also remain, along with what was once a winery that London used as living quarters for his help and guests.

AT HOME IN SONOMA

London loved Northern California's Sonoma Valley and went so far as to name a 1913 novel *The Valley of the Moon*. Rolling hills enclosed what was then farmland depleted by poor agricultural practices that London had committed to rejuvenate and are now given over to significant plantings of wine grapes not unlike those in neighboring Napa County.

The two oldest commercial wineries in California are situated here, just outside the town of Sonoma. Buena Vista Winery was established in 1857, and Gundlach Bundschu in 1858. Both still produce wine and are worth a visit. Throughout the valley, small-scale organic farmers satisfy the needs of increasingly picky consumers.

The community of Sonoma is a local jewel, one of those destinations that inspires guidebooks to invoke superlatives. Do an online search for "California" and "charming," "romantic" or "foodie," and Sonoma will likely appear near the top. But there's a lot of history here, too.

At the start of the European colonization of the West, Mexico was part of the Spanish empire, including what was then known as Alta California. As part of its colonization efforts, Spain established a series of 21 Franciscan missions, and Sonoma's Mission San Francisco Solano was the northernmost of them.

When Mexico gained independence, it closed the missions and appointed Mariano Guadalupe Vallejo, then in charge of the San Francisco Presidio military base, to administer the job. At the same time, Mexico

was concerned with the increasing incursion of Russians at nearby Fort Ross and Bodega Bay, and decided to boost its military presence north of San Francisco. Thus, in 1835 the pueblo of Sonoma was established.

In 1846 Sonoma became the site of the Bear Flag Revolt when a small group of Americans "captured" the town, took then-General Vallejo into custody and declared the establishment

of the California Republic. The republic was short-lived but presaged what was to come.

After his influential career, General Vallejo retired in Sonoma to write a five-volume history of California. Two of his homes and Mission San Francisco Solano are now part of Sonoma State Historic Park, another wonderful place to visit in Jack London's Valley of the Moon. 🚚

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²Each merchant is assigned a code by a third party that indicates the merchant's area of business. Bonus points will only be awarded if the merchant code for the purchase matches a category eligible for the offer. Comenity Capital Bank does not have the ability to control assignment of merchant codes.

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TAKE A LOAD OFF



OVERLOADING A VEHICLE CAN HAVE A NUMBER OF CONSEQUENCES,

SO UNDERSTANDING WEIGHT AND LOADING IS ESSENTIAL TO SAFE TOWING

Merriam-Webster defines “weight” as the force with which a body is pulled toward the earth. Everything around us feels this gravitational pull. Then you add the forces of movement, which can magnify the effect of weight, and ... well, you get the point. Weight and loading are important for an airplane so it will lift off the ground and for a ship so it won’t roll over, and they are important for your RV, not only to make sure it will last a long time without premature wear or component failure but also so it will be safe to drive on the highways and back roads.

There are a number of resources for RVers to reference regarding the weight of their RV. Owner’s manuals usually provide weight and loading information, as do numerous websites. Over the years, this magazine has dedicated many pages to RV weight. One organization, the RV Safety and Education Foundation (RVSEF), has dedicated its existence to the issues of RV weight and loading. It’s an important topic that every RVer should understand.

Overloading a tow vehicle, trailer or motorhome can have a number of consequences. First is excessive wear to the various components, including brakes, bearings, universals, transmission, torque converter or clutch, and so on. Second, and more important, is safety. Overloaded tires can blow out,

brakes can fade or fail, and structural components can break, which can all lead to loss of vehicle control and cause a crash. Staying within the engineering limits of your vehicle is the best way to prevent this from happening.

To comprehend vehicle weight and loading, you need to be familiar with the following weight terms. Note that these values contribute to an understanding of the proper matching of a tow vehicle and trailer, or what a vehicle itself can handle, but no one value presents the complete picture, which is a common misconception among RV owners.

Gross Combination Weight Rating (GCWR)

This is the maximum operating weight of a tow vehicle and anything it is

towing, loaded. There is nothing that can be done to increase a vehicle’s GCWR, and it must not be exceeded.

Gross Vehicle Weight Rating (GVWR)

This is the maximum operating weight of any vehicle on the road and is set by the original equipment manufacturer (OEM). All tow vehicles, towed vehicles, motorhomes and trailers have a GVWR. Likewise, there is nothing that can be done to a vehicle to increase its GVWR, and this value must not be exceeded. In contrast, changing some of a vehicle’s factory components to lighter-duty ones can reduce the GVWR; however, there is no practical way to quantify that reduction.

Gross Axle Weight Rating (GAWR)

This is the maximum amount that can be placed on any one axle of a vehicle, evenly distributed across the axle, and includes the weight of the axle. It is important to note that a vehicle may be within its limits on any other rating and still exceed its GAWR. A vehicle’s GAWR may be increased by replacing the axle

TAKE A LOAD OFF

with a heavier rated counterpart and/or upgraded suspension components, but that will not increase the GVWR.

Unloaded Vehicle Weight (uvw)

This is the weight of the base vehicle, as shipped from the factory. For tow vehicles, this may not include options that are installed on the vehicle at the factory. For RVs, it generally will, as they are weighed and the certification label is affixed prior to shipping.

Cargo Carrying Capacity (ccc)

In the RV world, ccc is used to provide a close value to how much cargo can be put in an RV, which is especially useful at the time of the initial purchase. This number does not include any aftermarket or dealer-installed accessories or modifications. Once an RV has been loaded and modified, it must be weighed to properly revise this value.

To truly match a tow vehicle and its towed vehicle or trailer, it is essential to weigh the vehicles and know these values as accurately as possible. The best way to weigh a vehicle is by wheel position, and the RVSEF does this for RVers all over the country. However, most RVers won't be in the areas where this service is provided, so weighing in on a truck scale is the next best option. These can be found at truck stops, moving companies, gravel pits, some landscape-material suppliers and the occasional recycling center. Do an online search for "truck scales" and your ZIP code to find one nearby.

A truck scale will provide the vehicle's overall weight and, if you can position the vehicle properly, the axle weights. With trailers, weighing on a truck scale can also determine pin or hitch weight and axle weight.



A) Most truck scales like this one have three platforms that will allow you to have a front-axle, a rear-axle and a trailer-axle weight. B) Once you have weighed both the truck and the trailer, drop the trailer and come back to weigh just the truck. This way you can use both weights to calculate your rough axle loads. Remember, this is a rough weigh and is not as accurate as weighing by wheel position, so it still can be possible to be overloaded on one side of an axle.

Truck scales generally consist of three platform sections that conform to the axle positions for tractor-trailers, but this setup also works for RVs. To get the most complete picture, pull your vehicle's front axle up to the front platform (as shown in photo A, above). There is often an intercom outside the driver's-side window that is used to communicate with the scale operator.

Take a look back at which axles are on which platforms. The weight report will show each platform as a separate axle, so if you want to adjust your RV on the scale, do so before hitting the intercom button. You'll have to physically move the tow vehicle or RV on and off the scale to ascertain axle weights for scales without the above configuration.

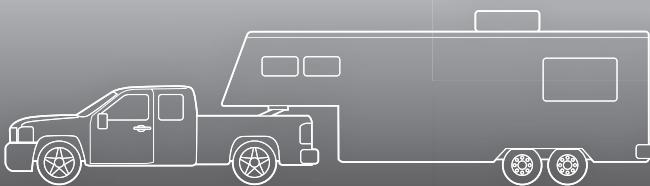
If you're weighing a truck and trailer on a three-platform system, you will want the front axle on the first platform and the rear axle on the second platform, as shown above. The trailer axles should be on the third platform. If you're weighing a motorhome, you'll want the same; the trailer or towed dinghy should be on the third platform.

This first weight will give the gross combined weight and weight by some axle positions, depending on where the axles fall on the scale. If you're towing a trailer and want to know gross weight, you'll have to do a second weighing.

After you have the first weight, tell the operator you'll need a second weight for the trailer. The operator

SCALE POSITIONING

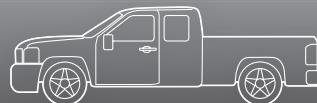
► Your first weigh should be on the scale with the front truck axle on the first platform, the rear truck axle on the second, and the trailer axle(s) on the third. Be set up to tow on the road; if you have a weight-distributing kit, it should be fully set. Your second weigh should be just the truck, as it was on the first weigh, but minus the trailer. If you're weighing a motorhome, make sure the axles are on separate platforms. In many cases you can weigh the towed vehicle at the same time, but it should be on a separate platform. If it can't be, disconnect it and weigh it separately.



1

2

3



1

2

3

may ask for the company and the truck and/or trailer number, so have something in mind ahead of time. This is to identify you and your equipment at the fuel desk. You can also just say something like "Private vehicle, Ford F-450 and Dutchmen Voltage," for example, or simply "Truck and RV."

Since you have the weight of the truck and trailer together, mathematics allow you to extrapolate the fifth-wheel pin weight or trailer hitch weight by weighing the truck alone without the trailer. Drive off the scale and drop the trailer in an appropriate parking spot, and go back to the scale for the second weight (photo B on previous page).

Once the truck is on the scale, push the intercom and tell the operator that this is your second weight. This will give you the truck-only weight. Once the operator confirms the weight is recorded, go back and reconnect the truck and trailer, and proceed to the fuel desk to get your weight report.

The first weight on the report will provide:

- The weight of the truck and trailer.
- The truck's front and rear axle weights. This will show the operating weight of the truck axles. The weighing

should be done with weight-distributing equipment in place when weighing a travel trailer.

- The trailer's axle weight. The second weight will provide:

• The truck's actual weight and individual axle weights without the trailer but otherwise loaded for travel.

With these values in hand, you can extrapolate:

- The hitch or pin weight of the trailer or fifth-wheel. Subtract the truck weight without the trailer total from the truck-with-trailer weight. The difference is the operating hitch or pin weight (with the weight-distributing system in place for travel trailers). For fifth-wheel trailers, it will be the actual pin weight.

- The rear-axle weight of the truck, to determine if it is overloaded.

- The front-axle weight, to determine if too much weight is on the rear of the tow vehicle. With a travel trailer, this may mean tightening or releasing the weight-distributing spring bars a bit.

Remember, the trailer and tow vehicle should be loaded for travel. Fuel and water tanks, and LP-gas cylinders should be completely full. If it's not possible to weigh with the water tank full, water can be estimated by calcu-

RV AND TRUCK WEIGHT REPORT

OUR VALUES

Test weighs utilized a 2016 Ford F-450 Platinum Lariat Crew Cab dually and a 2017 Dutchmen Voltage 3990 toy-hauler fifth-wheel.

TRUCK GROSS VEHICLE WEIGHT RATING (GVWR)..... **14,000 LBS.**
 TRUCK GROSS COMBINATION WEIGHT RATING (GCWR) **40,400 LBS.**
 TRUCK REAR GROSS AXLE WEIGHT RATING (GAWR)..... **9,100 LBS.**
 TRAILER GROSS VEHICLE WEIGHT RATING (GVWR)..... **20,000 LBS.**

RV/TRUCK WEIGHT — REAR AXLE (PLATFORM 2)..... **7,520 LBS.**
 RV/TRUCK WEIGHT — GROSS (PLATFORMS 1, 2 AND 3)..... **26,360 LBS.**
 TRUCK-ONLY WEIGHT — REAR AXLE (PLATFORM 2)..... **4,440 LBS.**
 TRUCK-ONLY WEIGHT — GROSS (PLATFORMS 1 AND 2)..... **9,500 LBS.**

RV/TRUCK GROSS – TRUCK-ONLY GROSS = **TRAILER WEIGHT**
 26,360 LBS. 9,500 LBS. **16,860 LBS.**

TRAILER GVWR - TRAILER WEIGHT = **CARGO CARRYING CAPACITY (CCC)**
 20,000 LBS. 16,860 LBS. **3,140 LBS.***

*If weighing with the RV loaded for travel, this is the remaining CCC. Be sure to adjust for passengers and liquid weights, if not weighing with full water and fuel tanks, water heater and LP-gas cylinders.

RV/TRUCK REAR AXLE – TRUCK-ONLY REAR AXLE = **TRAILER PIN WEIGHT**
 7,520 LBS. 4,440 LBS. **3,080 LBS.**

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lating 8.33 pounds per gallon. The water heater should be included and the appropriate weight added.

The reason for weighing with full water is because the location of the tank in the trailer can dramatically affect the pin or hitch weight. Many RVers travel with empty holding tanks and, again, the weight of full tanks can be extrapolated later.

With this information, you will know:

- The gross combination weight. If you didn't weigh fully loaded for travel, be sure to add those values later.
- The tow vehicle's, trailer's or motorhome's actual weight, as equipped and loaded for travel.
- The trailer pin or hitch weight and the axle weight. If the trailer is towed level, and it should be, the axle weight should be divided between the two axles.

You will also be able to extrapolate the loaded rear-axle weight for the tow vehicle while towing the trailer by taking the rear-axle weight of the truck alone and adding the pin or hitch weight of the trailer. Remember that, to be accurate, the tow vehicle should be loaded for a typical trip, including passengers and cargo in the truck bed.

If any of the ratings are exceeded, it will be necessary to adjust the weight, if possible. This can be done by reducing cargo or shifting its placement until the weight-rating values are met. It's best to refrain from using any vehicle or RV before the weight is within its limits.

WEIGHT WATCHERS

Over many years of weighing RVs, the RVSEF has seen some common mistakes and oversights that RVers make with respect to weight, according to Walter Cannon, the organization's

↑ KNOW THE STICKERS

- ▶ (Above left) RVs are required to have a yellow Cargo Carrying Capacity label on the door to indicate the ccc of the RV, as built from the factory. Anything added to the RV after it leaves the factory reduces this ccc. (Above middle) Trailers will have a vehicle certification label somewhere on the front left of the unit. This indicates GVWR and GAWR, and the tire size and pressures required for these weights, as built. Motorhomes will have one on the inside, usually by the driver's seat. Note that the axle ratings may be more or less than the GVWR. This is correct, based on the engineering design and the amount of weight the pin or hitch is expected to carry. (Above right) Tow vehicles and motorhome chassis will have this certification label. With tow vehicles, it is usually on the driver's door or doorpost. With motorhomes, it is usually by the driver's seat.

executive director. "Besides not getting weighed, there are a number of issues the RV manufacturers get blamed for that really happen after the RV is down the road," Cannon said.

"I've weighed vehicles that the owners say they haven't done anything to, when that's not the case, and it throws the weights way off," he added. "We had one recently, and it turned out that he had had a liquid-type roof coating done at a rally, which adds somewhere around 300 pounds, and he had the dinette replaced with a custom-built desk with file drawers and a granite top."

It's important to note that anything added to an RV increases weight, but some additions are easy to overlook. Many RVs come prepped for things like satellite dishes, second air conditioners and washer/dryers, all of which add considerable weight. Any aftermarket accessory adds weight — some small, like plastic vent covers, and some large, like solar panels and battery banks. Then there are the giant ones like motorcycle and golf-cart lifts that are mounted on the rear of RVs.

Cannon noted that RVers can get into

trouble not only with add-ons but also with toy haulers. "People buy toy haulers and think they can fill the back with anything. We've seen two household refrigerators, full beds for additional people, horse stalls — anything else they can fit back there," he said.

Weighing by wheel position is important, Cannon stressed. "While an RV may be within its GAWR for a particular axle, we have seen where one wheel position may be way overloaded." When an axle is loaded close to its rating, the wheels should be weighed individually to determine if there is an overloaded position.

We all want our RV experiences to be safe, enjoyable and as economical as possible. Paying attention to weight limits at the beginning of a trip and making sure you don't pick up too much weight while on the road will go a long way toward that goal. 🚚

Recreation Vehicle Safety and Education Foundation

For RV weighing locations and dates, and detailed information on RV safety, visit the RVSEF website. www.rvsafety.com

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When visiting Nashville, Tennessee, world renowned as Music City, you may be tempted to ask a few residents what makes their town tick. That's because music so predominates the culture here, it seems unlikely there's much else. Even the 200-mile stretch of Interstate 40 that we followed to Nashville from Memphis is named the Music Highway, as designated by a 1997 act of the Tennessee legislature. Almost invariably, you'll hear, as we did, that there's more than music to this Southern city on the Cumberland River. Lots more.

HISTORY, ARTS AND CULTURE

For one thing, there's the city's history, which goes back more than two centuries to 1779, when pioneer James Robertson, one of the founding fathers of the state of Tennessee, led an overland party of settlers from Fort Patrick Henry in eastern Tennessee to establish an outpost, Fort Nashborough, at the town's current site. Named for Revolutionary War hero General Francis Nash, it would, a decade or so later, be rechristened Nashville.

There's also the presidential connection. The group of women and children who came by water to join the original bunch and reconnect some 60 families was led by pioneer John Donelson, father of Rachel, who would later become the wife of Andrew Jackson, the nation's seventh president. The Jacksons' home, the sumptuous Hermitage, lies a dozen miles outside of Nashville and is among a handful of 19th-century mansions in the area that can be toured.

The city is also devoted to fine arts and culture, apparent in the host of galleries and museums, dinner theaters and fine restaurants, a first-rate zoo and a botanical garden, earning Nashville the nickname Athens of the South. Appropriately, a full-scale replica of the Parthenon in Athens, Greece, was built here in 1897 during the state's centennial celebration.

MUSIC AND LIGHTS

It's one thing to hear somebody say that Nashville is not only about the music, but it's something else to believe it when you're honky-tonking on garishly neon-lit Broadway, hitting one cavernous club after another. About 15 clubs stand side by side on this bustling thoroughfare, including Legends Corner, Tootsies Orchid Lounge and Robert's Western World (a boot store by



(Far left) At the Country Music Hall of Fame, visitors can walk inside a 40-foot guitar built by C.F. Martin & Company. (Left) The Johnny Cash Museum chronicles the life of the Man in Black with hundreds of items including handwritten lyrics and personal contributions from family and friends. (Below) The skyline and John Seigenthaler Pedestrian Bridge reflect in the Cumberland River.

IN NASHVILLE

Old South meets the present in a city with more to note than music

day and honky-tonk by night), to name a few. These clubs are where up-and-coming country stars and their bands rock the rafters from mid-morning till past midnight, hoping to gain the following that will make them famous.

Nashville may not be only about the music, but it's clear that it's the main thing when you drive along Music Row, with block upon block of tree-shaded lanes lined by fine old mansions that are now the offices of major country stars, Reba McEntire and Garth Brooks among them. Numerous music publishing companies and record labels are also headquartered here.

Of course, Nashville is mostly about the music, you think, as you wander through the glitzy galleries of the huge Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum. Or when you're squeezing into a chair at the last empty table at the Bluebird Cafe, a 90-seat music club where country fans wedge themselves in like Vienna sausages to hear the newest tunes from singers hoping to make it onto the charts (Garth Brooks, Faith Hill and many others got their start here).



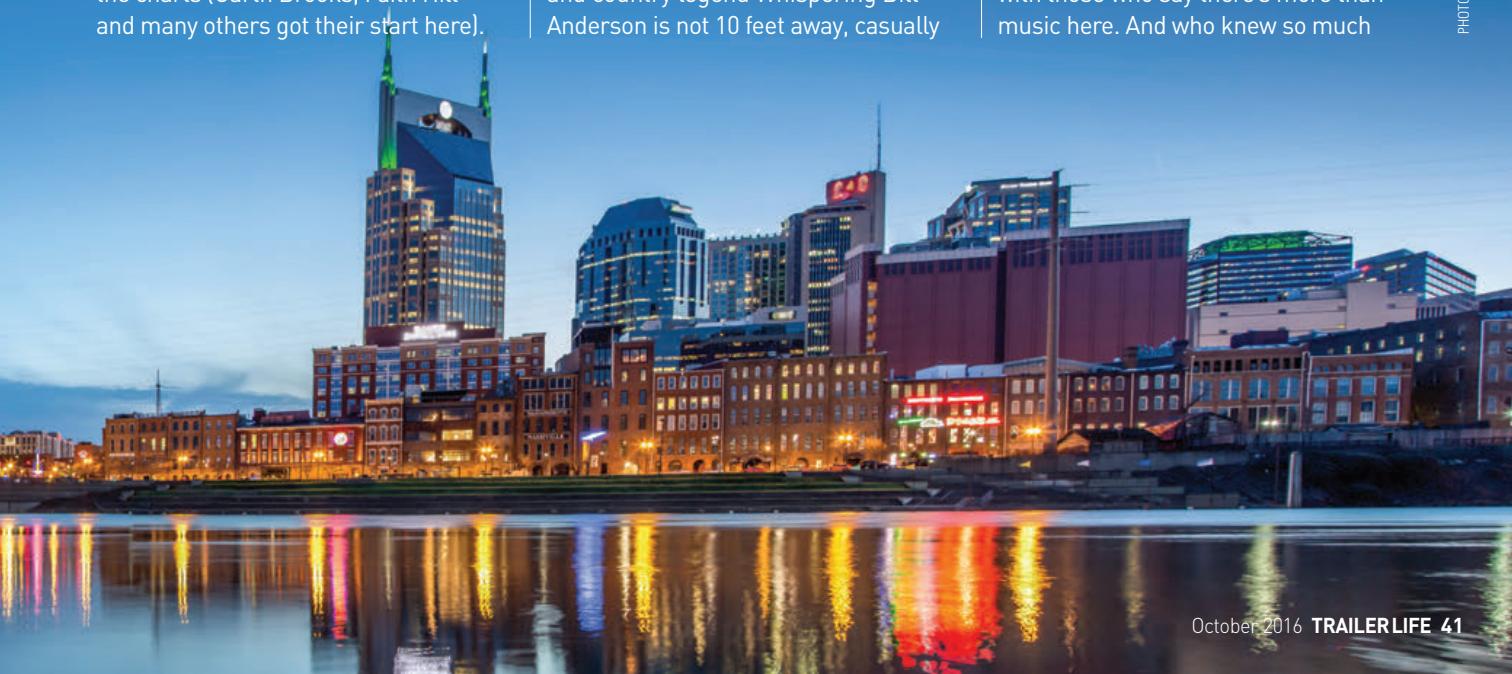
Kick up your heels listening to honky-tonk music at Legends Corner in downtown Nashville where record covers plaster the walls and artists croon and play till the wee hours.

Or when you're caught up in hand-clapping and toe-tapping at historic Ryman Auditorium, a church built in 1892 and later the home for more than 30 years to the Grand Ole Opry, and still its winter quarters.

Or most of all, when you're standing in the wings during a backstage tour at the Grand Ole Opry House on Opryland Drive (exit 12 off Briley Parkway), and country legend Whispering Bill Anderson is not 10 feet away, casually

chatting with half a dozen other performers. The announcer calls out "Let 'er go, boys," and the best-in-the-business house band, a white haze from cone-shaped lights filtering down on them, starts to play. Radio and television can't do it justice. You have to be there.

Our days in Nashville were a crescendo leading to Saturday night at the Opry. Still, I would have to agree with those who say there's more than music here. And who knew so much



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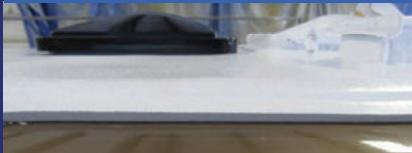
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of it could be squeezed into a mere three-day visit, notwithstanding that each day began at 7 a.m. and ended at midnight.

LOCAL ATTRACTIONS

A main attraction in town is the Frist Center for the Visual Arts, with a “stripped” classical façade and echoing Art Deco interior, that was built in the early 1930s for Nashville’s main post office. It was bought and renovated by the city and the wealthy Frist family as a center “to celebrate and help visitors explore all forms of visual art,” said Martha Davis of the Nashville Convention and Visitors Corporation.

The Frist’s half-dozen galleries are host to traveling exhibits from major museums around the country and the world, Davis added. Educational programs for all ages are offered, plus there’s a café and a gift shop full of handcrafted art and jewelry, books, prints and more.

Anyone with a hankering to learn about country music, a lot or a little, will want to tour the Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum, which opened in 2001 and had its size more than doubled to 350,000 square feet last year. The futuristic-looking building symbolizes many things: from the air it looks like a bass clef, dark windows on the front resemble piano keys, and a ring of stones that decorates the rotunda is in the pattern

Called the Athens of the South because of its status as a capital city with many universities, Nashville built the world’s only full-scale copy of the Parthenon in 1897.



Inside the Nashville Parthenon, *Athena Parthenos* (the Virgin Athena) stands 41 feet 10 inches tall and is the largest indoor statue in the Western World.

of notes from the song “Will the Circle Be Unbroken?”

Self-guided tours wind past dozens of historic photos, placards that list country-music milestones and glass cases displaying musical instruments once played by country stars, along with the gaudy costumes they wore. Videos show entertainers discussing their craft and performing. There’s music trivia, recording and songwriting areas, and even a 40-foot guitar you can walk through.

Nearby in Centennial Park is another Nashville attraction, the august Parthenon, the only full-scale replica of the Greek version anywhere, said Director Wesley Paine. Originally built of brick, wood and plaster, it was intended to be torn down, but public outcry was such that it was rebuilt in the 1920s of reinforced concrete and



concrete aggregate.

So massive is the building and the *Athena Parthenos* statue inside it that the 6-foot 4-inch Nike figure she holds in one hand seems minute. Twelve years after she was unveiled in 1990, *Athena* was gilded with 8 pounds of 23.75-carat gold at a cost of about \$170,000, said Paine. The monumental goddess of wisdom absolutely glows. The building she occupies is also an art museum, displaying plaster replicas of the original Parthenon's Elgin Marbles and about 40 paintings at any given time by 19th- and 20th-century American artists.

HISTORIC HOMES

Tours of Nashville's mansions could easily fill several days. The elegant Greek Revival Hermitage was built in 1819, later enlarged, burned and rebuilt, we were told by one of the 30 or so interpreters who dress the part in clothing typical of the period. The Hermitage was opened to the public in 1889 and underwent a major restoration a century later. Today, among other things, original furnishings and wallpaper are on display, as is a daguerreotype taken of Andrew Jackson in 1845 just nine days before he died. We see a tall, skeletal man who suffered from dysentery.

Belle Meade, another Greek Revival mansion, was built in the mid-19th century by General William Harding, although the plantation's reputation as a stud farm had begun four decades earlier. It was home to Iroquois, the first American-bred horse to win the English Epsom Derby in 1881. After Iroquois died in 1899, still the most famous Thoroughbred of the time, his front hoofs were sent to Tiffany's in New York and made into a pair of inkwells, on display in a glass case. A dozen or so historic buildings on the now-30-acre plantation can be toured.

Other mansions open for tours include the Italianate Belmont, once a summer home and now part of Belmont University, and Travellers Rest, Nashville's oldest plantation house, built in 1799 by Judge John Overton, a tax collector, land speculator, banker and planter, as well as a judge, and also Andrew Jackson's presidential adviser.



BIG HITS IN NASHVILLE

We recommend roaming the town on foot on a 90-minute Echoes of Nashville walking tour or on wheels via the Music City Hop sightseeing bus or trolley, which make 17 mostly music-related stops.

Echoes of Nashville Tours

615-576-0804
www.echoesofnashville.com

Gray Line Music City Hop

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For More Information Nashville Convention and Visitors Corporation

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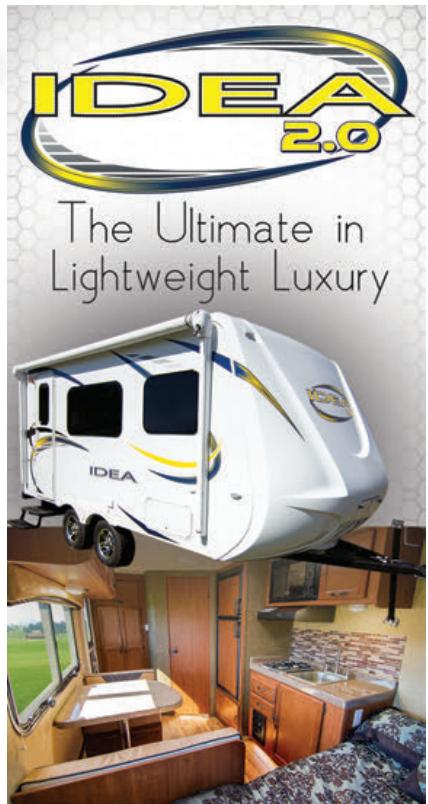
There's also the 55-acre Cheekwood Botanical Garden and Museum of Art, with 11 gardens, a mile-long Sculpture Trail and the namesake Georgian-style mansion, built by the Cheek family of Maxwell House coffee in 1932 and now displaying a permanent art collection and traveling exhibitions.

BEYOND HONKY-TONKS

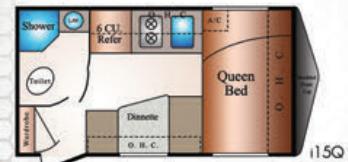
A visit to Nashville should also include a tour of the 1859 state capitol, which is today as it was more than a century and a half ago. From its lofty site, the Greek-style building has a wide view of 19-acre Bicentennial Capitol Mall State Park, where Tennessee history and natural wonders are interpreted. There's a 200-foot granite map of the state, a 95-bell carillon and a 2,000-seat amphitheater, among other attractions.

Next to the park is the Nashville Farmers' Market, where dozens of vendors sell every kind of fruit, vegetable and bedding plant you can think of. The market, open from dawn to dusk daily except Christmas and New Year's Day, also includes restaurants and other shops.

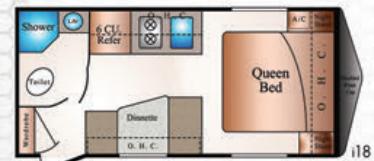
Of course, there's more: the Willie Nelson and Johnny Cash museums, Adventure Science Center, Fort Nashborough (a replica of the original



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(Above, from left) Belle Meade (“beautiful meadow”) was built by the slaves of William Giles Harding. Confederate General Harding is considered one of the founders of Tennessee horse racing and breeding. The Country Music Hall of Fame’s front windows resemble piano keys.



settlement) and Fort Negley, which is now listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The partly restored fort was the largest and most important Union fortification built during the Civil War (mostly by African-American residents of the town) after Nashville fell in 1862.

Then there are the restaurants, way too many to provide a comprehensive list. But we can personally recommend Biscuit Love, which offers a variety of fares (I tried the unlikely combo of cold, “shaved” Brussels sprouts topped with two poached eggs); Arnold’s Country Kitchen, one of Nashville’s popular meat-and-three soul-food restaurants (the “three” refers to side dishes); and Hattie B’s, where the fried chicken is excellent, and you choose your degree of spiciness.

Nights in Nashville are, of course, for music, and there are so many venues that the possibilities seem endless. Our last night in town, I asked our local friend, who has been to the Opry many times, which performers would be on the program. She immediately rattled off more than half a dozen familiar names, among them some of my favorites: Keith Anderson, the Secret Sisters, the Whites, Jonathan Jackson, Mike Snider, the Annie Moses Band, Bill Anderson and Connie Smith, plus a few others. I laughed because I thought she was joking. She wasn’t.

I want to go back to the Bluebird Cafe, informal as a living room, where we heard a quartet of songwriters hunched over their guitars, playing terrific new tunes, and I want to spend a month of Saturday nights at the Grand Ole Opry. 🎵



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IN MUSIC CITY**

We stayed at Nashville Shores Lakeside Resort, a 385-acre outdoor-recreation destination 10 miles from downtown on Percy Priest Lake. Open from March through November, the Good Sam Park combines an aerial-adventure course and a water park with cabins and campsites. The 84 RV sites include 30 on the waterfront and 74 with full hookups, plus free cable and Wi-Fi. Amenities range from a laundry room and camp store to a playground and dog park. Guests have private access to the lake and can take advantage of the marina, and pontoon boat and personal-watercraft rentals.

For year-round RV camping, a couple of Good Sam Parks offer campsites 365 days a year in Nashville and nearby Smyrna, a 30-minute drive from Music City.

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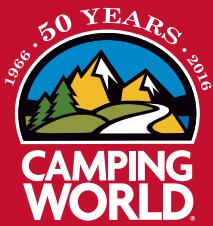


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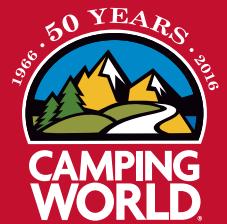
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SMART TRAILER



INTELLI-HITCH TAKES THE GUESSWORK OUT OF CONTROLLER SETUP USING A SOPHISTICATED MICROPROCESSOR BUILT RIGHT INTO THE BALL MOUNT

Setting up a vehicle for towing requires the requisite controller to activate the trailer's brakes and, in many cases, the manufacturers of tow vehicles supply this piece of equipment. But there are lots of vehicles on the market that can be used for towing, and it's entirely possible that a suitable brake controller will need to be added.

Not all brake controllers are created equal, and less-expensive models, without proportional braking capability, may deliver trailer-brake performance that's too grabby or too modest.

The other issue is knowing how to set up the controller so trailer braking is smooth and effective. This is an area that can be confusing to some owners who attempt to dial in the proper settings to prevent over- or under-braking. The new Intelli-Hitch 2.0, designed for non-weight-distributing, dead-weight-only applications, does that thinking for you and activates the brakes seamlessly in proportion to the tow vehicle's braking.

Unique to the field, the American-made Intelli-Hitch 2.0 is a well-assembled adjustable ball mount with an

embedded electronic brake controller. It completely eliminates the need for a brake controller in the tow vehicle and makes the hitching process simple. Using a specially crafted heavy-duty welded-steel ball mount as a base provides a Class IV platform for towing trailers up to 15,000 pounds. The hitch-weight rating is determined by the rating of your receiver setup and must not be exceeded to avoid overloading the equipment.

Also supplied with the Intelli-Hitch are two reversible ball-mounting feet for the 2- and 2 $\frac{1}{16}$ -inch Curt balls included with the kit. Utilizing this configuration not only allows for quick changes of ball sizes but also gives a full 9 inches of rise and drop to the final ball height, making it ideal for nearly any trailer out there.

The Intelli-Hitch 2.0 houses a state-of-the-art microprocessor-based brake controller, which constantly monitors the motion of the trailer, providing split-second input for optimal braking. All of the components, like the standard seven-pin pigtails, show no signs of cheapness, which is in line with the overall build quality of the Intelli-

BRAKING

Hitch 2.0. The ball mount is finished with a durable and glossy black powder coating.

What's behind the design and function of this ball mount? Think of it as a sophisticated electronic version of the surge-style brakes commonly found on boat trailers. The Intelli-Hitch 2.0 relies on the black outer portion of the shank to slide fore and aft around the red, pinned center segment, sending position and movement signals to the brake controller.

This smart ball mount can distinguish when the brakes are needed by monitoring tension between the trailer and tow vehicle. As long as there is tension, the trailer tows nicely, but when the ball mount senses movement — or “creep,” as the company explains — it signals the processor to send power to the trailer brakes in proportion to the tow-vehicle braking and applies the brakes when necessary.

For the most part, the installation is plug-and-play, but there is some quick and simple prep work to both the truck's receiver and the Intelli-Hitch. We found it easiest to just build the ball mount while inserted in the receiver, but before placement, the inside of the receiver must be cleaned and lubricated with the provided grease.

Before greasing, you'll need to make sure there are no burrs or rough edges inside. We filed down the burrs, followed by some sanding and cleaning with wet and dry paper towels. Then, a good layer of grease was spread inside the receiver and on the shank itself, which ensured the necessary unrestricted movement.

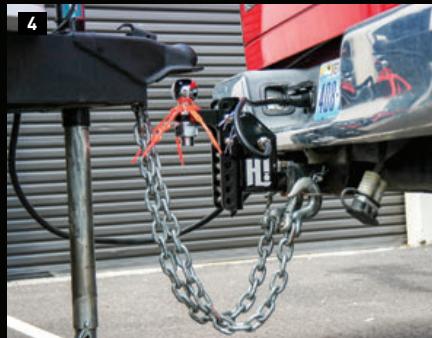
If you need to remove the hitch, you'll need to use some type of protective wrapper for the mounting shank to ensure that the grease doesn't smear where it isn't wanted and to avoid attracting grit and dust into the grease.



(1) The Intelli-Hitch 2.0 is designed for use with 2-inch receivers and supplied from the factory with the necessary hardware to assemble the ball mount. Two adjustable feet are provided for hitch-ball interchangeability. Also included are the necessary pins, 2- and 2 $\frac{3}{8}$ -inch hitch balls, and grease for the receiver and ball mount. **(2)** Pigtails built right into the ball mount are used to connect to the tow vehicle and trailer power cord. Standard seven-way connectors are provided.

Likewise, the receiver bore will need to be plugged to avoid grease contamination.

Once the appropriate-size ball is put in place and the height adjusted, the ball mount is ready to go after plugging in the pigtails that come out of the ball mount. One pigtail connects to the tow-vehicle receptacle, and the other receives the plug from the trailer.



(3) To make the assembly process easier, the main section of the ball mount was inserted in the receiver so the ball channel could be secured with the provided pins. Ball height can be adjusted up or down to 9 inches. **(4)** The powder-coated micro-processor receives signals when the ball mount senses a change in tension between the tow vehicle and trailer, and applies the trailer brakes accordingly. The Intelli-Hitch system is for weight carrying only and is not practical for use by owners needing the benefit of a weight-distributing system.

Overall performance of the Intelli-Hitch paralleled the company's claims of accurate braking pressure applied when needed, whether under regular or, in our case, simulated emergency-braking conditions. Braking was smooth, and we experienced no bucking under slow braking, which indicated that the automatic adjustment process is precise.

One of the downsides is the lack of weight-distributing provisions. While the ball mount simplifies the process for those towing with stout suspensions that can handle the additional weight on the rear axle without negatively affecting handling, it does make this equipment impractical for those who need to balance the weight with the use of spring bars.

Another consideration is the lack of a lever to manually activate the trailer brakes during severe sway. This could spell trouble in extreme conditions. Also, there's no provision for adding a friction-type sway control, which will be a problem for combinations that do not exhibit perfect towing prowess. Those interested in this system might also consider one of the electronic sway-control systems on the market in lieu of a friction device.

When backing, the product relies on a proprietary Tow Direction Sensing feature that processes a movement-direction algorithm to "know" when the trailer is being pulled or pushed. We did experience some trailer-brake locking while backing up into a driveway and found it necessary to unplug the pigtail. However, this was not the case for the majority of backing maneuvers.

The Intelli-Hitch is an alternate way to go if there's no need for a weight-distributing hitch or a sway-control device, taking the guesswork out of setting up a brake control, especially for neophytes. The 2.0 model is designed for 2-inch receivers and retails for \$599; the price jumps to \$630 for use in 2½-inch receivers with the 2.5 model. 🗨

Intelli-Hitch

806-318-8484, www.intelli-hitch.com

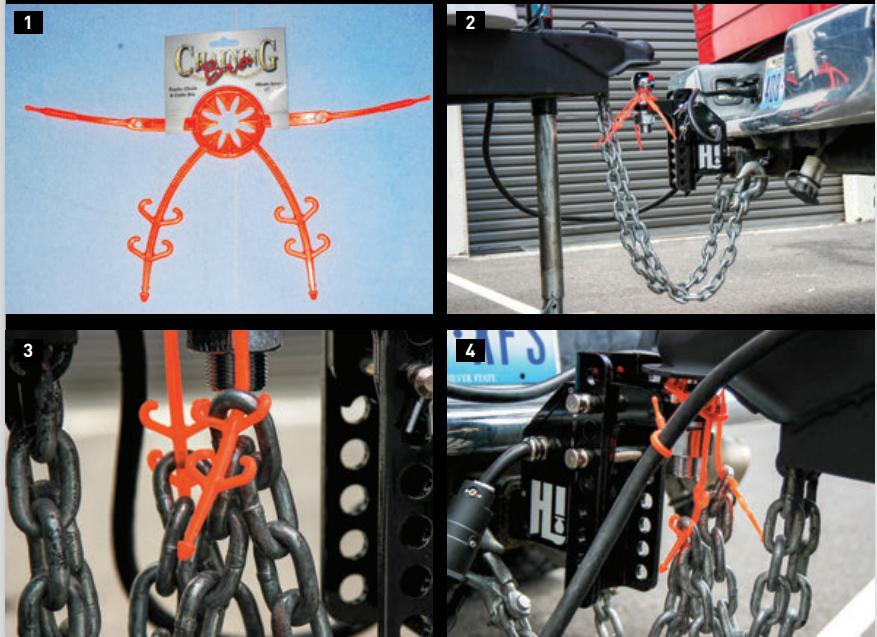
CHAIN CONTROL

Dealing with safety chains and the umbilical cord that connects the tow vehicle to the trailer has always been a love-hate relationship. Without these items, towing could not be safe; keeping them from dragging sometimes takes creative maneuvers. Intelli-Hitch is now marketing the Chaining Bra, a funky-looking device that does exactly what the name implies: it holds things up.

Looking like a stick figure, the \$12 Chaining Bra consists of a head, a couple of arms and a pair of legs. These appendages are used to wrap around the chains and umbilical cord to keep them safe from dragging and avoid resultant damage. The one we used was orange, but a number of other bright colors are available. Rather than making this organizer from metal, the company utilizes recycled pyrolytic urethane, which means nothing to owners except that it's a "green" product that's supposed to last forever and is very flexible.

Use of the Chaining Bra is as easy as slipping the head over the ball to free up the arms to control the electrical cord. Then the legs are hooked into the safety chains and secured at the desired height, while retaining enough movement for turning. Chains are often much longer than are needed, and with this device, there's no need to twist them to take up the slack.

While at first glance the Chaining Bra doesn't look like much, Intelli-Hitch nailed it with a basic and affordable product that really works. — K.L.
www.intelli-hitch.com/chainingbra



(1) The Chaining Bra resembles a stick figure with a head that loops over the hitch ball, arms that wrap around the umbilical cord and legs that lock in to links for controlling the safety chains. **(2)** When looped over the ball, the bright-orange Chaining Bra is easy to see. Installation and removal are simple. **(3)** Each of the legs has two hooks at different levels for securing the chains at the necessary height to prevent dragging. After selecting the link to hang from (ideally, center), the legs are pulled through the link supporting the chain high off the ground. **(4)** Holding on the umbilical cord is done by looping the ribbed lead over the desired wires, then threading it back into its own hole; there's one for each side of the ball mount.



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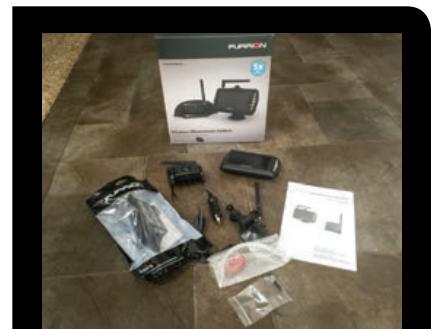


BACKING A TRAILER JUST GOT EASIER WITH FURRION'S WIRELESS RV OBSERVATION SYSTEM WITH INFRARED NIGHT VISION

If you're like me, you've often wished you had the ability to see behind a travel trailer or fifth-wheel while backing up. While motorhome owners will quickly tell you how great it is to have a backup camera, it can be a complicated mechanical project to hardwire a camera from the truck cab to the back of a trailer. Fortunately, radio technology has progressed quite a bit in recent years, and Furrion has come to the market with a wireless camera that really works well for towable RVs.

Furrion's Wireless High-Speed RV

Observation System (FOS48TAPK-BL) consists of an IP65-rated waterproof camera that mounts on the back of any RV with a special bracket. (Some RVs have such a bracket installed at the factory.) The camera has a small antenna and is connected to a 12-volt DC source inside the RV. The camera has an automatic infrared night-vision feature, so using it after dark is almost like looking through it during the day. For the cab, the system comes with a 4.3-inch LCD transmitter/receiver with a suction-cup mount, an antenna and a 12-volt DC cord set for plugging into an accessory outlet.



Packed in the box are the backup camera, its power cable and mounting bracket, the monitor, its power cable and suction-cup stand, connectors, cable ties and instructions.

(1) The first step is to remove the clearance light to determine working space, access and wiring. **(2)** The best place to mount the camera turned out to be to the right of the removed light, to clear the structure to the left and below. Ideally, the camera should be positioned as high and close to the center as possible. In this case, there was a header just below the light that would have made it more difficult to place the camera there without putting it too low and in the middle of the graphic. Once the location was determined, we drilled a 1/4-inch hole to route the wire. **(3)** The base for the camera is mounted and sealed, and the rest of the wire is pulled through and stuffed into the wall. Note that the ends of the wire are pre-stripped and soldered. Don't cut the wire; instead, find somewhere to conceal the excess. We used the included quick-connectors to attach the wires to the positive and negative clearance-light leads.

We had the opportunity to test this system twice, once preinstalled on a 2017 Keystone Montana 40-foot fifth-wheel (see "One-of-a-Kind Fiver" in the August 2016 issue), and the other was an aftermarket install on a 33-foot travel trailer, towed by a Ford F-350 pickup.

The Montana came with the complete system installed at the factory, and it worked flawlessly when towing the trailer and setting up at the campground. Furrion also offers a camera prep kit to RV manufacturers and the aftermarket, which includes the camera mount and power cable with a blank cover plate, so the RV owner can pick up the camera system at a later date and install it in as little as 15 minutes.

For our installation, we started by figuring out where we wanted to place the camera. The system we received came with the camera mount, but some of the kits don't, so make sure you order what you need. Installing on the back of a stick-and-tin trailer is pretty easy for those who are technically competent, but doing so on a laminated fiberglass RV might be a bit more complex.

The camera kit with the bracket comes complete with a rubber gasket, screws and quick-connectors for tapping into the power leads. We connected to the clearance-light circuit for this installation, as it was convenient. We could control the camera from the truck by turning the clearance lights on or off, which eliminates battery drain on the RV if the camera were left on 24/7. To access the clearance-light wiring, we removed one of the fixtures, which allowed us to figure out where structure was in the wall and how the wiring was routed. A fiberglass-laminated wall won't give you this flexibility, which means you'll need to be more creative.

We test-fit the camera and powered it up to get an idea of where to position the mounting bracket to get the best view, which also gave the best option for installation. We mounted the camera just slightly off-center, in close proximity to and just below two clearance lights. Do not mount the camera above the clearance lights, as they will show up and distort



The LCD monitor (right) is the size of a small GPS and includes its own suction-cup mount. The backup camera (far right) fits into the company's proprietary mounting bracket or factory-installed brackets, which makes it transferable between RVs.

LIGHTS, CAMERA, ACTION!



the camera's view. To power the camera, make a set of test leads to go to a 12-volt DC power source or tap into the clearance-light circuit.

After testing the view seen by the camera, we found that it allowed us to see the whole backside of the trailer, as the camera has a wide-angle lens. If we had to pick only one side to view, we would have opted for the left corner to keep an eye on campground hookups while backing into a site.

After selecting the spot to mount the camera, we drilled a 1/4-inch hole for the wire to pass through. We

(4) The kit comes with a blank mounting plate and screws. Keep this plate in a safe place, because the camera is transferable. Furrion's mounting kit comes with the wiring and the mount; some RVs will be prewired for such a system. (5) The camera mounting is completed, with the mounting bracket kept as tight and close to the lights as possible. We carefully replaced the butyl tape behind the light and resealed it. (6) The monitor is mounted on the windshield with the suction cup and plugged into a nearby 12-volt DC power outlet. The antenna is big and forces the monitor screen down a bit in the F-350 truck, but it worked. The color LCD display is clear, and the camera has a strong signal, even though it is located 40 feet behind the monitor. The camera is adjustable up and down to fine-tune the image.

routed the wire up through one of the wiring holes for the clearance lights and made the connections with the included terminals. We cleaned the old sealant off the light and the siding, and resealed with butyl tape. We attached

the mount to the wall, sealed the wire hole with silicone and secured the camera. Remember to test the system before reinstalling the clearance light.

Once the light and the camera were attached to the wall, we sealed the



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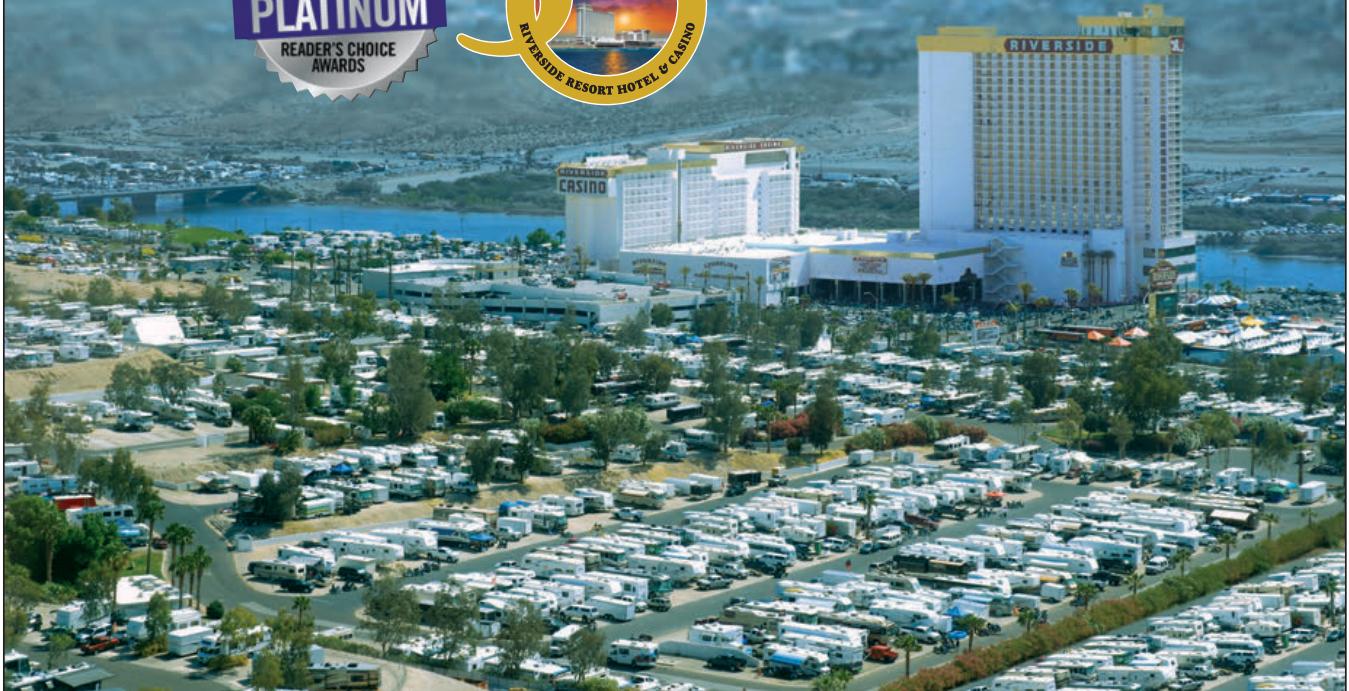
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LIGHTS, CAMERA, ACTION!

necessary areas with silicone sealant. The camera is adjustable up and down, so you can have the optimal view of the back of the RV as well as what's behind it.

The in-cab monitor is simple to install and operate. It comes with a removable 12-volt DC accessory cord set and a windshield mount that uses a suction cup. The color display includes dynamic guidelines for backing, a nice feature. The display has five buttons, but other than power, you'll almost never need the others, which include an off and off button that controls the backup lines, a menu button, and up and down arrows for scrolling through the menu options. Pairing the camera and the monitor is a simple procedure, and ours was already paired from the factory.

We did some extensive driving and testing with the unit, and ran into an issue only once, and that was at Massachusetts' Eastern States Exposition fairgrounds where we got an intermittent-signal error on the display. As it turned out, high-voltage overhead power lines at our location were causing interference. Once we moved away from that area, all worked well again. Given how many different types of wireless communications, devices and frequencies we have in our lives, it's normal to encounter some interference now and then.

One thing we did find was problematic on the monitor was the location and size of the antenna, which hit the windshield in the F-350, and the bracket wasn't long enough to make the needed adjustments. It only pushed the display down slightly, but it still worked just fine. That wouldn't be an issue when mounting the monitor on a steeper windshield or on a suction-cup plate attached to the dash.

Overall, the system was easy to install, operated extremely well, especially in low-light conditions, and was a great assistance when backing into either a campsite or the driveway. This is a good example of technology making the RV experience safer and more enjoyable. 🚐

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Fiberglass exteriors on RVs have a number of advantages that go beyond the shiny look that is visually appealing and exudes pride of ownership. Fiberglass exteriors are also durable and somewhat resilient to the elements. There's little doubt that structurally, fiberglass will last a long time, but how nice it looks over time is dependent on preventive maintenance.

Fading due to constant exposure to the sun is common, and after a while the surface takes on a chalky appearance that can make any RV look older than its actual years. Once the surface is badly oxidized, bringing back the shine to the gel coat can take several hours of labor-intensive buffing by someone who knows how to work with fiberglass, if it's not already too late. Poli Glow Products offers a cheaper and easier solution that can easily be done at home or at an RV park, even on a sunny day.

Poli Glow is a two- or three-step (depending on the surface condition) liquid-chemical process that revives the gel coat. Included in the Poli Glow Kit are a bottle of Poli Prep concentrated cleaner that mixes with water, a scrub pad to remove old wax and light stains after the surface is cleaned, an applicator mitt and a bottle of Poli Glow liquid for the final sealing, which leaves a shiny surface. For tougher conditions, Poli Ox powdered cleanser (not included in the kit) removes heavier oxidation and stains.

There's not a lot of information that comes with the kit, but after using it, we realized that the process was very straightforward. After making up the three-to-one mixture of Poli Prep and water in a bucket or spray bottle, the prepping solution is applied to the surface. We preferred to use the spray bottle, since it was easier, and any leftover solution can be stored as a premixed cleaner for the next treatment.

For our test we found Poli Prep to work effectively on most of the trailer. For the few areas where the stains could not be removed with Poli Prep, an application of Poli Ox did the trick. It's important to ensure that the surface maintains color uniformity while scrubbing away any oxidation or staining.

After the pre-



Scrubbing the RV's exterior fiberglass and striping with Poli Prep and applying five coats of Poli Glow sealer removed the stains (right of green tape) and brought back the shine (left of green tape). The Poli Glow process is safe for decals and graphic elements.

scribed one-hour dry time passed, we treated the surface with Poli Glow by spreading the liquid with the water-dampened mitt. Choosing either a vertical or a horizontal pattern, the Poli Glow is spread evenly and allowed to dry for two minutes before applying subsequent coats. The company recommends applying four to six coats to get to the desired look. We found that it took five coats to reach a point where the surface was restored to our satisfaction.

The Poli Glow treatment is designed to last up to a year before reapplying, but that, of course, depends on conditions. There is enough in the \$69.95 kit to treat an RV up to 32 feet, and the sealer will not come off during normal washing. Poli Ox powder cleanser sells separately for \$12.95.

The transformation is amazing, and the process was easier than expected, which should encourage owners to take care of their rigs and protect their investment. While the kit may not be inexpensive, it does circumvent professional waxing, which can be much more costly. 🚚

Poli Glow Products

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15218530

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CENTECH 7 FUNCTION DIGITAL MULTIMETER
LOT 60699 shown 8802c/63096

\$16.45 VALUE

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15240547

WOW SUPER COUPON

16 OZ. HAMMERS WITH FIBERGLASS HANDLE
PITTSBURGH

CLAW RIP
LOT 69006 LOT 47873 shown
60715/60714 69005/61262

Customer Rating: ★★★★★

\$3.99
comp at \$17.99

15186800

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WOW SUPER COUPON

12,000 LB. ELECTRIC WINCH WITH REMOTE CONTROL AND AUTOMATIC BRAKE

Customer Rating: ★★★★★

LOT 61256
61889/68142
60813 shown

\$299.99
comp at \$752.99

15204936

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WOW SUPER COUPON

4-1/2" ANGLE GRINDER
drillmaster

Customer Rating: ★★★★★

LOT 95578
69645/60825 shown

\$11.99
comp at \$20.26

15246243

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WOW SUPER COUPON

CENTRAL PNEUMATIC 3 GALLON, 100 PSI OILLESS PANCAKE AIR COMPRESSOR

Customer Rating: ★★★★★

LOT 95275 shown
60637/61615

\$49.99
comp at \$98.62

15219623

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Customer Rating: ★★★★★

LOT 69397
63308/61427
95272 shown

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15242921

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WOW SUPER COUPON

BADLAND 1200 LB. ELECTRIC WINCH

Customer Rating: ★★★★★

LOT 61256
61889/68142
60813 shown

\$453
comp at \$752.99

15204936

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WOW SUPER COUPON

10 FT. x 20 FT. PORTABLE CAR CANOPY

Customer Rating: ★★★★★

LOT 60728/69034
63054/62858 shown

\$99.99
comp at \$205.99

15208040

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WOW SUPER COUPON

1.5 HP ELECTRIC POLE SAW PORTLAND

Customer Rating: ★★★★★

LOT 68862/63190
62896 shown

\$69.99
comp at \$99

15244087

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WOW SUPER COUPON

1-1/4 GALLON HOME AND GARDEN SPRAYER

Customer Rating: ★★★★★

LOT 61280/63124
63145/95692 shown

\$8.99
comp at \$14.97

15179216

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WOW SUPER COUPON

HARDY POWDER-FREE NITRILE GLOVES PACK OF 100

Customer Rating: ★★★★★

SIZE	LOT
MED	68496/61363
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X-LG	68498/61359

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comp at \$15.99

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WOW SUPER COUPON

STEP STOOL/WORKING PLATFORM

Customer Rating: ★★★★★

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66911 shown

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WOW SUPER COUPON

WIRELESS SECURITY ALERT SYSTEM

Customer Rating: ★★★★★

LOT 93068 shown
69590/61910/62447

\$11.99
comp at \$29.99

15261360

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WOW SUPER COUPON

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Customer Rating: ★★★★★

LOT 63079/63080/69729/69676 shown
LOT 63089/63090/69675/69728 CALIFORNIA ONLY

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15208643

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WOW SUPER COUPON

PITTSBURGH RAPID PUMP® 3 TON HEAVY DUTY STEEL FLOOR JACK

Customer Rating: ★★★★★

LOT 69227/62116/62584
68048 shown

\$79.99
comp at \$141.88

15249346

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Double-Duty Folgers Coffee

I've been working on recoating my EPDM rubber roof and needed a light-weight container to carry up the ladder to do the trim work around the vents, A/C and antenna. I also had some painting projects that I needed to tackle. I looked around for a plastic container with hand grips and a place to hold the paintbrush and came up with this empty Folgers coffee container. Later, I found out that a 3-inch brush fits perfectly between the grips.

Daniel Lessard, Sarasota, Florida



Reach for the Top

We recently purchased a new travel trailer that has a higher ceiling. We had trouble reaching the knobs on the bathroom's ceiling fan and the RV's other vents, so I made this little gadget to turn the knobs. I took a knob off the fan, laid it on a scrap of 3/4-inch lumber and drew around it with a pencil. I drilled two 1/4-inch holes at the low points of the knob, then cut the wood in a hexagon shape and glued 1/4-inch dowels into the holes to make the pins approximately 1 1/2-inches long. This setup is attached to a short piece of broom handle by a single screw. Now we can open or close the vents without getting a stepstool.

Wally Kolkmeier, St. Charles, Missouri



Blasted Pests

Heat and insects can make sitting under our RV's awning at night uncomfortable. To make it more enjoyable, we use an overhead fan mounted to the RV.

We purchased an inexpensive 16-inch, three-speed oscillating floor fan. Using a metal flag-pole bracket, we attached the fan to the range's vent flange (editor's note: this won't work if the range is on the street side) using one of the existing screws in the flange and drilling another beside it. To protect the RV's finish, we put a rubber bumper on the third (bottom) mounting hole on the bracket. Using a copper-tubing cutter, we cut the fan's 1-inch tube to the desired length. Then we simply slid the shortened tube with the attached fan into the flag-pole bracket, securing it with the provided thumbscrew.

When it's time to move on, simply loosen the thumbscrew and unplug the fan. Make sure that when the fan is in the middle of its oscillating cycle it is pointing straight down.

We've gotten many compliments on this setup.

Larry and Lawana Norem, Fulton, Illinois 🚐

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



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All Amped Up

An essential safety component of any RV, the circuit breaker monitors electrical power and switches it off when it senses a problem. Trac Outdoor Products has taken the old thermal devices to a new level of performance with its Digital Circuit Breaker (model T10171), which displays real-time voltage and amp draw of 12-volt DC systems. The compact, waterproof unit has brightly lit LED displays for easy reading of volts and current, as well as a broken-circuit indicator light and dedicated buttons for Amps (30, 40, 50 or 60), Mode (manual or automatic) and Reset. Adjustable settings give users control over the circuit break-point.

MSRP: \$69.95

615-462-6224, www.trac-outdoor.com

Circle 135 on Reader Service Card



Ring o' Rubber

LP-gas cylinders are a bit of a pain to transport for filling. Not only do the sharp foot-ring edges have a tendency to scratch the paint in the bed of a truck or the interior of an SUV, the cylinders have a propensity to rust around the bottom when mounted to the trailer A-frame or in a fifth-wheel compartment. Nash Innovations' Tank Tire solves these concerns with a ring of polymer rubber that fits around the base of most LP-gas cylinders, and provides an element of stability when transporting them. The protective ring is built to be long-lasting and to withstand harsh weather, according to the company.

MSRP: \$16.99

239-682-4811, www.tanktire.com

Circle 136 on Reader Service Card



Rayzar-Sharp Reception

A strong signal is a must for digital TV reception, plus you want to keep your RV's roofline as low as possible. Winegard's Rayzar z1 amplified HD antenna fits that criteria perfectly. Compact and powerful, the z1 maximizes UHF reception and high-band VHF to provide access to the major broadcast networks. Optimized for North American digital TV frequencies, the antenna is said to eliminate interference from non-TV frequencies like radio. With no monthly programming fees, owners can enjoy broadcast news, weather and sports in their RV from anywhere in the United States. The easy-to-install antenna is available in white or black.

MSRP: \$109.99

800-288-8094, www.winegard.com/rayzarz1

Circle 137 on Reader Service Card

No Garage? No Problem

For those of you who don't own an RV equipped with a garage but still want to transport motorized toys like ATVs, motorcycles or even a golf cart, Idaho Tote offers a solution. An all-steel flatbed carrier that attaches to the back of the RV, the Idaho Tote bolts to a special bracket that is welded on the RV's frame. A compressed-air system controls the patented axle: one airbag changes the axle position in reverse, and the other when driving forward. Optional add-ons include an electric-brake package, shock absorbers, a variety of loading ramps and a 15-inch tire upgrade from the standard 14-inch ST radials. Available in custom colors, the 8.5-foot-wide carrier can be ordered in 1-foot increments from 6 to 10 feet and has a gross vehicle weight rating of 3,000 pounds. While the wheels and tires



carry most of the weight, it's important to account for the additional weight on the rear of the trailer. You'll also want to check DMV regulations regarding RV extensions, which vary from state to state.

MSRP: From \$6,830. 208-276-3203, www.idahotote.com

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WHEEL-BEARING FAILURE

Q Last summer on a trip out West, one of my trailer-axle hubs burned out. The hubs had been “inspected and serviced” two months prior, but that’s another story. I’m considering purchasing a tire-pressure monitoring system (TPMS) for the trailer. Would such a system give any forewarning of an overheating axle hub? I’m thinking not, but it might minimize damage if the tire blew.

Frank Quinn, Commerce, Michigan

A As you shop for a TPMS, you’ll find some of them also monitor temperature. If the sensors are the type that screw onto the tire-valve stem, they wouldn’t be much help with overheated bearings. Some sensors fasten inside the wheel using something like a large hose clamp that attaches to the wheel, but even those are fairly far away from the bearings. The overheating would need to travel all the way from the hub outward via the wheel to the rim area before it’s detected by the TPMS. That’s not a very effective way to watch for bearing overheating.



Better yet, buy an inexpensive handheld infrared thermometer that you aim at the surface to be checked, and use it to do a fast once-over of the hubs when you stop for fuel or whatever reason. Bearings usually don’t go bad instantly; there should be a period when they start warming up gradually as you drive. If one of the hubs is extra warm, it’s a good time to make a further inspection before something goes wrong.

I’d also take up the matter with the last place that “inspected and serviced” the hubs. — **Jeff Johnston**

FLOATY FRONT END

Q We recently purchased a 2017 Forest River Salem RKSS trailer that weighs 6,300 pounds. We have a 2010 Chevy Tahoe with a 3.42 axle that is rated to pull 8,200 pounds. When we tow the trailer, the front end of the Tahoe seems to be light. Is this vehicle sufficient to pull this trailer?

Kathy Vanstaveren, Grandville, Michigan

A I believe your Tahoe is sized about right, but a light-feeling front end is almost always a sign that the weight-distributing (WD) hitch (if you are using one) is not properly adjusted. The extra weight on the Tahoe’s rear axle is, by the leverage effect, removing some weight from the front axle, and that makes it feel light. In turn, this makes for some erratic, insecure steering and braking.

Tighten the tension on the spring

bars, either by dropping another couple of chain links or whatever means the WD hitch uses to accomplish this. You may be surprised at how tight they need to be for proper operation, and that’s what they’re designed to do. Do a test drive with the tighter spring bars, then stop and adjust as necessary, either by adding or removing tension as appropriate. Once dialed-in, steering and road feel should be much improved. — **J.J.**

MORE HITCH-WEIGHT QUESTIONS

Q I am confused by your answer to “Hitch-Weight Questions” in the July issue. You state that “A weight-distributing hitch doesn’t remove any hitch weight; it just distributes that weight more evenly between the tow vehicle’s front and rear axles.”

If, without the WD hitch, the tongue weight on the tow-vehicle hitch causes the rear springs to sag several inches, but with the WD hitch, several pounds are transferred to both the tow vehicle’s front axle and the trailer axle, then the spring bars must be exerting an upward force on the hitch. Therefore, the weight that the hitch sees is reduced, a portion of the tongue weight being directed up into the tow-vehicle frame and up into the trailer frame, creating a more level towing condition.

Am I missing something?

Ronald Prusinski, Plymouth, Indiana

Q In the July issue, you state that a weight-distributing hitch distributes weight only between the rear and front axles of the tow vehicle. This contradicts my Airstream owner’s manual, which states that a properly installed WD hitch evenly distributes the tongue weight in one-third increments to the vehicle’s front axle, the vehicle’s rear axle and the trailer’s axle(s). My go-to RV shop mechanic also is of the 1/3-front-axle(s), 1/3-rear-axle, 1/3-trailer-axle understanding.

THE TECH TEAM



CHRIS DOUGHERTY: Technical editor for *Trailer Life* and *MotorHome*, Chris is an RVDA/RVIA certified technician, former service manager and lifelong RV’er.



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.

For a trailer with a hitch weight of 1,200 pounds, like my 28-foot Airstream, this discrepancy can have significant implications regarding selection of a tow vehicle — on maximum payload capacity, for example.

Rick Graff, San Diego, California

A The function of a WD hitch has always been a bit mysterious to a wide range of RV users. Trying to explain the whole distribution-of-weight matter is a bit tricky.

Rick, according to your Airstream owner's manual, with the hitch weight spread out to each of three places in 1/3 increments, the hitch would weigh nothing at all. Airstream uses some unique engineering in its trailers, but it's not clever enough to remove all hitch weight. In some cases, years ago, trailer and truck manufacturers have used fuzzy hitch-weight math to rationalize a buyer choosing a trailer with a hitch that's too heavy for the tow vehicle's rating, a practice that has mostly halted these days.

A WD hitch distributes hitch weight by way of the spring tension exerted by the spring bars. The spring bars are free to pivot side to side at the hitch head, but they're locked in up and down. When the free end of the bar is tensioned by its mounting chain or some other mechanism — that's the "upward force on the hitch" you described, Ron — it uses the hitch ball as the fulcrum to transfer some of that weight effect away from the hitch ball. Without the WD hitch, all of the trailer hitch weight is on the ball and the tow vehicle's rear axle, and the axle is the fulcrum that exerts a leverage that removes weight from the front axle.

With the WD hitch, some of the weight is distributed to the tow vehicle's front axle, and because the spring bars are applying downward tension on the trailer-frame hangers, which are pulling up on the spring bars, some weight is shifted back to the trailer axle(s). The weight does not disappear; it's just spread out from the hitch ball and divided between the tow vehicle's axles and, to a lesser extent, the trailer axle(s).

In short, be sure to pay attention to your tow vehicle's hitch ratings, because that trailer hitch weight isn't going away, even with a WD hitch. — J.J.

TRAILER-TIRE BLOWOUTS

Q I am a relatively new travel trailer owner, having purchased our Forest River Flagstaff 26RLWS a little more than three years ago. It has had

two blowouts so far on the rear tires, one on each side. The tires in question are Karrier Loadstar ST205/75R14 radials. In each case, the tires literally were completely destroyed; it looked like a small explosive charge was placed inside.

I've replaced these two tires with Goodyear Marathon ST tires after reading about them in *Trailer Life*. Would it have been possible to replace them

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with equivalent passenger tires? I don't recall having this type of blowout in my 62 years on passenger and truck tires!

Ernest Allen, Prairieville, Louisiana

A Matters have changed a great deal in the trailer-tire manufacturing and marketing arena, Ernest. Blowouts as you've described are not that uncommon these days, and many of those are due to the use of extremely cheap, low-quality tires, although some failures are due to improper application, overloading and underinflation.

Given the occasion to change your Flagstaff's tires, you would never want to switch to a passenger-type tire when you already have ST (Special Trailer) or LT (Light Truck) tires. Passenger tires are generally rated at lower weight or payload capacities than LT or ST tires. You always want to trade up, if you aren't using the same size and brand of tires that came on your trailer, and that helps avoid overloaded tires.

You should always choose new

tires that are rated to carry the same payload capacity as the old tires, or they should have somewhat higher ratings. Keep in mind that the wheels must be rated for any new tires with higher ratings. Search various trailer-owner forums online, and you'll find a lot of information about which brands of trailer tires work, and which don't.

— J.J.

WATER PUMP QUILTS

Q I have a Shurflo water pump with a pump strainer attached. It will pump about 2 gallons and then quit pumping. It still runs — it just stops pumping. I can turn the pump off and back on, and it will pump about ¼ to ½ gallon and quit again. I have removed the strainer to see if it's clean, and it is completely clean. It seems that when the pump gets warm, it stops pumping, but it does not feel warm to the touch. Is there something else I can do?

Nat Wade, Miller Grove, Texas

Shortly after RV Clinic received Nat's first letter, he sent this follow-up:

After running a cleaning solution through the water pump with no success, I resorted to removing the pump. Plumbing is *not* a friend of mine. I took an air hose and blew the lines out, and all seemed clear. I took the front of the pump off and cleaned the rubber seals, and put them all back in place. Now the pump works great.

I think the rubber seals got a little stiff from not being used very often. That, and cleaning the head out. Either way, the trouble was with the pump itself. By the way, I did get the pump and lines reconnected, and not a single leak.

N.W.

I'm glad to hear you got this resolved, Nat, and put everything back together successfully. This is a frequent issue for RVers, along with no priming and losing prime from the pump. If a pump sits for a long time, this can happen, as a completely dried-out pump will have a tough time priming. I have also seen the screws on the pump face

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come loose or where a small piece of the rubber doesn't sit in a groove just right, causing an air leak. Lastly, I've seen where there was no strainer and the pump picked up a shard of plastic left over from construction of the tank, which cut the pump diaphragm. In all of the cases, it becomes necessary to disassemble the pump to check the diaphragm. — **Chris Dougherty**

FRIDGE-SEAL SAG

Q I have a Norcold (model number N1095R) refrigerator that came with a fifth-wheel I purchased in 2014. While preparing it for storage in 2015, I decided to leave both the refrigerator and freezer doors open for ventilation, which is something I used to do with my previous RV with a Norcold refrigerator. Upon returning after a few weeks, I noticed the bottom portion of the freezer-door seal was sagging.

It appears the seal is not secured to the door along the bottom, so I needed a new seal. However, to get a new seal, I was required to buy a replacement door, which I did.

My question is, could I have used a sealant to secure the sagging seal? If so, what type of sealant would you recommend? With the new fridge door installed, I now keep both doors closed when the RV is in storage.

Robert Dunn, Union, Washington

A When the refrigerator door is assembled, the seal is set in the foam and adhered to it between the foam and the inner plastic lining, so there is no way to properly repair this. It must be replaced.

On the subject of keeping the doors closed, I don't recommend that until the inside of the refrigerator is absolutely clean and dry. With no airflow, mold and mildew often set in, which is a real mess. The doors have two small clips in the latches, which allow just enough airflow to prevent this.

The door-seal failure is an unfortunate coincidence and has nothing to do with leaving the doors open to air out the refrigerator. — **C.D.** (continued on page 71)



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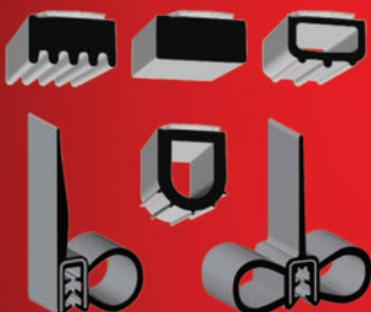
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ADVERTISERS' INDEX

RS#	ADVERTISER	PAGE#
101	Augusta RV LLC	15
102	B&W Trailer Hitches	75
130	California RV Show/RVIA	51
	Camping World	45-47
104	Carefree of Colorado	10
	Classifieds	70-71
105	Comfort Ride Hitch LLC	65
132	DISH Network	39
106	Geico	23
	Good Sam Extended Service Plan	57
	Good Sam RV Loans	72
	Good Sam Roadside Assistance	61
	Good Sam Travel Assist.	63
	Good Sam Visa	34
	Harbor Freight Tools	59
108	Hensley Manufacturing Inc.	56
109	Highland Ridge RV, Inc.	7
117	IBall Hitch Cam	66
110	Instagone	13
111	Jayco	9
112	Lippert Components	12
114	MOR/Ryde	25
	Members Life Insurance	14
113	Michigan Truck Spring	66
115	Northwood Mfg.	24
116	Oliver Travel Trailers	13
123	OpusTravel Trailers	67
133	Pace Edwards	54
118	Pala Casino Spa & Resort	17
119	Park It 360	14
120	Progress Manufacturing, Inc.	67
121	Progressive Insurance	5
122	Pull-Rite	76
	RAM	2-3
124	RV Armor, Inc	44
	RV Marketplace	68-69
125	RV Roofing Solutions	37
126	RVRoof.com	42
131	Riverside Resort & Casino	55
127	SpaceCraft Mfg.	65

ADVERTISERS' INDEX

RS#	ADVERTISER	PAGE#
103	Sun Wave	56
128	Transfer Flow Inc.	33
129	Travel Lite Truck Campers	43

EDITORIAL PRODUCT INDEX

RS#	ADVERTISER	PAGE#
138	Idaho Tote	62
136	Nash Tank Tire	62
134	Space Craft	26
135	Trac Outdoor Products	62
137	Winegard Rayzar	62

FREE TRAVEL INFORMATION

RS#	ADVERTISER	PAGE#
140	Alaska and The Yukon	73
141	Alaska Marine Highway System	73
143	Arkansas State Parks	73
145	DeGray Resort State Park, Arkansas	73
146	Florida Keys	73
147	Florida State Parks	73
154	Glacier National Park, Montana	73
144	Hot Springs National Park, Arkansas	73
150	Idaho RV Campgrounds	73
149	Idaho Travel Council	73
148	Lake Harris RV Resort, Florida	73
152	Lake Of The Ozarks, Missouri	73
142	North To Alaska	73
155	Ohio State Parks	73
151	Visit Missouri	73
153	Visit Montana	73
157	Wyoming Tourism	73
158	Yellowhead Highway, Canada	73
156	Yellowstone Country, Wyoming	73

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(continued from page 67)

TIRE LESSON LEARNED

We own a 16-foot Scamp lightweight trailer and love it. While coming back from Kentucky Lake on Route 57, we experienced our first blowout on the trailer. The tread was peeling off the tire! AAA to the rescue, and we were back on our way.

I took the trailer to my tire store the following morning, and much to my surprise, the other tire tread was peeling away, too! We discovered the DOT date was almost six years old. Scamp advises that the tires have a five-year life, and regardless of tread depth, they should be replaced.

Lesson learned.

Doug Allen, St. Charles, Missouri

This is a very important point that every RVer should remember. It's generally accepted in the RV industry that trailer tires time out in seven years, although that time period could be shorter or longer, depending on how and where the tires are stored and maintained. It's best to have the tires inspected annually at five years of age and older, and for the owner to make careful regular inspections by looking for tread wear, cracking, separation and bubbles. — **C.D.**

OLIVER VERSUS R-POD

Q I own a 2005 Nissan Frontier LE King Cab 2WD truck with a V-6 engine that I purchased new 11 years ago. I have seen different reports on what it can safely tow.

I have wanted to get a travel trailer for years but have been totally intimidated for a few reasons. First, I have zero experience with RVing. I am the complete opposite of a handyman. I have been trying to decide between an Oliver fiberglass trailer and a much less expensive compact trailer such as the Forest River R-pod. The downside is moving it, of course. I cannot afford a different truck.

Do you think my Frontier could be a good match with the Oliver trailer? I want to live in it full time for a while and am ready to buy now. I just turned 50 and want to get out of my cocoon

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and live. The trailer would require a big portion of my life savings, so, of course, that is also a part of this decision.

Jeffrey Kashner, Sarasota, Florida

A Your 2005 Nissan Frontier LE can tow a maximum of 6,000 pounds with a gross combination weight rating (GCWR) of 11,500 pounds. That puts a limit on the amount of cargo you can carry in the truck, as well as the weight of the trailer you can tow.

Sizing a trailer to a tow vehicle also requires understanding the trailer's gross vehicle weight rating (GVWR). The 18-foot Oliver has a GVWR of 5,000 pounds and a dry weight of 3,640 pounds, leaving a cargo carrying capacity (CCC) of around 1,360 pounds, so it looks as though this trailer will work.

The 23-foot 6-inch Oliver Legacy II model has a dry weight of 4,600 pounds, but with a 7,000-pound GVWR, it is too heavy for your truck. However, the numbers suggest that there's more than a ton (2,400 pounds) of CCC, which for a trailer of that size is a lot, especially with almost no exterior storage. Even if the water tank were completely full, the weight would be at 5,300 pounds, plus other cargo, so, with care, you probably could manage this trailer within the published limits of the truck.

The R-pod's GVWR is right around 3,800 to 3,900 pounds, depending on the model, with an average hitch weight of 280 pounds or so, which makes this lightweight trailer better suited for your truck and will leave some room for cargo.

Make sure to compare the weights of trailers you're thinking of buying with the truck's GCWR. Ideally, you should pay a visit to a local scale with the truck and trailer loaded for a typical trip.— **C.D.**

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Legend of Butch Cassidy

Questions still surround the life and demise of the Old West's infamous outlaw



We of the wandering class invariably cross the paths, or happen into the haunts, of the famous and the infamous who have traveled before us. My favorite is Butch Cassidy, one of many outlaws that American storytellers and moviemakers have made into folk heroes. Paul Newman's portrayal of the Old West gang leader

in the 1969 movie *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid* elevated him to celebrity status.

Butch Cassidy lore is found all over southern Utah, especially around Beaver where he grew up, and in northern Wyoming, where his gang, the Wild Bunch, hung out in the 1890s. In Winnemucca, Nevada, town boosters were eager to show me a bank that they claim he robbed.

Other than sensational newspaper copy written of his escapades at the time, there wasn't much solid reporting on Butch until his sister, Lula Parker Betenson, published a book in 1975. What you and I have picked up over the years has a lot to do with what makes a good story.

For example, in the small community of Leeds in southern Utah, I met Charlie Scott, who runs a dinner house called Catfish Charlie's. I was told that he was a Butch Cassidy buff, so I went to his restaurant one afternoon before it opened.

Charlie was more than willing to put aside his prep work for dinner. We sat, and I listened. His Oklahoma accent added a dash of authenticity to these stories of the Old West.

"Butch Cassidy died right where you're settin'," he began.

I remember squirming in my chair. "No way!"

Charlie rapped the table with his cigarette lighter, as if to pinpoint the spot. "Well...a log-cabin inn was here then."

"I saw on PBS one time, anthropologists were looking for his bones in Bolivia," I said.

"But they didn't find him, did they? Because he's not buried there. He's buried here."

"Around Beaver?" I asked.

"Probably. His family knows. Whoever is left. But they've never told anybody."

He had a smirk like he knew more than he was going to tell me. Then again, maybe the smirk is always there, like the straw hat that he never takes off.

"Two houses down," Charlie continued, "that's where



(Top) The famous derby-hat portrait of Butch Cassidy (shown on the far right) and his gang, the Wild Bunch. (Above) With alpine forests and fishing lakes, the Tushar Mountains east of Beaver, Utah — the town where Cassidy grew up — come alive with color in the fall.

the Sundance Kid was livin' at the time. His real name was Harry Longbaugh, but he didn't use that here." Charlie was pointing over his shoulder with an unlit cigarette he had been holding. "He used the name Hiram BeBee. People tell that he would pull a six-gun on kids if they got on his lawn."

"When was that?"

"Late '30s."

Next, on to Winnemucca, where in 1900 — September 19, to be exact — Butch and his gang casually rode into town and robbed George Nixon's bank, the First National. As the true believers tell it, in a hail of ferocious gunfire, Butch and his gang made a clean getaway. The gunfire, others say, was actually George Nixon, standing out in front of the bank shooting into the air.

Here the story takes a sassy twist. Butch eventually sent Nixon a photograph of himself and the gang in fancy new suits, stiff collars and derby hats. With it was a thank-you note expressing his appreciation for the bank's money and word that they were enjoying it.

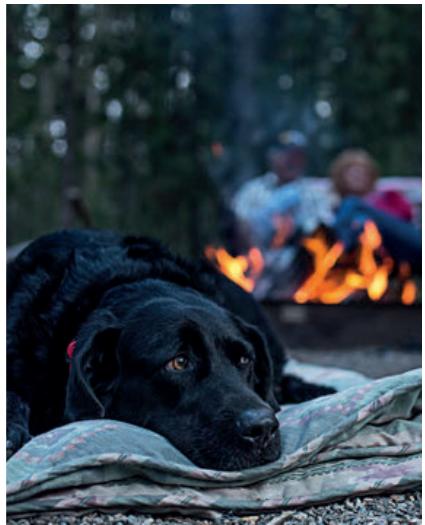
The famous picture — now a postcard sold in souvenir shops — was sent to Nixon all right, but by the Pinkerton folks, others say. The detective agency was investigating the robbery and soliciting Nixon's help in identifying the robbers. The town of Winnemucca used to celebrate Butch Cassidy Day every September until residents started asking why. Nobody had a good answer, so they quit doing it.

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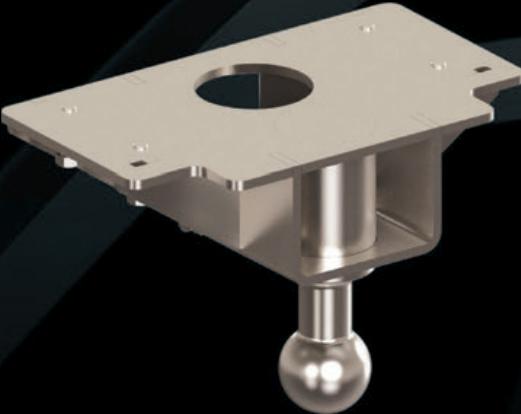


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