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**On the cover:** A dozen fifth-wheels to keep full-timers content, from a nimble 34-foot condo on wheels to an opulent 44-foot rolling estate.

# Crisp Days, Fall Color and Camping

Autumn is a great time for RV adventures in your cozy cabin on wheels



Anytime you can head out in your RV is a good time, but for my wife, Karen, and me, fall is our favorite. Autumn in the Northeast is spectacular. Throughout New York and New England, fall colors are a feast for the eyes, harvest festivals and fairs abound, apple orchards and pumpkin farms tempt with fun and treats, and the excitement of Halloween is in the air for kids of all ages.

RVing in autumn is spectacular, too. We love journeying up into the picture-postcard New England towns, seeing the seasonal foliage and taking in everything around us. The RV is a perfect, cozy cabin, and nothing feels quite as good as a roaring campfire on a crisp fall night. We even take along autumn and Halloween decorations to add a festive touch.

Among our favorite fall destinations are the quaint New Hampshire town of Keene, the charming Woodford and Bennington areas of Vermont, and the Adirondacks and Hudson Valley of New York. The village of Sleepy Hollow in New York's Westchester County, made famous by short-story writer Washington Irving, welcomes visitors from near and far for its October activities, and there are some terrific RV parks in the region.

Speaking of RV camping, this issue is packed with new RVs. In our cover story, full-time RVer Emily Fagan rounds up a dozen fifth-wheel trailers for extended living (page 20), just as many snowbirds are making plans to fly the coop and head south for the winter. Donya Carlson reports on the new line of Catalina Trail Blazer toy haulers from Coachmen in Around the Bend (page 10). And Bruce Smith travels to Oregon's Umpqua River to test the 2018 Forest River R-pod RP-180 (page 16). This fun little trailer has all the necessities and can be towed by a midsize SUV or pickup. Check out more easy-towing ultralights at [www.trailerlife.com/tinytrailers](http://www.trailerlife.com/tinytrailers).

We also have plenty of do-it-yourself projects this month. Bob Livingston swaps out a fifth-wheel's ducted air conditioner for the new Blizzard NXT from Dometic (page 42). Ed Bolduc replaces a trailer's porch light with the King RV Media Bluetooth speaker with LED effect lighting (page 52). I tackle a couple of sizable projects, updating an entertainment center (page 35) and installing an automatic leveling system (page 48). Lippert Components has introduced an aftermarket leveling system — not just a stabilizing system — that can be added to almost any travel trailer, and Furrion offers components for a complete audiovisual upgrade.

Don't forget our popular 10-Minute Tech section (page 54). As usual, readers suggest some quick and simple ways to make life on the road easier. If you have a tried-and-true RV tip, share it with us at [10minutetech@trailerlife.com](mailto:10minutetech@trailerlife.com).

Take advantage of the season to enjoy every bit of RVing time and fall color you can. See you down the road! 🚐

— Chris Dougherty, Technical Editor

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34841	20'1"-22'	34846	31'7"-34'
34842	22'1"-24'	34847	34'1"-37'

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52242	22'1"-24'	52247	34'1"-37'

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64840	18'1"-20'	64845	28'7"-31'6"
64841	20'1"-22'	64846	31'7"-34'
64842	22'1"-24'		

#### 5TH WHEEL

Part #:	Length:	Part #:	Length:
64852	23'1"-25'6"	64855	31'1"-34'
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36049	36'1" - 40'



⚠ Measure the length of your roof, NOT the length of your trailer ⚠





## Wheels Are Turning

I read the "Tire Blowouts and Axle Alignment" letter from Bette Gurule in August's RV Clinic. We had a similar situation with our 2015 Keystone Montana 3625RE. That's a 38-foot fifth-wheel weighing about 13,500 pounds dry. Both tires on the passenger's side blew out at about 4,500 miles, tearing out the fender skirt and causing around \$4,500 in damage to the trailer.

I had been researching trailer tires for a while because a friend had a blowout a few years ago and I was concerned that it would happen to us. I knew that the max speed was 65 MPH, and I was careful not to exceed that. When I store the trailer, I cover the whole thing and have tire covers to boot. I also park it on wooden planks.

Following the blowouts, I resumed researching in earnest with a focus on ensuring this would never happen to me again. I came across Ken Freund's "RV Tires 101" in the November 2015 *Trailer Life*. The article was very good and gave me the insight I needed to select a new set of tires. It's so good I would recommend that you run it annually for new RV owners.

As for my RV, I finally settled on Goodyear Unisteel G614 RST radials. They were somewhat expensive at \$303 apiece, but I could instantly tell the difference from the stock tires when they arrived. They are much heavier than those stock baloneys and have a very substantial sidewall.

I combined that purchase with an EEZ RV TPMS that monitors both tire pressure and temperature. I put the sensors on the trailer tires and the rear tires of my 2012 Ford F-350 SRW King Ranch truck. I was amazed when I saw a 10- to 12-degree temperature increase and a 20-PSI pressure increase on the trailer tires on a 250-mile trip. I live in Georgia and travel to the Gulf of Mexico a lot, and the roads pick up heat from the sun. I run Michelin tires on the truck, and the pressure increase there was about 10 PSI.

One last thing: I was really



## Amphibian On Board

Last summer, while enjoying a week in Gulf Shores, Alabama, I noticed we had gained a new friend. A tiny frog was basking comfortably in the shade of the door latch on our fifth-wheel trailer.

**Gary Kreitz, Houston, Texas**

impressed by how well the F-350 handled the blowouts. I wouldn't have known if my wife hadn't heard the explosion of the second tire and looked back to see the fender skirt flapping in the breeze. When she informed me, I looked in the mirror, saw the damage and calmly pulled the rig to the side of the road without incident. My hat is off to Ford and its great trucks.

I hope this helps someone else avoid a blowout on their rig.

**Jim Hoy, Thomasville, Georgia**

I read Bette Gurule's account of tire-blowout issues, and it brought back memories of similar experiences we had until I came up with a simple fix. I keep the air inflation of our fifth-wheel's load range D tires to 62 pounds (3 pounds under the 65-pound max pressure marked on the tire) and keep the speed at 60 MPH or below.

If you monitor and maintain close to the max pressure rating stamped on the tire sidewall and make sure the trailer doesn't exceed its weight limit, you will have happy towing. We have towed our 2001 Prowler fifth-wheel for 16 years and more than 150,000 miles.

**Fred Nusco, San Marcos, California**

To read "RV Tires 101" on our website, go to [www.trailerlife.com/tech/diy/rv-tires-101](http://www.trailerlife.com/tech/diy/rv-tires-101). — Editors



## Twin Cities' Twist

As a resident of Minnesota for more than 40 years, I was delighted to read "Minnesota's Finest Miles" in the August issue about the state's many scenic byways. However, the two-page spread captioned as Minneapolis is in fact a photo of St. Paul, the other beautiful Twin City.

**Terri Haag  
Minneapolis, Minnesota**

## More Tire Talk

The new 30-foot Airstream featured in July's "Cutting-Edge Classic" by Donya Carlson comes standard with 16-inch E-rated Michelin tires that have the LT (Light Truck) rating. Finally, someone in the RV industry is showing some sense in regard to trailer tires.

**Dennis Horton  
Ann Arbor, Michigan**

## TALK TO US!

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# L.L.Bean Flagship Store

A 17-foot replica of the iconic Duck Boot greets shoppers outside the Freeport, Maine, store that has stood on Main Street more than a century

article by **Dave G. Houser**

More than 3 million people a year crowd into the L.L.Bean Flagship Store in Freeport, Maine, making the famous outdoor-gear retailer's sprawling megastore the state's second leading visitor attraction. Only Acadia National Park draws more visitors.

Located for more than a century on Freeport's Main Street (just off Interstate 95, 18 miles northeast of Portland), the store bears the name of its founder, avid hunter and fisherman Leon Leonwood Bean. The company began as a one-room operation in 1912 selling a single product, the Maine Hunting Shoe, now known as the L.L.Bean Boot or Duck Boot. Crafted by Bean from a combination of lightweight leather uppers and rubber bottoms, the waterproof boot was marketed through a four-page mail-order catalog and became a huge success. That led to the establishment of the Freeport retail store — and the rest, as they say, is history.

Today the L.L.Bean enterprise (still family owned) includes not only the massive three-story, 220,000-square-foot Freeport flagship but more than 40 other stores around the country and an ongoing mail-order and e-commerce business with combined annual sales of more than \$1.6 billion. The venerable boot, still a big seller,

remains a staple.

The Freeport store is well worth a visit, even if you're not in the market for a fishing rod or duck call. You'll be greeted outside by a 17-foot-tall reproduction of the iconic L.L.Bean Boot, erected in 2002 to mark the company's 90th anniversary. The store's entry doors have canoe paddles for handles, but they don't have locks. There's no need, since the place is open 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, as it has been since 1951.

Inside, the store is simply mind-boggling — it is bright, open and airy, and jam-packed with colorful displays of outdoor gear, clothing and footwear. Canoes and kayaks hang from the ceiling, and during my visit a shoemaker was at work in the lobby demonstrating how the famous boot is made. All of the boots are crafted — mostly by hand — at a company workshop in Brunswick, Maine.

Next door to the original flagship store is Bean's Hunting and Fishing Store, featuring a two-story waterfall and a trout pool. Trophy mounts of various game animals watch from the walls, as shoppers peruse an unbelievable array of equipment and supplies, from shotguns and fishing rods to hip waders and live bait.

Yet another building houses the Bike, Boat and Ski Store. During the summer it displays bikes, kayaks,

canoes and clothes, and accessories relevant to those activities. Once fall arrives, the showroom stock changes to winter sports gear and clothing.

The Bean conglomerate includes the Home Store (in nearby Freeport Village) that offers indoor and outdoor furniture, bedding, bath and kitchenware. An L.L.Bean Outlet Store peddles overstocked and discontinued items.

Additionally, Bean offers classes. Its Outdoor Discovery Schools provide instruction on kayaking, fly casting, sporting clays, archery and standup paddleboarding, and during winter, cross-country skiing and snowshoeing. Private lessons, fishing and camping trips, and other outdoor excursions are also available through the school.

If you have any energy (and cash or credit) left following your exploration of the Bean campus, you'll find more than 100 outlet and factory stores tastefully scattered around Freeport, a remarkable shopping mecca, inspired without a doubt by L.L.Bean.

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PHOTO COURTESY L.L.BEAN

## Catalina Trail Blazer

Coachmen RV offers two toy hauler travel trailers in the Catalina line, the Trail Blazer 26TH (pictured) and the new-release-for-2018 19TH, with large garages and ramp doors that turn into optional party decks. With the party deck, a snap-in rail is included, and cables are added to make the floor line level with the rest of the trailer. In minutes, the cables can be unclipped and the rail popped off for toy hauler use. Additionally, the toys will be safe outside from sticky fingers with the ToyLok, a 15-foot retractable steel-cable system mounted on the frame for use with a padlock.

The 29-foot 10-inch 26TH has a gross vehicle weight



rating of 7,900 pounds and 12 tie-downs, which the company claims are the most in its class. It also features two opposing fold-down sofas that convert for wall-to-wall sleeping, in addition to the walk-around queen bed up front and two chairs that can be swapped out for a fold-down sofa for sleeping additional overnight guests. The smaller 19TH, at 22 feet 9 inches, has an 8-foot garage with 10 tie-downs, a fold-down sofa and a front queen bed for sleeping up to four.

Trail Blazers have the Starlight System, a remote control for operating the awning and the LED lights below the awning and along the frame under both sides of the trailer. Standard are a removable dinette table, a 32-inch HDTV, and an exterior bracket and cable hookup to move the TV outside, along with a full-radius metal front cap, black-tank flush, aluminum fender skirts and steel wheels, plywood floor, outside shower and two 5-gallon LP-gas cylinders. Base MSRP is \$25,800 for the 26TH and \$19,700 for the 19TH.

Coachmen Catalina Trail Blazer, [www.coachmenrv.com](http://www.coachmenrv.com)



In minutes, the 26TH's rear dining area with a removable table turns into wall-to-wall sleeping space or a completely open garage with 12 tie-downs. The rear screen wall is standard.

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## Savannah's Newest RV Resort

The oldest city in Georgia is getting a new RV resort: CreekFire Motor Ranch is scheduled to open this fall with more than 100 full-hookup sites, half of which are back-in and half pull-through. Spreading over 100 acres, the privately owned resort offers family entertainment with multiple pools, a 35-acre lake with a beach area with chairs and umbrellas, and regular social activities such as nightly bonfires and Sunday buffets.

Recreational amenities include a nature trail, tennis and basketball courts, bocce ball, billiards, ping-pong, arcade games, card tables, and boat, canoe, golf and bike rentals. A 1962 Ford F-100 pulling a 1962 Airstream Safari has been turned into a mobile bar and grill for enjoying lunch poolside, and the resort also features a waterfront bar.

**At this writing, additional RV sites were under construction at CreekFire in Savannah, Georgia. The RV resort is scheduled to open this fall.**

The CreekFire grounds are gated around the clock. Daily shuttle service to historic downtown Savannah, 16 miles to the southwest, is provided from the resort, with discount ticket partnerships for local attractions.

Owner Matthew Lipman said, "CreekFire is unique in that the resort itself and each RV site are oversized to allow plenty of privacy but have all the amenities and features to achieve that community feeling." Tent sites and lakefront cabins are also available. As the resort expands, plans include adding more RV sites, a lazy river waterpark and vintage Airstream trailers for rent.

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## Air OPUS Outback

OPUS, manufacturer of folding campers, has added the Outback to its line with an all-terrain chassis, external slide-out kitchen and outdoor shower. The Outback is compatible with the innovative Air OPUS inflating-tent technology where the 2,870-pound (curb weight) camper automatically sets itself up.

Compact and rugged, the Air OPUS Outback includes a chassis with independent torsion suspension and 12 inches of ground clearance. It can be towed by most properly equipped six-cylinder SUVs and has the option for a rooftop cargo rack rated to haul up to 700 pounds. The Outback has an 8-foot ceiling height, skylights, a 42-gallon water system, two queen-size beds and a lounge with a table that can be folded down to sleep two. MSRP is \$21,999.

OPUS, 925-215-7315, [www.opuscamper.us](http://www.opuscamper.us)



## California RV Show

Celebrating 65 years, the RVIA California RV Show at the Los Angeles Fairplex in Pomona will be spread out across 1.2 million square feet of exhibit space, October 6 to 15. The show features more than 1,400 new 2018-model RVs along with daily seminars, cooking demonstrations, vendor booths and celebrities.

Seminar presenters include *Trailer Life* and *MotorHome* Publisher Emeritus Bob Livingston. Topics range from RV care, repair and maintenance to traveling with pets, camp cooking, planning the ultimate RV adventure, RVing in Baja, trailer towing, suspension, and motorhome driving and dingy towing.

Hall of Fame guest appearances include Major League Baseball legend Steve Garvey, NBA champion and professional basketball coach James Worthy and former National Football League running back Eric Dickerson. Television host and actor Mario Lopez will be at the show October 14 at 11 a.m. Check the website for additional celebrity appearances and seminar times.

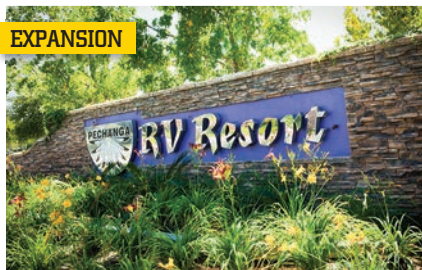
Showgoers can enter to win a new 19-foot 8-inch Lance 1475 Ultra Light travel trailer (\$26,404 value). Other fun includes an archery show, free Ferris wheel rides, Fiesta Day and country-music performances.

Mobility scooters, wheelchairs and kids' wagons are available for rent, and pets are welcome. Admission is \$15 for one day and \$20 for a multiday pass; active military with ID and kids 17 and under are free. Parking is \$10 for cars and \$15 for RVs. A coupon good for \$1 off the price of admission is available on the website and on page 27 of this issue. [www.thebestrvshow.com](http://www.thebestrvshow.com)



## NEWswire

### EXPANSION



### Pechanga RV Resort Adds 41 Sites

Pechanga RV Resort and Casino, rated 10/10\*10 by Good Sam and a four-diamond property by the American Automobile Association, is expanding its RV resort in Temecula, California, to include 41 additional luxury spaces and enhanced pool, barbecue and pet areas. Slated for completion this December, the expanded amenities also include an outdoor guest pavilion for showing movies at night, life-size Jenga puzzles and 22 Buddy Sites that allow two RVs to pull into the same site from opposite sides and share an oversize patio, pergola and two tables.

Guests receive free use of the Journey driving range that includes golf balls. The adjacent casino has 4,000 slots, table games, entertainment and a spa. Nearby Temecula has 40-plus wineries. The RV resort is open year-round with rates starting at \$50 per night.

[www.pechanga.com/rvresort](http://www.pechanga.com/rvresort)

### MILESTONE



### 100,000th Montana Fifth-Wheel

This past July the 100,000th Montana fifth-wheel rolled off the assembly line since being introduced in 1998. Keystone produced 627 Montanas that first year, and the line grew to become the United States' number-one-selling fifth-wheel brand for 11 consecutive years between 2001 and 2011. It has received numerous awards including a *Trailer Life* Readers' Choice Award.

Said Mark Krol, Montana product manager, "Our veteran production team includes over 80 skilled craftsmen that have built Montana fifth-wheels for 10 years or longer."

The 100,000th Montana, a triple-slide 3811 MS (Master Suite) featuring a walk-through closet, was delivered to Holiday World of Alvarado, Texas, to be picked up by owner Michael Peay. Keystone General Manager Jason Grill and Montana District Sales Manager Scott Taylor joined the festivities.

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## Settling Up on Tires

When the manufacturer of his fifth-wheel didn't return his calls, a Florida reader asked for help with reimbursement for a set of new trailer tires:

► In July 2015 my wife and I purchased a new Cardinal fifth-wheel. In October the following year, a tire blew out on the left side of the trailer. Later that day, a tire on the right side of the trailer blew out. Assuming the tires were defective, I replaced all four of them, to be safe.

I have left several messages with the Forest River warranty manager with no response. I do not feel that I am being unreasonable in expecting the tires to last more than 1,200 miles. I check them every time we take the trailer out and make sure they are inflated properly. The trailer is kept in a complete enclosure, so the tires are not affected by sunlight, and they showed no sign of deterioration.

**Gerald Patterson, Apopka, Florida**

Shortly after RV Resolutions reached out to Forest River on Gerald Patterson's behalf, he received a call from the manufacturer and sent a follow-up note:



► The Forest River representative stated that the tire warranty should have been handled by Goodyear. I explained that Goodyear required that I return the tires for inspection, but since I did not have room to transport them back home, I had to leave them with the company that replaced the tires.

In the interest of customer satisfaction, Forest River offered to reimburse me \$498 toward the cost of replacing the tires. Since my trailer was out of warranty, I am satisfied with this outcome.

Thank you for the help and support. *Trailer Life* is providing a great service with RV Resolutions.

**G.P.**

## Unfit Trailer Axles

A Southern California reader wrote to RV Resolutions after having to pay to replace the new axles that had just been installed on his fifth-wheel:

► On May 30, 2016, my wife, Cheryl, and I were towing a 2010 Forest River Rockwood Ultra Lite fifth-wheel on Interstate 15 through Mesquite, Nevada, when a motorist flagged us down and indicated that the trailer axle was smoking. I pulled over, and flames erupted from the front axle. I managed to get the fire out by smothering it with a folded blue tarp.

Two fire trucks, two police units and a paramedic arrived, and the fire department assisted in removing the wheel from the trailer. With the trailer on three wheels, the police officers and firefighters escorted us up the off-ramp to a nearby auto-repair facility, ACT, where it was determined that both axles needed to be replaced. Forest River did not have axles for the trailer, so ACT ordered them from Six States Distributors.

When we picked up the trailer,

I hitched it up and took a test drive with the mechanic. The trailer's brakes worked fine at first, but I started having difficulty slowing on the drive back to California.

I took the trailer to a shop in my hometown and discovered that the wrong size axles had been installed and the brake line was broken. To make a long story short, I had the axles and brake line repaired, and I am now seeking restitution.

**Jay Clapper, Orange, California**

### THE COMPANY RESPONDS

After contacting the Nevada repair shop that replaced the axles on Jay Clapper's fifth-wheel, RV Resolutions heard from one of the shop's owners:

ACT is not a trailer company but an

automotive-repair shop. We relied on a manufacturer's representative to identify the correct parts for the repair. The representative from an axle distributor (Six States) inspected Mr. Clapper's trailer for the proper fitment and ordered the axles for it. We were the installer on the job. After investigation by another facility, it was determined that the fitment of the part was incorrect, but our installation was not at fault.

Mr. Clapper requested \$1,987.70, and this was agreed to and taken care of through the Automobile Club of Southern California. We hope this will be the resolution that is needed in this very frustrating incident.

**Keith Browning**

**ACT Auto Care and Collision Center**  
**Mesquite, Nevada** 📍

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



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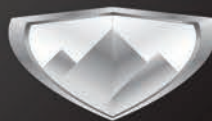
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# Little but Loaded

Forest River's easy-towing R-pod provides maximum comfort in a minimal package

**RV**ers seeking a comfortable travel trailer that would fit into snug Forest Service or similar-type campsites often required a full-size tow vehicle because the available trailers typically exceeded the towing capacity of smaller pickups and SUVs. Today, that's not the case. RV manufacturers offer numerous well-appointed lightweight trailers, and automotive manufacturers have beefed up the towing muscle of their midsize offerings. Combine a newer midsize pickup or SUV with an ultralight trailer, and you have a comfy combo for those who like to keep their RVing footprint small.

A fine example is the 2018 Forest River R-pod RP-180, which we towed with a 2017 GMC Canyon Denali 4x4 to a BLM campground on the banks of Oregon's Umpqua River. The truck and trailer mate as if they were meant for each other, and the combination would make an excellent weekend-getaway package for young couples and empty nesters alike.

The RP-180 is one of the newest offerings from Forest River, and one of six R-pod models with a slideout galley that makes the interior quite comfortable inside the cozy 20-foot platform. The test Hood River Edition, which we picked up at George M. Sutton RV in Eugene, Oregon, includes a \$384 option package on the West Coast production models. It swaps out the 205/75R14 street tires for more aggressive and taller 235/75R15 off-road tires on aluminum rims for greater ground clearance and durability on unpaved backcountry roads. The package also includes a MaxxAir vent

cover and a double entry step.

The eye-catching exterior is two-tone gelcoated fiberglass, akin to what the boating industry uses. Under that, Forest River employs welded-aluminum side walls and floor covered by a one-piece R9-insulated fiberglass roof, R7-insulated laminated walls and R9-insulated flooring for an interior that is both warm and quiet. When it's chilly, a touch on the digital thermostat brings to life the 20,000-Btu furnace, located under the queen-size bed in the rear, and it takes just a couple of minutes to get toasty. If it's hot and humid, the optional 13,500-Btu air conditioner (\$978) cools things down just as quickly.

We loved the 6½-foot ceiling and the huge amount of storage between all the drawers, cubbies, cabinets and open space under the bed. Add to that a couple of exterior cargo compartments, the front one being an L-shaped area spanning the width of the trailer. The spacious rear bathroom has a wall of

storage nooks and drawers, as well as a corner shower and vanity that are separate from the toilet.

R-pods come with a nice combination of appliances and features, including a two-burner stove and 3.7-cubic-foot refrigerator, vinyl flooring and LED lighting. In addition to the Hood River upgrades, three option packages elevated the test trailer from standard trim to the comfortable level of camping we enjoyed: Interior Luxury (\$1,160), Exterior Luxury (\$1,740) and Camper Friendly (\$530). The add-ons made our several-day stay at Tyee Campground that much more pleasant.

The interior package includes a remote-controlled AM/FM/CD Jensen Bluetooth sound system, pleated night shades, a four-speed roof fan, 4.2-cubic-foot refrigerator and 6-gallon DSI water heater. The Camper Friendly option adds a solar-charging port, an outside shower, friction-hinged entry door, EZ Glide dinette table, recessed cooktop with a glass cover, and a seamless countertop with an under-mount stainless sink and sink cover.

The Exterior Luxury Package tops everything off with a dual-battery rack, external speakers, 5-gallon LP-gas cylinder with an ABS cover, front and rear manual stabilizer jacks, folding entry-door-assist handle, independent-



(Far left) The slideout galley in the test trailer came with a one-piece countertop, an under-mount stainless sink and a recessed two-burner cooktop; the convection microwave is a \$413 option. (Left) We slept well on the queen bed at the rear of the RP-180, but the 6-foot-and-over crowd may find it on the short side.





(Above left) The Interior Luxury Package includes the larger three-way 4.2-cubic-foot refrigerator, which is handy when spending more than a couple days camping off the grid. (Above right) A pleasant surprise is the big bathroom at the front of the RP-180 and the abundant storage space it affords. Vinyl flooring makes upkeep easy.

torsion axle, black-tank flush, TV antenna and magnetic door catches for the outside compartments. These options are worth the extra coins, and we appreciated the convenience and utility.

During the test, a couple of items caught our attention. One was that the 20,000-Btu direct-vent furnace is located directly under the bed and the discharge faces inward toward what appears to be a convenient storage area. We had to remind ourselves several times to keep that area clear.

The other item was the slideout. While it functions fine, after it rains and the slide is retracted, it deposits water down both walls and onto the vinyl floor. This is common with this style of slide room. Such water intrusion can be reduced by having a slide-

out awning installed — something to think about at the time of purchase.

Getting to and from the campground was just as pleasant as our accommodations. The Canyon Denali is the flagship of GMC's midsize pickups. It's loaded with all the creature comforts and towing ability we've come to expect when the Denali moniker is placed on a GMC, from heated and cooled seats to the IntelliLink touchscreen system to connect everything.

With a 308-horsepower 3.6-liter V-6 and eight-speed automatic as the driving force, the truck never lacked for pulling power needed to easily climb mountain grades, merge into fast traffic or pass slower-moving vehicles, all while getting 13.4 MPG pulling the R-pod.

As for towing ability, the Canyon Denali 4WD shortbed is rated for 7,000 pounds with the 3.42:1 axle ratio and towing package, which is how the test truck was equipped. The ideal hitch weight is between 10 and 12 percent, and the trailer's hitch weight was 330 pounds. That put it a hair on the light side, which is probably what contrib-

## SPECIFICATIONS

### 2018 FOREST RIVER R-POD RP-180

Exterior Length	20'
Exterior Width	6' 6"/body, 8'/overall
Exterior Height	9' 11"
Interior Width	6' 3"
Interior Height	6' 6"
Construction	Aluminum/fiberglass
Freshwater Cap.	36 gal.
Black-/Gray-Water Cap.	30/30 gal.
LP-Gas Cap.	5 gal.
Water-Heater Cap.	6 gal.
Refrigerator	4.2 cu. ft.
Furnace	20,000 Btu
Air Conditioner	13,500 Btu
Converter	55 amp
Batteries (2)	Dealer supplied
Tires	235/75R15
Suspension	Independent torsion
Weight (freshwater, water heater, LP-gas full; no cargo)	3,400 lbs.
Hitch Weight	330 lbs.
Axle Weight	3,070 lbs.
GVWR	3,832 lbs.
GAWR	4,000 lbs.
Cargo Carrying Cap.	432 lbs.
MSRP, Base	\$16,479
MSRP, As Tested	\$24,343
Warranty	1 year

#### Forest River

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uted to a slight wag rolling down the highway. A sway control is in order for this combination, and it's best to place heavier cargo in the front portion of the trailer.

The short take on the Hood River Edition R-pod RP-180 is that it accommodates two adults with enough of the niceties to make getaways very enjoyable, and the Canyon Denali makes getting there just as relaxing. My wife and I would have loved to have kept this combo around for the rest of the summer and fall. It fits our lifestyle, allowing us to camp in style at smaller, more remote and less frequented campgrounds and off-the-grid locations. 🚐

### FOREST RIVER R-POD RP-180

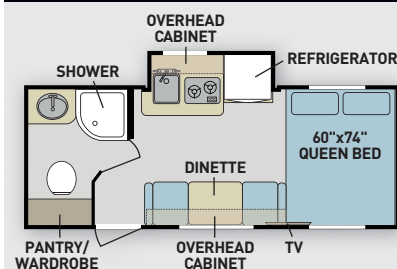


ILLUSTRATION BY BILL TIPTON



Check out dozens of other mini RVs in *Trailer Life's* Tiny Trailers series, along with more of Bruce Smith's photos of the R-pod RP-180. [www.trailerlife.com/tinytrailers](http://www.trailerlife.com/tinytrailers)



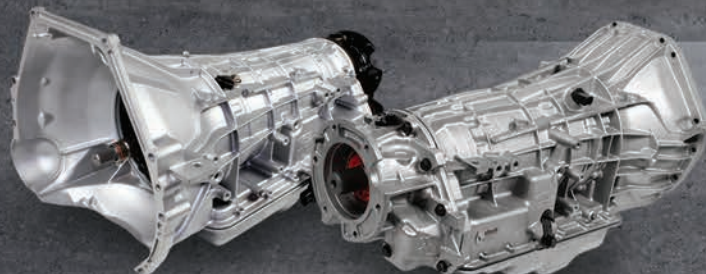
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# Full-Timing Fifth-Wheels

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**C**hoosing a fifth-wheel trailer for full-time living is a thrill, but making the right decision can be daunting. Many full-timers buy more than one rig, and some upgrade after only a year or two. We were no exception. For us, the small amount of depreciation we lost by upgrading from one trailer to another was a worthwhile investment. We considered it tuition to the School of Hard Knocks where we majored in hands-on experience.

We love visiting RV dealerships. The first thing we look at are the specs posted on the front-left corner of the trailer, especially gross vehicle weight rating (GVWR), unloaded vehicle weight (UVW), and cargo carrying capacity (\*CCC), which is roughly the difference between the two. Carrying capacity is critical because it determines which of your worldly possessions you can keep with you.

Typical full-timer cargo includes winter and summer clothes, shoes, boots, jackets, bedding, household appliances, dishes, pots, pans, food in the refrigerator and pantry, power tools, spare parts, cleaning supplies, toiletries, barbecue grill, bikes and other recreational gear, hobby items, a portable generator and more. The trailer must also accommodate the weight of any optional equipment or furnishings, from an onboard generator to a washer and dryer, solar-power components and extra batteries. And don't forget the contents of the LP-gas cylinders and holding tanks.

Staying at a full-hookup RV site requires very little water

in the trailer, but we carry a full freshwater tank and empty waste tanks when we dry camp so we can stay awhile. Our 36-footer has a carrying capacity of 3,439 pounds, and despite traveling light with many half-empty cabinets, we max that out when our 70-gallon freshwater tank is full. We'd love another 1,000 pounds of leeway.

The fifth-wheel's GVWR determines which trucks can tow the trailer. If you have a truck already, its maximum tow rating and payload are readily available. It is tempting to oversize the trailer or undersize the truck, but after upgrading to a more powerful dually, we love being able to tow our fifth-wheel anywhere in the Rockies effortlessly. For full-timers who travel just twice a year between favorite summer and winter destinations, decluttering can lighten the trailer prior to towing.

When it comes to features, full-body paint is the most durable, and gelcoat can be buffed to a shine, while a fiberglass roof will last longer than a rubber one. High R-factor insulation is important in both cold and warm weather. Non-opening skylights without shades or insulation may make the interior hot in summer. Disc brakes provide phenomenal stopping power, especially in emergencies, and can be added later if the manufacturer doesn't offer them, which is what we did. Over the years, we also replaced the shocks and upgraded from E-rated to G-rated tires.

Basement storage, battery-compartment size (if extra batteries are desired), and the accessibility of the converter,

---

For full-time RVers with big ambitions, the 44-foot 2-inch DRV Mobile Suites 44 Nashville (above) spreads out with a wide body and six slides.

hot-water tank, furnace, water pump, landing jacks, circuit-breaker panel and slideout mechanisms are essential if any of these systems ever needs to be repaired or replaced, especially for do-it-yourselfers.

A hitch receiver mounted to the frame will be more than strong enough to accommodate a bicycle rack or small cargo carrier. If the receiver is only mounted to the rear bumper, you'll need to check the owner's manual for weight restrictions and to make sure using one won't void the warranty.

For extended dry camping, our 70, 78 and 50 gallons of fresh-, gray- and black-water holding tanks, respectively, are adequate, but bigger would be better. If you won't be dry camping much, large tanks are less important.

The interior of the trailer must evoke a satisfied "Ahh... I'm home!" We like light-colored, open and airy floorplans, but everyone has different tastes.

For couples accustomed to a king-size bed, downsizing to a queen may be difficult. For us, it is the one aspect of our rig we'd like to change. But not all kings are equal. Rather than the standard residential 76x80 inches, most fifth-wheel kings are narrower, measuring anywhere from 70x80 to 74x80. If you might upgrade to a true residential mattress, confirm that there is enough clearance on either side and consider whether the mattress will droop over the edges of the platform.

In the kitchen, an RV refrigerator that can run on LP-gas is great for dry camping; however, it may need regular defrosting. An electric residential refrigerator will require a generator or large battery bank with properly sized solar panels and an inverter to operate without hookups for extended periods, but the payoff is a frost-free fridge with an icemaker built in. Refrigerator sizes typically range from 8 to 22 cubic feet. An unsung advantage of a small refrigerator is that less food means less weight in the trailer. We have found our 8-cubic-foot RV fridge is sufficient, although we do have to negotiate treaties between the veggies and beer in an ongoing turf war.

Many full-time fifth-wheels have a center island plumbed with a sink, and while that provides extra cabinet and counter space, it usually means most of the kitchen may be inaccessible when the slideouts are closed. Being able to open the refrigerator without extending the slides in store parking lots, as well as having access to the bed and bathroom at rest areas and in front of friends' houses makes RV life easier. Before signing on the dotted line, inspect the fifth-wheel with the slideouts closed so you know what you can and can't access.

A love seat is fine for guests, but a longer sofa where you can truly stretch out is best for afternoon snoozes. Check out the furniture and bed in all positions to make sure you will be comfortable relaxing in your new home.

From an equipment durability standpoint, be aware that kitchens and entertainment centers placed at the rear of the trailer may experience more jostling because of the distance from the axles and the teeter-totter effect relative to the hitch position and axles.

Transitioning from a residential washer and dryer to public laundromats or smaller RV appliances is an adjustment. The advantage of coin-operated laundries is that you can walk out with everything clean and folded in just two hours. As a bonus, you can meet the locals and ask for tips on things to see and do in the area. Having a washer and dryer in the trailer is convenient, but doing the laundry takes more time. For full-time living, an individual washer and dryer setup is generally preferred over a combo unit. If the appliances are not installed, the extra space is a boon; ours is a coat, sweater and shoe closet.

Full-timers joke that the ideal trailer is a sprightly 25 feet when towing but a spacious 45 feet when parked. From the many fifth-wheels suitable for full-time use, we've assembled a dozen representative 2018 models in the 34- to 44-foot range that include everything from nimble condos on wheels to opulent rolling estates.

## New Horizons Majestic

New Horizons offers two lines of high-end fifth-wheels built on in-house-manufactured frames with Dexter or MORyde axles: the lighter Summit in standard floorplans and the heavier, fully customizable Majestic. The **M37RL3S** is a wide-body (8½ feet) trailer that comes in just under 40 feet long. With a net carrying capacity (\*\*NCC) of 4,960 pounds, it can hold a lot of equipment and supplies. An open floorplan with an optional sinkless island gives the living area a spacious and airy feeling (the sink is on the adjacent counter). The fiberglass roof and full-body paint with an automotive clear-coat finish make the exterior not

only durable and handsome but easy to maintain. Holding tanks are sized well for extended dry camping.

Exterior Length .....	39' 10"
Exterior Width .....	8' 6"
Interior Height .....	8' 10"
Exterior Height .....	13' 3"
Freshwater Cap. ....	100 gal.
Black-/Gray-Water Cap. ....	50 gal./80 gal.
LP-Gas Cap. ....	20 gal.
UVW, Base .....	19,040 lbs.
GVWR .....	24,000 lbs.
**NCC .....	4,960 lbs.
Hitch Weight .....	3,540 lbs.
MSRP, Base .....	\$192,129

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## Space Craft Manufacturing

Space Craft builds fully custom trailers on in-house-manufactured frames. Each one-of-a-kind RV is designed specifically for its buyer. Every year Space Craft fabricates a fifth-wheel on spec for exhibiting at RV shows. The **2017 Show Model** is a 40-foot wide-body beauty. From the fiberglass roof to the full-body gelcoat paint, this trailer is designed to withstand anything life on the road might deliver. With painted drywall inside instead of wallboard, a spacious bathroom up front and a half bath by the kitchen for guests, it is a plush rolling home. If you don't want an extra bath or need a different arrangement of kitchen cabinets and counters, just ask. Likewise, if you prefer bigger holding tanks or desire exotic hardwood cabinets and trim.

Exterior Length .....40'  
Exterior Width .....8' 6"  
Interior Height .....8'; 6' 7"/bedroom  
Exterior Height .....13' 4"  
Freshwater Cap. ....50 gal.  
Black-/Gray-Water Cap. ....50 gal./90 gal.  
LP-Gas Cap. ....20 gal.  
UVW, Base .....19,000 lbs.  
GVWR .....23,000 lbs.  
\*CCC .....4,000 lbs.  
Hitch Weight .....5,000 lbs.  
MSRP, Show Model .....\$196,880  
**888-463-7520, [www.spacecraftmfg.com](http://www.spacecraftmfg.com)**

## Northwood Arctic Fox

Northwood Manufacturing offers two large full-time fifth-wheels, but a shorter, lighter one, the wide-body **29-5T**, caught our eye because it features an efficient and open floorplan that used to be prevalent but is now hard to find. Just under 34 feet, it has a nearly L-shaped kitchen (more like a stocking) with enough counter space for two to work without an island. Everything is fully accessible when the two slides are closed, and with more than 4,800 pounds of carrying capacity, there's little chance of overloading the trailer. The optional king bed is a larger-than-



normal 74x80 inches, and holding-tank capacities are well-sized and balanced for extended dry camping. Dexter axles and a Northwood-manufactured frame provide a durable foundation.

Exterior Length .....33' 11"  
Exterior Width .....8' 6"  
Interior Height .....8' 6"  
Exterior Height .....13' 3"  
Freshwater Cap. ....82 gal.  
Black-/Gray-Water Cap. ....67 gal./65 gal.  
LP-Gas Cap. ....20 gal.  
UVW, Base .....10,876 lbs.  
GVWR .....15,700 lbs.  
\*\*NCC .....4,824 lbs.  
Hitch Weight .....2,023 lbs.  
MSRP, Base .....\$66,453  
**800-766-6274, [www.northwoodmfg.com/arctic-fox-2/arctic-fox-29-5t](http://www.northwoodmfg.com/arctic-fox-2/arctic-fox-29-5t)**



## DRV Mobile Suites

DRV builds the stuff full-time-RVing dreams are made of, and its **44 Nashville** is a stunner. At 44 feet 2 inches long, with a wide body and six slides, it is an extremely large unit, ideal for full-timers who love entertaining and settling into favorite locations for extended periods. The large living room upstairs features two long sofas, each in its own slideout, plus a pair of recliners. The view from upstairs into the kitchen makes it feel especially airy. With the kitchen sink against a wall, the center island is perfect for laying out a spread of food. The master bedroom has a full private bath, and



guests can use the half bath. Dexter axles and disc brakes are standard.

Exterior Length .....44' 2"  
Exterior Width .....8' 5"  
Interior Height .....8' 5"  
Exterior Height .....13' 4"  
Freshwater Cap. ....100 gal.  
Black-/Gray-Water Cap. ....50 gal./75 gal.  
LP-Gas Cap. ....20 gal.  
UVW, Base .....20,000 lbs.  
GVWR .....24,000 lbs.  
\*CCC .....4,000 lbs.  
Hitch Weight .....3,000 lbs.  
MSRP, Base .....\$144,000  
**260-562-1075, [www.drvsuites.com/mobile-suites-luxury-fifth-wheels](http://www.drvsuites.com/mobile-suites-luxury-fifth-wheels)**



## Highland Ridge Open Range ➡

The **3X377FLR** has an inviting living room in the front with two love seats, each in its own slideout surrounded by windows, and a pair of recliners that face the entertainment center and electric fireplace. With the living room upstairs, the kitchen becomes a separate room that includes a dining nook in its own window-enclosed slideout. A hutch with a long counter in the kitchen offers lots of solid lower-cabinet space that is not hung on the walls, ideal for stowing heavier items, plus the 4,135-pound carrying capacity is sufficient for filling the shelves. A private back door to the



master suite makes the bedroom and bathroom fully accessible when the five slides are closed.

Exterior Length .....	41'
Exterior Width .....	8' 6"
Interior Height .....	8' 4"
Exterior Height .....	13' 1"
Freshwater Cap. ....	75 gal.
Black-/Gray-Water Cap. ....	41 gal./123 gal.
LP-Gas Cap. ....	14 gal.
UVW, Base .....	12,860 lbs.
GVWR .....	16,995 lbs.
*CCC .....	4,135 lbs.
Hitch Weight .....	2,373 lbs.
MSRP, Base .....	\$77,960

[260-768-7771](http://260-768-7771), [www.highlandridgerv.com/products/2018/open-range-3x](http://www.highlandridgerv.com/products/2018/open-range-3x)

## Redwood Luxury Vehicles ➡

The elegant **RW390/RW3901WB** is just over 40 feet long with a standard width and three slideouts. The upstairs master suite is spacious and feels like home, with a large bathroom and dual vanities, plus a walk-in closet and another closet for hanging clothes or installing an optional washer and dryer. Brightening the bedroom, a window runs the width of the king-bed slideout rather than standard small windows on either side. A kitchen bar nook and a center island with a sink provide ample counter space for two people to prepare meals at the same time. When the kitchen slide is closed, the refrigerator's right-hand

door and the entire bar nook are accessible. Dexter axles are standard, and disc brakes are an option.

Exterior Length .....	40' 4"
Exterior Width .....	8'
Interior Height .....	8' 6.5"
Exterior Height .....	13' 2"
Freshwater Cap. ....	62 gal.
Black-/Gray-Water Cap. ....	44 gal./88 gal.
LP Gas Cap. ....	14 gal.
UVW, Base .....	14,326 lbs.
GVWR .....	17,900 lbs.
*CCC .....	3,574 lbs.
Hitch Weight .....	2,412 lbs.
MSRP, Base .....	\$126,032

[855-226-7496](http://855-226-7496), [www.redwood-rv.com/model/redwood/RW390/3901WB](http://www.redwood-rv.com/model/redwood/RW390/3901WB)



## Keystone Montana High Country ➡

The triple-slide **380TH** is for full-time RVers who don't want to give up their garage. Utilizing a clever two-story design in the rear bedroom, the queen bed sits on a platform above a large garage space. The garage can hold an ATV or bikes or a workbench with tools, and its ceiling raises and lowers, along with the bed above. The kitchen is bright with an L-shaped counter and large hutch with lower cabinets. Up front, the cozy living room has two love seats and a couple of recliners. Touring the 380TH, we had no idea it had a garage until we peered through the rear-ramp door at the "man cave."

Exterior Length .....	41' 6"
Exterior Width .....	8'
Interior Height .....	8' 5"
Exterior Height .....	12' 9"
Freshwater Cap. ....	64 gal.
Black-/Gray-Water Cap. ....	39 gal./78 gal.
LP-Gas Cap. ....	14 gal.
UVW, Base .....	13,125 lbs.
GVWR .....	17,000 lbs.
*CCC .....	3,875 lbs.
Hitch Weight .....	3,125 lbs.
MSRP, Base .....	\$75,000

[866-425-4369](http://866-425-4369), [www.keystonerv.com/montana-high-country](http://www.keystonerv.com/montana-high-country)

## Cedar Creek Hathaway

The **34RL2** is a popular triple-slide layout in a nearly 38-foot standard-width body. The kitchen includes an island plumbed with a sink, providing lots of counter and cupboard space, and the rear-lounge living area has a big cushy sofa across the back of the trailer. Recliners in the curbside slide face the electric fireplace and entertainment center in the opposing slide, making it easy to watch TV without having to turn the screen or chairs. The bathroom has his-and-her vanities, and a coat closet is near the entry door. With more than 4,200 pounds of carrying capacity, this rig is prepared to shoulder the load of full-time living.



Exterior Length .....	37' 11"
Exterior Width .....	8'
Interior Height .....	8' 11"
Exterior Height .....	13'
Freshwater Cap. ....	57 gal.
Black-/Gray-Water Cap. ....	40 gal./80 gal.
LP-Gas Cap. ....	14 gal.

UVW, Base .....	12,009 lbs.
GVWR .....	16,270 lbs.
*CCC .....	4,261 lbs.
Hitch Weight .....	2,270 lbs.
MSRP, Base .....	\$84,289
<a href="http://260-593-4000">260-593-4000</a> , <a href="http://www.forestriverinc.com/fifth-wheels/cedar-creek-hathaway-edition">www.forestriverinc.com/fifth-wheels/cedar-creek-hathaway-edition</a>	



## Jayco Pinnacle

The **36BPTS** is a similar triple-slide floorplan in a spacious and larger layout at nearly 41 feet with a wide body. It includes a double-vanity bathroom in the master suite up front and a half bath for guests by the kitchen. The television is installed on a clever lift system, making it possible, when the TV is turned off, to lower it into a cabinet and enjoy the view and extra light from the window behind it. When the slideouts are closed, there is good bathroom and bedroom accessibility, and the whole kitchen except the pantry can be reached. The fifth-wheel has a solid foundation on Dexter axles with a MORryde suspension system and Goodyear tires.

Exterior Length .....	40' 9"
Exterior Width .....	8' 6"
Interior Height .....	9'
Exterior Height .....	13' 2.5"
Freshwater Cap. ....	75 gal.
Black-/Gray-Water Cap. ....	50 gal./50 gal.
LP-Gas Cap. ....	14 gal.

UVW, Base .....	13,275 lbs.
GVWR .....	16,500 lbs.
*CCC .....	3,225 lbs.
Hitch Weight .....	2,735 lbs.
MSRP, Base .....	\$86,460
<a href="http://800-283-8267">800-283-8267</a> <a href="http://www.jayco.com/products/fifth-wheels">www.jayco.com/products/fifth-wheels</a>	







## Heartland Bighorn

Nearly 40 feet long with the standard 8-foot body width, the **BH3575 Elite** is an airy version of the popular island-sink kitchen with a rear-lounge layout. The curbside slideout with the dining table and recliners has a 7-foot 2-inch ceiling height. With no cabinets in the slide, the windows are enormous, giving the feeling of a sunroom. A wide pull-out desk in the entertainment center can support a laptop, and the refrigerator and pantry are easily accessible for a lunch stop when the slides are closed. A big window brightens the bedroom, although the king bed is only 70x80 inches. Carrying capacity is limited, but with fewer storage compartments than some units, owners will be less inclined to overload the trailer.

Exterior Length .....	39' 4"
Exterior Width .....	8'
Interior Height .....	8' 4"
Exterior Height .....	13' 3"
Freshwater Cap. ....	65 gal.
Black-/Gray-Water Cap. ....	45 gal./90 gal.
LP-Gas Cap. ....	14 gal.
UVW, Base .....	12,950 lbs.
GVWR .....	16,000 lbs.
*CCC .....	2,950 lbs.
Hitch Weight .....	2,435 lbs.
MSRP, Base .....	\$80,848
<a href="http://877-262-8032">877-262-8032</a> , <a href="http://www.heartlandrvs.com/brands/luxuryfw/bighorn/bh-3575-elite">www.heartlandrvs.com/brands/luxuryfw/bighorn/bh-3575-elite</a>	

## Grand Design Solitude

Just under 35 feet, the wide-body **310GK** is a shorter, more maneuverable version of the island-sink kitchen in a rear-lounge model. A wide, low window running the width of the queen bed gives the bedroom extra light and a view. The wall-mounted dinette eliminates the table's foot- and leg-blocking pedestal and prevents it from tipping over, especially when braking hard. A second awning over the curbside windows is a savior on hot and long summer days. Immense fresh- and gray-water tanks are welcome,



but a bigger black tank would be better matched. The relatively modest carrying capacity will keep owners living light, which can be a good thing.

Exterior Length .....	34' 11"
Exterior Width .....	8' 5"
Interior Height .....	8' 6"
Exterior Height .....	13' 5"
Freshwater Cap. ....	93 gal.
Black-/Gray-Water Cap. ....	50 gal./100 gal.
LP-Gas Cap. ....	14 gal.
UVW, Base .....	12,100 lbs.
GVWR .....	15,000 lbs.
*CCC .....	2,900 lbs.
Hitch Weight .....	2,350 lbs.
MSRP, Base .....	\$80,013
<a href="http://574-825-9679">574-825-9679</a> , <a href="http://www.granddesignrv.com/showroom/2018/fifth-wheel/solitude">www.granddesignrv.com/showroom/2018/fifth-wheel/solitude</a>	



## KZ Durango Gold

The wide-body **G370RLT** is a lighter, more affordable version of the same floorplan with a GVWR of 14,500 pounds. It is spacious, at almost 40 feet long, and has a gelcoat exterior. Carrying capacity is limited at 2,814 pounds, but full-timers who travel light and are mindful of installing options or loading extra gear can stay within the weight limit. The trailer rolls on Dexter axles, and a factory upgrade to G-rated tires is

available. The kitchen offers a full-size pantry and many sturdy lower cabinets, and the sizable wastewater tanks are ideal for extended dry camping.



Exterior Length .....	39' 6"
Exterior Width .....	8' 5"
Interior Height .....	8'
Exterior Height .....	12' 11"
Freshwater Cap. ....	67 gal.
Black-/Gray-Water Cap. ....	67 gal./97 gal.
LP-Gas Cap. ....	14 gal.
UVW, Base .....	11,686 lbs.
GVWR .....	14,500 lbs.
**NCC .....	2,814 lbs.
Hitch Weight .....	2,250 lbs.
MSRP, Base .....	\$65,130
<a href="http://800-768-4016">800-768-4016</a> , <a href="http://www.kz-rv.com/products/durango-gold-fifth-wheels">www.kz-rv.com/products/durango-gold-fifth-wheels</a>	

**\*CCC:** Cargo Carrying Capacity equals the gross vehicle weight rating (GVWR) minus unloaded vehicle weight (UVW) and full LP-gas weight. **\*\*NCC:** Net Carrying Capacity equals the maximum allowable weight of supplies and optional equipment that can be carried by the RV including personal belongings, food, fluids, LP-gas and dealer-installed accessories.

Specifications provided by the manufacturers.





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# OREGON'S

IN THE SHADOW OF SNOWCAPPED MOUNT HOOD, THE HOOD RIVER VALLEY HAS IT ALL EACH FALL,

Where can you sip local beer and fine wine, eat at farm-to-table restaurants, hike, bike and windsurf, shop for antiques and collectibles, dine aboard a vintage train, sample freshly picked apples and pears and visit one of the best antique airplane and auto museums in the country? In Oregon's Hood River Valley you can do all this and more while surrounded by the breathtaking scenery of the Cascade Range and the Columbia River Gorge.

The Columbia River Gorge is a favorite destination for RVers (see "Simply Gorge-ous" in the May issue), and Hood River, a walkable town of about 8,000, is the crown jewel. For many years, Hood River was a sleepy agricultural community renowned for growing apples and peaches. However, several decades ago, windsurfers and kiteboarders discovered that the gorge's high basalt cliffs create the perfect conditions to ply their wind-driven pursuits on the waters of the Columbia.

With the influx of water-sport enthusiasts, the town literally woke up. Great restaurants, bakeries and coffee shops opened. Vineyards were planted, and wineries set up tasting rooms. Craft brewers began making beer. Artisans set up studios and galleries. A collector opened a sprawling aero

and auto museum. The old train began offering rides and meals while chugging through the verdant foothills of Mount Hood. And the Hood River Valley became one of the coolest destinations in the Pacific Northwest.

Even if you don't ride the currents of the Columbia, you can still enjoy the valley's fine apples, pears and other produce, and it's something we try to do every fall. Hood River is an easy, one-hour hop from Portland, but it's a five-hour jaunt from our home in Washington, and we're happy to have our RV along for the ride.

## HISTORY AND HERITAGE

We arrive in Hood River on a beautiful autumn day and pull off Interstate 84 at exit 62 to visit the Columbia Gorge Hotel. Constructed in 1921 by Simon Benson, a timber baron who helped build the scenic drive now known as the Historic Columbia River Highway, this mission-style hotel was for years a favorite of Hollywood's elite. During the Jazz Age, stars such as Rudolph Valentino and Clara Bow visited, along with presidents Hoover and Taft.

We amble through the hotel's lovely gardens and

A GENUINE CIRCLE TOUR, THE FRUIT LOOP RUNS DOWN ONE SIDE OF THE VALLEY TOWARD MOUNT HOOD AND UP THE OTHER BACK TO HOOD RIVER.





# FRUIT LOOP

FROM HARVEST FESTIVALS AND FARM-TO-TABLE FARE TO COLOSSAL VIEWS AND A COLORFUL HISTORY

scramble up rocks overlooking the river and Wah Gwin Gwin Falls. Then we enjoy happy-hour cocktails and jazz piano before heading to the Mount Hood Railroad depot. Built in 1906 to transport fruit and lumber, the railroad now runs four-hour passenger tours on the scenic route from Hood River to Parkdale.

After parking at the train station, we board one of the dome cars. These two-story coaches, outfitted with white-clothed banquettes for dining, present panoramic views on a 22-mile journey through forests and vineyards. The company offers dinner trains from spring through early fall, as well as ride-only excursions, train-robbery trips and seasonal outings that include October's microbrew-infused Harvest Fall Special and cocoa-fueled Christmas trains to visit Santa.

As slivers of sunlight illuminate the autumn leaves, the train passes through thick forests and orchards heavy with pears and apples. Our dinners arrive — a bacon-wrapped 7-ounce filet mignon with mushroom demi-glace and pan-seared salmon topped with saffron sauce. As dessert is served, Matt the Magician entertains with clever card tricks.

It's after 9 when we drive down State Route 35 toward Toll Bridge Park, a county park that's our base during our Hood River stay. While the Columbia River Gorge is a popular RV destination, most of the RV parks are situated along the river between busy I-84 and the freight rail line that follows the river. We prefer the campground at Toll Bridge Park near the base of Mount Hood.



**The Old Trunk (top), a combination fruit stand, soda fountain and antiques shop, and the pumpkin patch at Mount View Orchards (above) are two stops on the Hood River County Fruit Loop.**



**At 11,249 feet, Mount Hood rises above the rolling farmland of the Hood River Valley and the forested foothills near its base.**





At Hood River's Glassometry Studios (above left) an artist fires glass in the blast furnace. The extensive Western Antique Aeroplane and Automobile Museum (above right) showcases beautifully restored vintage airplanes that still fly and cars and motorcycles that still run.

### FRUIT LOOP TOUR

We wake to brilliant blue skies and cool breezes, perfect weather for driving the 35-mile Hood River County Fruit Loop. A genuine circle tour, the Fruit Loop runs from the Columbia River down one side of the valley toward Mount Hood on Route 35 and up the other side through the little towns of Parkdale and Dee before returning to Hood River. With its acres of orchards and vineyards, and assorted berry, lavender and nut farms, fruit stands, wineries, alpaca ranches, and antique and collectible stores, not to mention side roads and detours, the loop can take from a few hours to several days to drive.

We meander through the valley at our own pace, stopping at many of our favorite farm stands and exploring

a few new ones. At Kiyokawa Family Orchards, we're dazzled by 100 varieties of apples and dozens of types of Asian and European pears. We sample Jonagold, Mutsu, Zestar, Gravenstein, Golden Supreme, Honeycrisp and more, and we're amazed by the differences. Some are sugar sweet, others have a sweet-sour bite, and still others offer complex flavors similar to those found in good wines. There are apples as tiny as cherries and ones as big as small melons. They come in a rainbow of colors — red, pink, green, yellow, and even orange — and all are super fresh and crisp. We buy several varieties to take home.

In Parkdale, the southern terminus of the Mount Hood Railroad, we pass the Ries-Thompson House (built in

Now offering scenic train rides, Mount Hood Railroad opened in 1906 to support the then-fledgling fruit and timber industries.



### HOOD RIVER HARVEST

Fall is festival time in the Hood River Valley, starting with the **Hood River Hops Fest** (September 23 this year), where more than 50 brewers share their hop-based libations. The fun continues at the **Hood River Valley Harvest Festival** (October 13 through 15) and the **Gorge Fruit and Craft Fair** (October 21 and 22), celebrations of regional goods from arts and crafts to produce, wine, beer and cider.

#### Hood River County Chamber of Commerce

[www.hoodriver.org/hops-fest](http://www.hoodriver.org/hops-fest)  
[www.hoodriver.org/harvest-fest](http://www.hoodriver.org/harvest-fest)

#### Hood River County Fairgrounds

[www.hoodriverfair.org](http://www.hoodriverfair.org)



### CAMP IT UP

#### OREGON

##### Toll Bridge Park

Situated 15 miles south of downtown Hood River on the city's namesake waterway, this 100-acre county park offers spacious RV campsites with full or partial hookups.  
[www.co.hood-river.or.us](http://www.co.hood-river.or.us)

#### WASHINGTON

##### Bridge RV Park and Campground

Across the toll bridge from Hood River in White Salmon, this full-service Good Sam Park has 35 full-hookup RV sites with 30 and 50 amps, free Wi-Fi and cable TV.  
 509-493-1111, [www.bridgerv.com](http://www.bridgerv.com)

#### FOR MORE INFORMATION

##### Hood River County Fruit Loop

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



1900), the town's oldest remaining residence and part of a 2-acre National Historic Site. Although the visitor center is closed during our stop there, we enjoy checking out the grounds, the barns and an old lumber truck.

At Mount View Orchards, we walk the dog through fruit orchards and a pumpkin patch. In addition to fresh fruit, this farm stand dries apples and pears, and we buy a few bags of crispy cinnamon-sugar apple chips for the road. We also sample rich pear squares made with delectable dried fruit.

In the town of Odell, we stop for lunch at one of the small Mexican taquerias scattered throughout the area. Odell is one of the stops for the Mount Hood Railroad, and we take our to-go carnitas burritos to Clear Creek Station, the railroad park, and join the train passengers listening to a country-western singer serenade them.

After lunch, we peruse the Old Trunk, an antique and collectibles store that's been serving the Hood River community since the early 1900s. This eclectic shop and soda fountain sells antique furnishings, books, vinyl records, and repurposed art and gifts that are so fun we spend more than an hour combing through treasures. Before leaving, we belly up to the old soda fountain with its Western-saddle stools and enjoy fresh raspberry soft-serve ice cream.

We also stop at the Apple Valley Country Store. This little shop just off Tucker Road sells 50 varieties of jams, syrups, mustards, pepper jellies and pie fillings, all with samples to try. The shop also makes pies and cookies, and huckleberry and marionberry milkshakes. We stock up on a few jars of our favorite AJ's Walla Walla Sweet Onion Mustard.

Since the windsurfing revolution, Hood River boasts several good restaurants, and one of the best is Celilo, an upscale farm-to-table eatery with an über-cool ambience. Established 10 years ago by chef-owner Ben Stenn, it has become a favorite with locals and visitors alike. The place is packed, and we settle for two seats at the long wooden bar to enjoy crispy,

house-made lavash (cracker bread), a sourdough baguette and giant salads made with heirloom tomatoes. Then we dive into fork-tender steak served with a pile of frites. *Heaven!*

#### VINTAGE OREGON

After a restful night at the campground, we head for the Western Antique Aeroplane and Auto Museum (WAAAM), nestled in the hills above Hood River.

For 50 years, pilot and airplane aficionado Terry Brandt collected vintage planes, cars and motorcycles. In 2006, he needed a place to display his large collection, and WAAAM was born. Today, the museum hosts one of the country's largest collections of still-flying antique airplanes and still-driving antique automobiles.

Housed in several cavernous hangars, the museum boasts more

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## OREGON'S FRUIT LOOP

than 130 planes, including a 1917 Curtiss Jenny, a 1928 Boeing 40C mail plane, and more Waco planes than the Waco Air Museum in Ohio. The auto collection is equally impressive with more than 175 vehicles including two Detroit Electrics and a steam-powered Locomobile.

We wander through the museum, amazed by the gleaming brass, chrome and aluminum all around us, and watch videos about early fliers, including

female pilots. This is a museum even people not interested in planes and cars can enjoy. It also houses old guns, tractors and military equipment, as well as Harley-Davidsons, Indians, Cushmans and other classic motorcycles. On the second Saturday of every month, museum volunteers fire up several old cars and planes and put them through their paces.

WAAAM was so fascinating that it's afternoon before we leave, and



**In the fall, visitors drive the Fruit Loop to stock up on fresh local pears and apples at dozens of orchards and farm stands.**

my stomach is growling. Fortunately, several craft brewers have set up shop in town, and we head to Full Sail, one of the largest. We order Amber Ale and huge burgers topped with Gouda cheese and bacon. After lunch, we take a free 30-minute brewery tour and learn that Full Sail uses local ingredients, including hops from nearby Yakima, Washington.

Hood River not only attracts craft brewers, it's also home to a number of artists, including glass master Laurel Marie Hagner, the owner and artist behind Glassometry Studios. When we wander inside, the glass ovens are blazing hot, and we're mesmerized as Hagner and several artisans pull plugs of molten glass from the fire and shape them into bowls, bottles and other items. Hagner makes and sells glass-art pieces and teaches glass-making classes. After watching the process, we're tempted to sign up.

The afternoon sun is lighting up Mount Hood when we make our last stop at the Wy'East Vineyards tasting room just off Route 35. More than 30 wineries and 45 vineyards surround the Columbia River Gorge, and many are here in the Hood River Valley. The area's diverse micro-climates and rich soil allow a wide range of grapes — from Aglianico to zinfandel — to grow.

The Wy'East tasting room is a comfortable and relaxing space, and we join a couple from Portland sampling estate wines. As we swirl a delicious red in our glasses, we take a moment to toast the Hood River Valley. 🍷

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FR044382-0617





# RV HOME THEATER

Furrion stereo components and a MORyde TV mount move the audiovisual experience to higher levels of pleasure

**RV**ing is no longer only about going outdoors. It's about having all the comforts of home, especially if you spend extended time in your RV. Additionally, many folks today consider their electronic connectivity an extension of themselves, so their RVs are starting to reflect that identity with individualized electronic immersion.

In the not-too-distant past, electronic entertainment systems for RVs were marginal, to say the least. Even though some RV stereos would promise things like USB and Bluetooth connectivity, the firmware and components were rarely up to the task and often out of date. But demand for

new and better systems has not escaped the manufacturers, and new RVs often have a selection of good components to choose from, and in some cases, excellent components. And RV owners who would like to upgrade also have access to these improved components.

One of the relative newcomers to the American RV market is Furrion, an Australia-based company that joined with Lippert Components to provide mobile-optimized electronics for the RV and marine industries. To check out some of the latest offerings, we upgraded the entertainment system in a 2013 Coleman CTS330RL, which has a large living area with an electric fireplace.



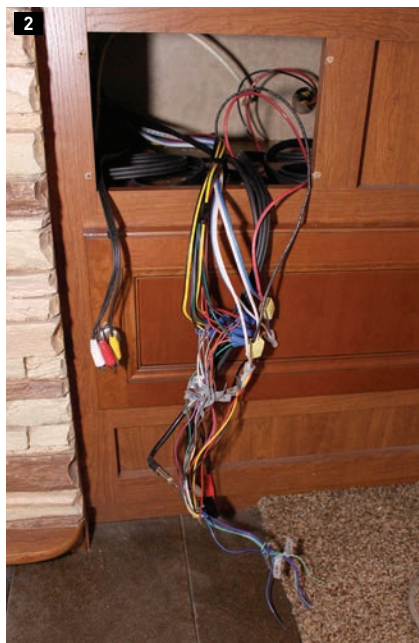
The original system included an inexpensive 26-inch TV on a simple mounting arm above the fireplace, and the buckled strap that secured the TV for travel had scratched the screen. The stereo was basic RV fare with a DVD player and inexpensive 8-inch single-cone speakers mounted in the ceiling in the living room, bedroom and exterior wall under the awning.

We had added a satellite system and Blu-ray player, with audio that fed to the stereo, and HDMI and RCA (component) cables that fed through the cabinet up to the TV. Any streaming device, like an iPhone or iPod, was connected using a 1/8-inch double-male stereo cable to an AV input on the front, because the USB provisions were even older than our iPod. The functionality and sound quality of the system were OK but certainly nothing to excite the senses.

To upgrade the system, we evaluated the type of components that would make sense for the trailer and mounting options. In many cases, component upgrades can be a simple replacement, but not in the test trailer. This became more apparent after we received the components we picked, but more on that later.

The first consideration was to upgrade the TV. After taking measurements, we could fit a 32-inch unit comfortably on the wall without it overwhelming the space; the next size up, 48 inches, was way too big. We wanted an LED HDTV with several HDMI inputs and component connections. Because the TV was to be mounted on the back wall of the trailer, we wanted it to be well made to handle the abuse on the road. In addition, we wanted a stable TV mount that would allow us to eliminate the strap.

From a componentry standpoint,



**1)** The original entertainment system, which consisted of a basic DVD stereo and a TV held to the wall with a vinyl strap for transit, was adequate but needed to be updated. **2)** Removing the stereo revealed the wiring harness and RCA connections to the factory-installed TV. These had to be changed to a new harness, and an HDMI cable was added for the HDMI-ARC feature. **3)** The original TV has a basic nonlocking articulating mount that didn't reach out far enough for good viewing from the couch or the theater seating. Also, there wasn't enough wiring for the entertainment system to connect to the TV.

we wanted a stereo with good sound, a DVD player and HDMI connectivity, plus inputs and outputs. We wanted additional connectivity, like the stereo in our truck, so we could use Bluetooth, USB and a front auxiliary input. The stereo also had to support multiple speaker zones, so the bedroom and outside speakers could be isolated, and we wanted to upgrade the speakers to improve the sound in the living room, especially while watching TV.

After studying the options from Furrion, we chose the FEHS32D9A 32-inch LED HDTV (MSRP \$502.95), the DV3300 stereo head (\$297.95) and the new FSBT43S-BL sound-bar speakers (\$105.95/pair). To mount the TV, we went to MORryde, a company

well known for its RV-suspension upgrades, for one of its wall and cabinet mounts. For this project, we choose the TV1-087H self-locking articulating-arm mount (\$154.99).

The TV and stereo head work seamlessly, as designed. They connect via HDMI with ARC (Audio Return Channel), which allows audio produced by the TV to be sent back to the stereo so it can be heard on the stereo speakers. All the components, including the Dish satellite receiver, Blu-ray player and VCR (yes, we still have one), feed directly to the TV — all but the VCR using HDMI. In addition, the over-the-air antenna and park cable connections come to the TV from the Winegard SensorPro digital signal-booster unit.

Summarily, anything watched on TV is heard in stereo through the sound-bar speakers; no audio connections need to be made to the stereo. The two units communicate in the background, so a change in the input of one reflects in the other. When a DVD is



## INSTALLATION TIPS

- Buy a coax stripper, crimper and professional RG-6 connectors, and always use RG-6 cable.
- Shop at RV-surplus warehouses for supplies and components such as screws and laminate tape for cabinetry.
- Map out your system and measure before buying.



inserted in the DV3300, the TV will turn on and go right to the correct input. Play a Blu-ray disc, and the TV and stereo will change inputs.

The DV3300 stereo has full Bluetooth connectivity with most smart devices and features NFC (Near Field Control), a convenient way of pairing an NFC-compatible device just by touching it to the Furrrion label on the front of the stereo. The Bluetooth connectivity not only supports phone functions (a microphone is on the front of the stereo) but also allows audio streaming from the wireless device. In addition, by downloading the iOS or Android Furrrion EC Control App, the DV3300 can be controlled from a smart device, making it possible to stream and select music, and control the DVD player, the radio tuner and just about every other function from another room or even out under the awning.

The Furrrion sound-bar speakers are a marked improvement over the original round paper-cone speakers. Designed as an alternative to the company's large sound bar, these are designed to replace the ceiling speakers found in most trailers, and with the separate tweeter, provide much nicer sound. An optional subwoofer is available from Furrrion to make the sound even better; however, in our case, there was no place to install it without losing cabinet space, and we're already self-conscious about volume-related thumping disturbing the neighbors, so we opted not to install one.

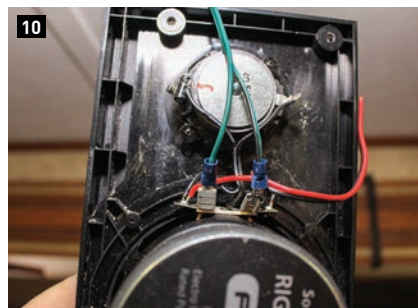
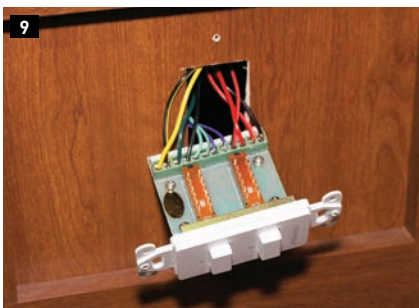
**7)** The finished TV installation required moving the receptacles and cutting the stone facade. We filled in the remaining holes with putty later. The large hole in the panel was disguised with matching laminate tape acquired from an RV-surplus store. **8)** Rewiring the stereo head was easy but required modification because the new unit had two speaker zones instead of three, which required adding a Pyle PVCS2 speaker switch. **9)** Once the speaker switch was installed, the living room speaker bars were on "A" and the bedroom and outside speakers were on "B," further split on the Pyle switch and marked. **10)** The Furrrion speakers can be hardwired or connected using the included spade terminals.



**4)** The framed wall, designed for the old TV mount, was modified for the new mounting bracket, which attached to the wall in the center behind the TV. We stripped the wall and added a 2x6-inch board for this modification. We used 2x6 lumber because that was what the manufacturer had used in the wall, but the TV is light, and smaller dimensioned lumber could have been used. **5)** Upon opening the wall, we found bad coax connections that were the source of an annoying static condition. We replaced all the connections with professional-grade RG-6 connectors. **6)** Additional HDMI cables were routed to the entertainment center; one existing cable was reused, along with the component cables for connecting to the system components, including the Furrrion stereo.

Furrrion's universal remote is provided with the TV, and it does an excellent job controlling all the components. Just about every feature of the stereo can be controlled from

the TV remote, including answering and hanging up the phone. The stereo also comes with its own credit-card-size 48-button remote, which controls everything on the DV3300, but the







larger TV remote and mobile app are better options.

Installing the system required quite a bit more work than was originally anticipated and called for some extensive wiring and carpentry. Once the system was laid out, we discovered a few things that could not be predicted in advance. None of these issues stopped us from upgrading the system, but many more hours of work were involved.

First, the original TV was mounted to a simple swing-away bracket that was attached to framing in the fireplace wall to the right side and

**11)** The hole from the original speaker had to be opened and adjusted for the new speaker. This was a better option than pulling down the ceiling panel and cutting in a new opening.

**12)** The new speakers look good and sound better. **13)** The stereo head attaches with four screws under the lower faceplate, which snaps back in place. A new cabinet style to fill in the larger hole from the old stereo was as close to the original as possible; larger holes were filled in later with matching putty.

center of the TV. The new MORyde bracket was much heavier-duty, and it mounted dead-center behind the TV, which is relatively universal. In this case, there was no mounting support in the wall. In addition, there were no HDMI cables running from the stereo and the Blu-ray player to the TV, so those had to be routed.

All this required removing the faux-stone facade, the fireplace and the upper-cabinet lauan paneling. Once the wall framing was accessed, a 2x6-inch backer was added. This also allowed routing of the HDMI cables down to the stereo cabinet.

In most cases, you won't be able to strip the wall where the TV attaches,

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so knowing where the TV backers are and what they can hold is important. Finding the backers in a wood-framed trailer is easier; trailers with laminated side walls should have aluminum plates built into the wall that are location marked. A call to the RV manufacturer may help identify TV-backer locations and how much they can hold, but only a few will have this information available, so don't count on it. Attaching to cabinets and countertops is much more straightforward.

Wiring the DV3300 was a little more of a challenge in that the stereo has a two-zone-speaker setup instead of three. In this case, we still wanted to be able to separate the inside and outside speakers, so we shopped online for a Pyle PVCS2 in-wall speaker switch (around \$14) that allowed us to split the second speaker output into two: one for the bedroom and one for the outside speakers.

When switching wiring harnesses from the old stereo to the new, switch

one circuit at a time. Feed the second speaker output to the input of the speaker switch, then attach the two sets of speakers to the A and B positions, respectively, and you're done.

We had to locate RV-cabinet stock to fill in the hole where the original stereo was mounted and make a base for the DV3300. The back of the DV3300 is a single-DIN size case, and the stereo attaches to the cabinet via four screws on the lower section of the face, underneath a removable plate.

Installing the sound-bar speakers took some careful consideration and modifications as well. Our original idea was to install them in the fireplace cabinet above or below the TV. We came to realize that the cabinet was not "tight" enough for speakers, and with the faux-stone facade, we were concerned about vibration noise. To compensate, the living room speakers in the ceiling were replaced with the sound-bar speakers.

While the wiring was adequate, the

hole was not the right size or shape, so after careful measuring and cutting with a hole saw, space was made for the tweeter, and the slight gap left by the original speakers was masked with matching ceiling-seam tape, purchased with the cabinet stock at an RV-surplus warehouse.

The Furrrion equipment, built and tested for the rigors of RV and marine use, works as promised and provides a satisfying entertainment experience. The MORryde TV mount is rock solid, locks in place and allows the TV to be pulled out and turned toward the couch or theater seating so there's no neck twisting to see the screen. All in all, the result was a tight installation that looks and sounds far better than the previous setup. 📺

#### Furrrion

888-354-5792, [www.furrrion.com](http://www.furrrion.com)

#### MORryde International

574-293-1581, [www.morryde.com/product-category/1-tv-mounts](http://www.morryde.com/product-category/1-tv-mounts)



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# INDOOR BLIZZARD



## DOMETIC REACHES A PINNACLE IN COOLING PERFORMANCE AND EFFICIENCY AFTER AN EXTENSIVE REDESIGN OF ITS LATEST ROOF-MOUNTED AIR CONDITIONER

**A**ir conditioning inside an RV has become a basic amenity that owners consider part of the standard-build landscape. Almost all RVs are equipped with at least one rooftop air conditioner, with others taking advantage of multiple units to cover more square footage. The challenge for RV manufacturers is to size the HVAC system just right, especially in units of fringe lengths where it's a coin toss whether to add a second air conditioner, or even a third. Dometic, a primary provider of roof-mounted air conditioners for a very long time, has recently brought to market a new model, the Blizzard, featuring numerous improvements in exterior design, insulation and efficiency.

In the aftermarket, owners will likely swap out older models that have a hard time keeping interior ambient temperatures at comfortable levels or have simply failed from years of use. Issues that are typically addressed

center around air distribution, fan noise and the inability to keep the temperature differential between inside and outside under control. After experiencing most of these maladies with the original air conditioner mounted

the paradigm when it comes to rooftop air conditioners.

The test fifth-wheel was fitted with only one air conditioner because its length put the decision to add a bedroom unit on the fence. Also, the owners elected to use the bedroom roof vent for a Fan-Tastic Vent fan, figuring the improved air circulation would be valuable during visits to primitive locations. That made the original air conditioner work really hard in hot weather, and the interior was never comfortable when the outside temperature exceeded 90 degrees Fahrenheit.

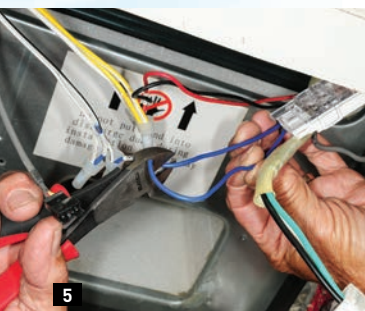
While a number of impressive assets were built into the original Atwood Air Command unit, air distribution through the network of roof ducting was rather puny. Fan noise for this model was exceptionally quiet, but the inability to completely cycle the fan in response to the thermostat set point was a deal breaker. So off it went to make room for the Blizzard.

in a 34-foot fifth-wheel, the factory-installed unit was replaced with a 15,000-Btu Blizzard NXT with heat pump to test the results of an aggressive R&D campaign by Dometic to change



Dometic's newly released Capacitive Touch Thermostat with Bluetooth capabilities allows control of the air conditioner, heat pump and furnace from a smartphone or tablet.





**1)** The ceiling-assembly shroud is removed to gain access to the hold-down bolts, **2)** which are removed to release the air conditioner from the roof. **3)** The return-air divider is removed from the ceiling assembly. It will not be used with the new air conditioner. **4)** The Molex connector, supplying 120-volt AC power to the air conditioner, is disconnected. The new air conditioner will plug into the existing connector. **5)** The thermostat and furnace trigger wires are identified and cut. **6)** The wires are bundled and secured so they won't interfere when placing the new air conditioner in the vent opening. **7)** Pushing up on the air conditioner from the inside releases the gasket from the roof so it can be removed. **8)** Climbing rope is tied around the original air conditioner and used to guide it down the rails of an extension ladder. **9)** A second person helps stabilize the air conditioner until it reaches the ground.

Removing an existing air conditioner does not require a great amount of mechanical aptitude, but it does take some effort, which can be mitigated with a few tricks of the trade. Once the ceiling assembly and the four long bolts securing the air conditioner are removed and the wiring disconnected, the unit can be lifted off the roof.

Most service centers use a forklift to bring it down from the roof, but do-it-yourselfers must be more creative. We've learned the hard way over the years to limit wear and tear on our backs, and the system we use is simple but effective. A climbing rope is tied around the air conditioner, and while the person on the roof lowers the unit by sliding it on the rails of an extension ladder leaning on the side wall, another person guides it to the ground. The opposite process is used to hoist the new air conditioner — still in its box — to the roof where it can be unpacked

and positioned over the 14x14-inch standard roof-vent opening.

The rest of the job is pretty straightforward and accomplished from the inside. It's easy to center the air conditioner in the vent opening by pushing from the inside, and once that's done, the next step is to wire it up. If a non-Dometic air conditioner is being replaced, the wiring takes some study. For this job, the Air Command thermostat required four wires, which were routed from the air-conditioner unit; the Dometic requires only three. Since the wire color-coding was not the same, we needed to assign individual wires for the 12-volt DC power, ground and thermostat, and label accordingly.

Connecting the wires at the air conditioner went with little fanfare, other than to pay attention to the new color-coding. Fortunately, the same blue trigger wires for the furnace were used, so there was no issue here. A single

**REMOVING AN EXISTING AIR CONDITIONER DOES TAKE SOME EFFORT, WHICH CAN BE MITIGATED WITH A FEW TRICKS OF THE TRADE.**







10



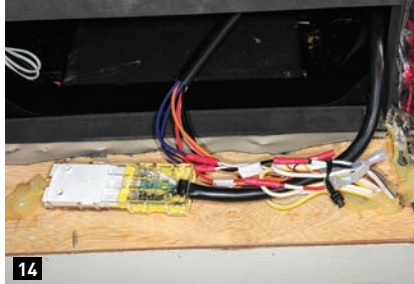
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**10)** The same rope and extension ladder are used to hoist the new Blizzard, still in its box, to the roof. **11)** The air conditioner is maneuvered over the roof-vent opening. **12)** Available in black or white, the high-impact-polypropylene injection-molded shroud and base pan have been redesigned to eliminate bird nesting and protect against corrosion and rust. New styling presents a modern look. **13)** Once the air conditioner is in place, the wiring is completed **14)** and secured to the wood frame in the ceiling opening. **15)** The previous air conditioner required four thermostat wires versus three for the Blizzard, making it necessary to note and color-code to the terminals on the thermostat circuit board.

wall-mounted thermostat controls the furnace, heat pump and air conditioning, which is a convenient feature. Power for the Blizzard is via a Molex connector, which was the same for the previous unit, so it was a simple plug-and-play operation.

Wrapping up the project required positioning of the return-air compartment partition, which took a little fiddle time to fit properly. Minor modifications were made to ensure a tight seal, which were improved with the use of aluminum tape. It's important that the return air does not mix with the cool air, or the ultimate temperature will be impacted. This process will be easier when swapping out another Dometic product. Once in place, stick-on insulation is cut to size and attached to the return air divider.

The new ceiling-assembly shroud is smaller than the original and very nice looking. Its three-piece design makes it easy to access the filter, which should be washed regularly. The only caveat was that the smaller dimensions exposed screw holes and some distortion in the ceiling material, which was unsightly. Our solution was to frame the shroud with maple molding found at a local building-supply store. It required miter cuts made on an inexpensive box with large tolerances, which were not perfect but concealed the evidence left by the previous shroud. A more refined fit will be made down the road.

While the new look of the high-impact-polypropylene injection-molded shroud and base pan is certainly snazzy,



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**16)** Long 1/4"-20 bolts are driven into the air conditioner to seat the gasket. The new gasket is softer and thicker, and can be damaged if the bolts are torqued too tightly. **17)** A few cuts are necessary to fit the return-air divider in the ceiling assembly. **18)** Once cut, aluminum tape is used to fill any gaps. **19)** The foam insulation is measured **20)** and positioned before cutting, **21)** and the backing is peeled away so it can be applied to the side of the return-air divider. You get only one shot at this, since the adhesive is very sticky and almost impossible to remove without damaging. A tight seal is necessary to prevent the return and cool air from mixing, leading to decreased efficiency.



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Map#	Event Name	Dates**	Venue
01	Great American RV Show - CO Springs	9/28/17 - 9/30/17	Norris Penrose Events Center
02	Colorado RV Adventure Travel Show	1/4/18 - 1/6/18	Colorado Convention Center
03	Wisconsin RV Show	1/5/18 - 1/7/18	Wisconsin Center District
04	Knoxville RV Show	1/5/18 - 1/7/18	Sevierville Convention Center
05	Savannah RV Show	1/5/18 - 1/7/18	Savannah Int'l Trade & Convention Center
06	Greater Atlanta RV Show	1/5/18 - 1/7/18	Georgia Int'l Convention Center
07	South Carolina RV & Camping Show - Greenville	1/5/18 - 1/7/18	TD Convention Center
08	Mid America RV Show	1/11/18 - 1/14/18	Kansas City Convention Center - Bartle Hall
09	Washington Camping RV Expo	1/12/18 - 1/14/18	Dulles Expo Center
10	Greater Chicago RV Show	1/12/18 - 1/14/18	Renaissance Schaumburg Convention Center
11	New Jersey RV & Camping Show - Edison	1/19/18 - 1/21/18	New Jersey Convention & Exposition Center
12	Lexington RV Show	1/19/18 - 1/21/18	Kentucky Horse Park
13	Cincinnati - Dayton RV Show	1/25/18 - 1/28/18	Dayton Convention Center
14	Greater Phoenix RV Show	1/26/18 - 1/28/18	Phoenix Convention Center
15	Magic City RV Show - Orlando	2/2/18 - 2/4/18	Orange County Convention Center
16	Minneapolis/St. Paul RV, Vacation & Camping Show	2/9/18 - 2/11/18	Minneapolis Convention Center
17	Richmond Camping RV Expo	2/9/18 - 2/11/18	Richmond International Raceway Complex
18	Chattanooga RV Show	2/16/18 - 2/18/18	Chattanooga Convention Center
19	Atlantic City RV & Camping Show	2/16/18 - 2/18/18	Atlantic City Convention Center
20	Gulf Coast RV Show - Mobile	2/16/18 - 2/18/18	Mobile Convention Center
21	Harrisburg RV & Camping Show - Pennsylvania	2/22/18 - 2/25/18	PA Farm Show Complex & Event Center
22	Columbus RV Show	2/23/18 - 2/25/18	Greater Columbus Convention Center
23	Colorado RV, Sports & Travel Show	3/1/18 - 3/4/18	National Western Complex
24	Central Illinois RV Show	3/2/18 - 3/4/18	Peoria Civic Center
25	Rhode Island RV & Camping Show	3/2/18 - 3/4/18	Rhode Island Convention Center
26	Virginia RV Show - Hampton	3/9/18 - 3/11/18	Hampton Roads Convention Center
27	Springfield RV & Camping Show	3/16/18 - 3/18/18	BOS Convention Center
28	Good Sam RV Super Show - Indianapolis	4/12/18 - 4/15/18	Indianapolis Motor Speedway

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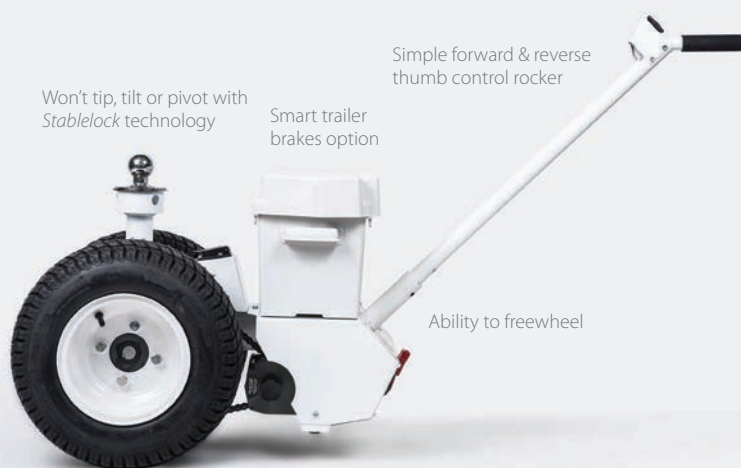
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22) Access and filter covers slide into the ceiling-assembly shroud, 23) which is screwed into the ceiling. The new shroud is smaller, leaving unsightly holes in the ceiling material. 24) Two-inch maple molding, found at a local building-supply store, is used to conceal the old holes and bunched-up material. Cuts were made on an inexpensive miter saw, which were less than accurate. Thinner molding that does not need to be removed to slide off the filter cover will be cut later and painted to match the ceiling.

we were more interested in the overall cooling performance. The Blizzard was tested in temperatures that hit 100 degrees, and the results were impressive. Most notable was the improvement in air distribution through the roof ducting. The high-capacity 350-cfm blower sent out a strong flow of air throughout the system that was much greater than the original unit.

A number of design enhancements and technology advancements contributed to a big improvement in cooling comfort inside the fifth-wheel, even when the temperature hovered at triple digits for most of the day. Strategically placed foam insulation and an integrated blower housing minimizes heat transfer so cooler air is produced and maintained. Improvements to the evaporator, condenser, fan and blower wheel all helped with the overall positive experience.

Noise and vibration were also big considerations in the revamp of this product, and improvements to the base pan get a big portion of the credit. At low speed, the noise was noticeably reduced from previous Dometic models, and even on high it was still possible to hear the television without turning the





**25)** Two-piece panels provide access to the ceiling assembly and foam filter, **26)** which should be checked monthly during regular use of the air conditioner. The filter can be cleaned with soap and water. **27)** The ceiling assembly has a modern and tidy look, and the slide mechanism for securing the panels works well.

volume to maximum. Energy-damping ribs in the base pan minimize vibration and noise, as do the density-optimized mounting blocks, which also provide a better water seal.

Other improvements include integrated plastic bird guards to eliminate nesting, a softer and thicker roof gasket that compresses easier for a better seal and an integrated drain pan for effective water drainage.

Dometic's Capacitive Touch Thermostat does a good job of controlling the air conditioner, heat pump and furnace, and its digital readout is easy to program. A new Bluetooth version allows users to set up an app on their smartphone or tablet and control the HVAC functions remotely. The Blizzard NXT air conditioner is available in 13,500- and 15,000-Btu capacities, with the latter (test unit) retailing for \$1,480. The thermostat sells for \$45; the Bluetooth model is \$88.

Air conditioning is an important amenity for any RV, and Dometic hit the mark with its design overhaul from both visual and performance standpoints. Owners will appreciate the Blizzard's cooling and power efficiency, and enjoy the indoor experience, even when outside temperatures soar. 🚐

#### Dometic

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# ONE-TOUCH LEVELING

LCI'S NEW AUTO-LEVELING SYSTEM FOR TRAVEL TRAILERS  
MAKES HAND CRANKS AND WOOD PLANKS THINGS OF THE PAST

I started out using a level, triangle jacks and wood boards. Back in the day, that's how we leveled and stabilized a trailer, or a motorhome for that matter. Drive the rig up on the boards to level it, and the triangle jacks would take some of the bounce out.

Later on, manual crank-down scissor jacks came on the scene, which did a better job of stabilizing, as did power lateral-arm jacks, but they still weren't designed to level a trailer. Motorhomes were early adopters of hydraulic leveling systems — transitioning to automatic controls — and many fifth-wheels are now fitted with similar leveling systems, but there were none for travel trailers...until now.

Lippert Components, Inc. (LCI) has

devised a leveling system for trailers. The company announced the system in 2016, and some 2017 trailers came with the first version installed from the factory. Version 2.0, which is available as an aftermarket kit, was released this year, and *Trailer Life* was offered the chance to install one of the first systems to come off the assembly line.

We installed the new Ground Control TT leveling system on a 2013 Coleman travel trailer. Installing the

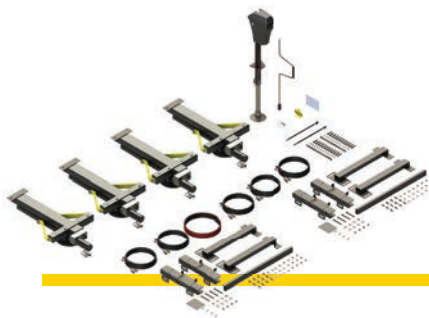
system was an ambitious project and is not recommended for casual do-it-yourselfers. Because of the complexity of installing the system, we can't cover every detail, but we will touch on the important aspects. The instruction book that comes with it is very in depth, and someone with good mechanical experience, and an extra set of hands, should be able to successfully install the system. Plan on spending the best part of two days to complete the installation.

Installation requires dropping the underbelly of the trailer. Since the test trailer had a corrugated underbelly, without insulation, this process went rather quickly. Some trailers have no underbelly at all, which would speed things up even more.

The Ground Control TT arrives on a pallet and weighs around 430 pounds, which must be considered when figuring total weight, as it compares to the gross vehicle weight rating. After factoring in the removal of the existing jacks and storage of the wooden blocks, an additional 370 pounds will be added to the test trailer. In truth, you'll still need a few of those leveling blocks for use under the jack feet when the ground is somewhat soft.







The Ground Control TT aftermarket kit comes with almost everything needed to install the system, including plug-and-play wiring harnesses.

All the components are plug-and-play with the exception of the 12-volt DC power leads that go to the battery or a power lug, if you have one. Complete wiring harnesses are fitted with weather-tight connectors. Everything is marked with a tag or sticker to indicate connections. The wiring harnesses under the trailer should be run through the frame trusses and secured with cable ties. The harness connections should be secured to the jacks with cable ties to prevent damage to the jack wiring.

Air tools are helpful but not required, but a heavy-duty ½-inch drill with good cobalt bits for drilling through steel is a must. An SAE ratchet set, torque wrench and a good selection of hand tools are also needed. In our case, the underbelly was nailed into the frame, so we pried out as many nails as we could and had to use a cutoff tool to grind off the rest — a time-consuming process.

You'll need a hole saw to make openings for routing the cables to the inside of the trailer from underneath (bundle the wires and measure the diameter before selecting the proper hole saw) and through the outside wall for the Auto Level Control touch pad. You'll also need a few carpentry tools to cut a hole for the OneControl touch panel inside the trailer. Additionally, you'll need a set of jack stands rated to handle the weight of the front of the trailer, and a 6-foot level to zero the system and set the level.

The kit is pretty complete, but you will need some additional supplies. These include lots of cable ties, a 12-volt DC 50-amp circuit breaker, spray-foam insulation and a means of reattaching the underbelly. We used self-drilling screws with washers. You'll also need at least two solderless eyelet terminals for the power lead, as you'll need to cut it and attach it to the circuit breaker, and then the other end (which already has a terminal) to the battery.

The jacks themselves are super heavy-duty electric lateral-arm-style components that are stout enough to hold the weight of the trailer, up to a maximum of 10,000 pounds. They attach via a three-piece bracket system: a frame bracket, a spacer bracket, and a center tube that goes between the left and right jacks. Twelve holes per set of jacks must be drilled. The rear jacks are mounted a minimum of 18 inches and a maximum of 30 inches from the rear-axle hanger, maintaining a 10.5- to 15-inch ground clearance.

**1)** The original scissor stabilizing jacks had seen better days. The factory-installed stabilizing jacks and the underbelly needed to be removed before installing the system. **2)** Precise measuring for the placement of the jacks is important. We used a welder's soapstone marker to locate the jacks. Remember: Measure twice and drill once. **3)** The brackets can be clamped to the frame using Vice-Grip welding clamps. They have different holes to use with different size frames. We used new cobalt bits to drill through the frame. **4)** Once the brackets are installed, the jacks are lifted and bolted into place. It's best to use a floor jack to assist with this. **5)** A hole saw is used to start the opening for the outside control panel. Then a jigsaw or RotoZip can be used to square off the hole for the panel. Use butyl tape and an appropriate liquid sealant like GE Silicone II, Geocel ProFlex RV or Sikaflex-221.





## ONE-TOUCH LEVELING

The front jacks mount a maximum of 60 inches from the front of the frame rails, maintaining the same ground clearance. It is important not to go below the approach- and departure-angle string lines. This is determined by putting a string under the tire and running it to the coupler for the approach angle, and from the tire to the end of the frame for the departure angle.

Level sensors, which detect the attitude of the trailer, are mounted on steel plates at the front and rear of the trailer in specified sections.

A replacement A-frame jack is also included with the system. It uses internal electronics that allow it to operate with the Ground Control TT system. Replacing the A-frame jack requires the front of the trailer to be supported with jack stands. The jack has a typical 12-volt DC power lead as well as two harnesses for the Ground Control system. The A-frame jack works independently of the system, with controls on the face of the motor box, but it will operate only if power is applied to the main controller. In other words, the trailer must have a full battery. A manual crank is included in the event of a power failure.

The system has three control components: the main controller board, the Auto Level Control touch pad and the OneControl touch panel.

The main controller needs to be mounted in a dry location, such as on the ceiling or wall of the forward compartment of the trailer. For this installation, a mounting board was already installed in the compartment for an inverter. There was ample room for the main controller, and it was easy to drill an additional 1½-inch hole through the floor to route the wires. We routed some of the wiring through an existing hole and the remainder through a new one, all of which were filled in with spray-foam insulation when the job was completed. Look carefully, as you may find an even better location inside a cabinet or other recess to route the cables.

Rather than mounting the Auto Level Control touch pad in an exterior compartment, which was customary for previous LCI products, the company has designed a pad that mounts to the front wall of the trailer so the operator can see the A-frame jack and initiate auto leveling and jack retraction without opening a compartment. Installing the pad requires cutting a small square hole through the side wall, being careful to clear any wiring or structures.

The touch pad operates the A-frame jack, the auto-level sequence and the return to hitch height. Pressing the up and down buttons on the panel powers on the system, and it starts in A-frame-jack mode. Pressing the other buttons begins the other sequences. A small green LED blinks when the system is operating and goes to steady green once the operation is complete.

The OneControl touch panel is designed to be installed in the living space of the RV. Beyond allowing full control and adjustment of the system, it also displays instructions and videos describing the operation of a “typical” leveling system. The panel should be mounted

**6)** The outside switch panel is installed on the front left of the trailer so the operator can see the A-frame jack. **7)** The OneControl touch-screen panel is installed in a convenient spot inside the trailer. Not only does it control the system, it displays instructions and videos on how to properly use it. **8)** Once the Ground Control is powered up, the next step is to zero the system. After the jacks hit the ground, push the arrow buttons to level the trailer using a 6-foot level placed on the floor. **9)** The extra wiring is attached to the frame truss closest to the opening in the floor where the wires are routed through to the main control board. **10)** Two leveling sensors are attached to plates and then the frame, one within 36 inches of the front and the other behind the rear jacks.



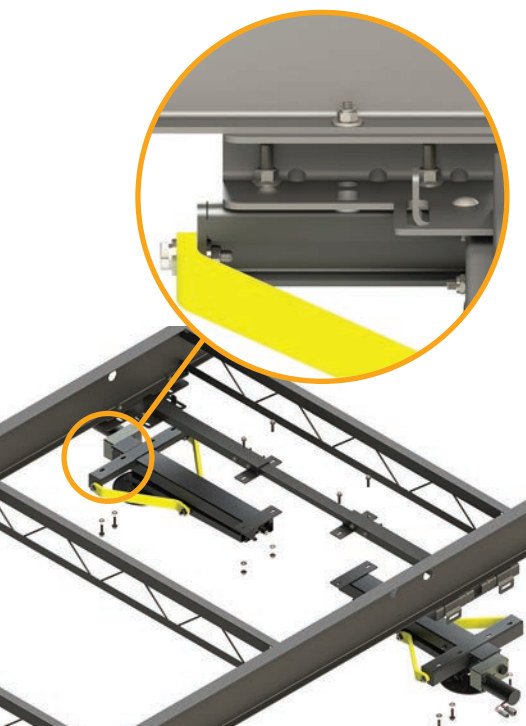


in a spot that's easy to use and where it won't get damaged; we elected to mount it close to the wall thermostat because it facilitated wire routing and there was a 12-volt DC circuit in the wall we could pull power from for the panel.

Once the whole system was set up and all the harnesses were connected, we installed the 12-volt DC 50-amp circuit breaker to the inside of the A-frame and connected the main power leads. The extra wiring was bundled and cable-tied to the frame truss closest to the wiring that was routed through the floor to the main controller. The system was zeroed and tested, and then the underbelly was replaced and resealed with spray foam as needed.

On first startup, the OneControl touch panel asks for the system to be zeroed and displays any faults. Zeroing is important, as it "tells" the system when the trailer is level. To get here, it's best to use a 6-foot level on the floor or frame of the trailer and the arrow buttons on the OneControl touch panel to completely level the trailer and then set. Once done, that's it. The system is ready to operate.

**The leveling jacks mount to the frame using brackets and a cross-trailer tube system. Drill the holes in the frame and the tube, and bolt them together. A floor jack is needed to raise the jacks into place and hold them there for mounting.**



Disconnecting from the truck is easy and done like you normally would from the A-frame-jack switch, the outside panel or the optional remote control with charger (MSRP \$274.82).

Once the trailer is disconnected, pull the truck away. When the tow vehicle is clear, hit the Auto Level button, and the system will level itself. The system remembers the hitch height and will return the A-frame to that height when it's time to hitch up.

It takes about three minutes for the entire process, during which the touch panel inside the trailer will display exactly what the controller is doing in real time, and the green LED on the outside touch pad will blink. The sequence runs as follows: the front jacks are lowered, the A-frame jack is raised about 12 inches, the rear jacks are lowered, and then the leveling adjustments are made. The touch panel inside reads "Success!," and the LED on the outside pad glows a steady green.

Each jack has a large-footprint pad attached, which reduces the need for independent jack pads on the ground, although it's best to keep a set of the pads on hand (such as the *Trailer Life*-branded oversize pads available at Camping World) for use when leveling on soft ground. An optional drop leg is available and recommended for the A-frame jack (MSRP \$52.79).

We found the system worked precisely as expected. Each jack has a manual override, and a crank is included in case of a malfunction or dead battery. For the system to operate properly, it must have full battery current and voltage. When the trailer is leveled, the floor is rock steady, with almost no side-to-side rocking. After a week on the jacks, the trailer was as steady — and level — as it was initially.

System maintenance is minimal. Aside from keeping the battery(ies) in tip-top shape, removing road dirt, grease and debris from the jacks, and then applying a thin coat of a light lubricant are all that's required.

MSRP of the Ground Control TT 2.0 is \$2,695, plus freight, with a one-year warranty. We spent about \$40 on additional materials, which will vary

## STABILIZING VS. LEVELING

The difference between stabilizing and leveling an RV generates a fair amount of confusion among RVers, especially those new to the lifestyle. Unfortunately, doing the wrong thing can lead to a damaged trailer that won't be covered by the warranty. Even though this is generally covered in the owner's manual, many people miss it, forget it or never read the operating instructions.

Stabilizing jacks on trailers are either scissor style or a light-duty lateral-arm style designed to take the bounce out of the suspension of an already leveled trailer. These jacks are not designed to hold the weight of the trailer or the torsional stresses of forward or backward movement of the trailer should it, for example, start to roll down a grade or shift on a site. These jacks will buckle if overloaded.

Leveling jacks are heavy-duty electric or hydraulic components that are designed to hold the full weight of the trailer and are part of a system of five to seven jacks, including the A-frame jack. Once parked on the site, the system picks up and levels the trailer.

It's important to know which type of jacks are mounted on your trailer and use them properly to prevent damage to the jacks and trailer. As a rule of thumb, if you have to crank them down manually, they're not leveling jacks. If the jacks are similar in style to the manual versions and operate via an electric motor, they are typically not designed for leveling. If you have any question, contact the manufacturer or your dealer.

As a matter of safety, always use wheel chocks or a device that locks the wheels whenever stabilizing or leveling a trailer, especially on a grade.

depending on the RV. If installed professionally, figure on \$1,500 or so for labor, depending on the amount of disassembly required and the shop's hourly rate.

While the leveling system is a sizable investment, the payoff in convenience is realized very quickly. With the system installed, trailer owners can say goodbye to boards and aching backs and hello to a rock-steady floor that's on the level. 🚐

**Lippert Components, Inc.**

574-537-8900

[www.lci1.com/ground-control-tt](http://www.lci1.com/ground-control-tt)



# Bluetooth Duo

Controlled by a mobile app, King's outdoor-speaker-and-LED-light combo replaces the porch fixture

**DIFFICULTY** 1 2 3 4 5

**TIME TO COMPLETE** 30 MINUTES

**TOOLS NEEDED** SCREW GUN, SCREW BITS, UTILITY KNIFE, WIRE CUTTERS, WIRE STRIPPERS, CRIMPING TOOL, CAULKING GUN

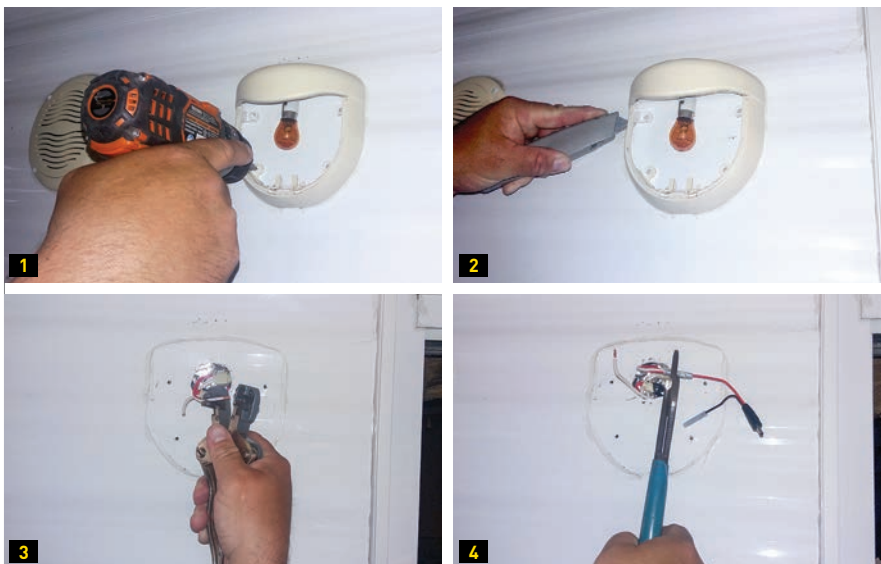
Many RVs aren't equipped with exterior speakers, and those that are often have speakers with disappointing sound quality. Installing new ones can be a time-consuming and difficult procedure requiring cutting holes in the RV's side wall and running speaker wires to the stereo. A simpler solution is replacing the existing porch light with King's RV Media Bluetooth speaker-and-light fixture.

The RV Media speaker streams audio from any Bluetooth-capable smartphone, tablet, computer or factory stereo head with A2DP technology. The standard model features weatherproof 100-watt Bluetooth speakers and 45 white LED lights. The premium model has the same audio system plus 45 color-changing LED lights that can be controlled with a free mobile app for Apple and Android devices. Both models are available in black or white.

We installed the white premium RVM2000 on a 2013 Breckenridge travel trailer. Although the Breckenridge has adequate outside speakers, the stereo system does not have Bluetooth capability, and the owners were unable to play music from their favorite streaming service.

The RVM2000 measures 13½ inches long, 5½ inches high and 2¼ inches deep. Its curved shape helps to create sound separation between the unit's two speakers and looks aerodynamic when mounted to the side wall.

Installation begins with removing



**1) The light lens on the original fixture is taken off, and the four screws are removed with a No. 2 square-head bit. 2) A utility knife is used to carefully cut the silicone sealer. 3) With the fixture removed, the power and ground wires are cut, and ¼ inch of insulation is stripped from each wire. 4) Butt connectors are used to quickly and securely attach the male power lead.**

the existing porch light. Make sure the light is turned off to prevent blowing the fuse. Carefully cut the silicone sealer around the fixture, then remove the light lens and the mounting screws.

The RVM2000 is hardwired to the trailer using the wires that powered the original light. The two-wire male power lead included with the speaker is connected to the porch-light wires using crimp-on connectors. It is important that the 12-volt DC positive wire is connected to the red wire of the male power lead and the negative wire is connected to the black wire.

On the Breckenridge, the

positive wire was red, and the negative wire was white. If you are unsure which wire is positive, a multimeter can be used to check polarity.

The male power lead is then plugged into the female connector on the back of the RVM2000. Wrapping the connection with electrical tape will help ensure that the connectors stay attached.

A foam gasket is applied on the back of the speaker to help make a weather-tight seal. Optional mounting

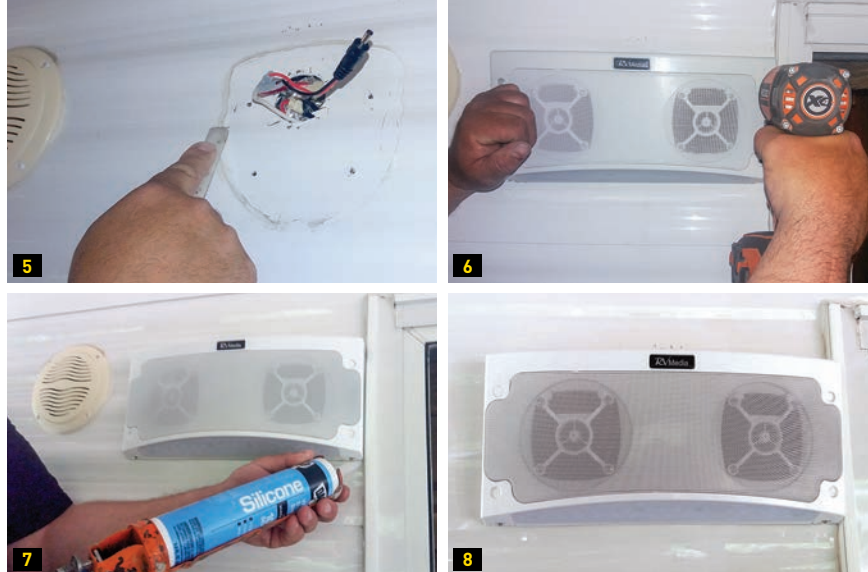
**SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE »** The weatherproof King RV Media fixture not only allows streaming of high-quality audio outside the RV but also provides a rainbow of color-changing LEDs, all controlled from a mobile device.



brackets are included that add screw-attachment points for the speaker, which we chose not to use on the Breckenridge because we were able to screw the RVM2000 into the porch light's wood backing plate, securely attaching the speaker to the wall. Weatherproof plugs are inserted in the screw holes, and a bead of silicone around the edge of the fixture completes the installation.

We had no problem pairing the RVM2000 to Apple and Andoid devices, and the sound quality from the speaker exceeded our expectations. The music was clear with no distortion, even at high volume, and the bass output was surprisingly deep.

The LEDs and speakers are controlled by a mobile app available from Apple's App Store and Google Play. The app allows the user to turn the light on and off, dim and brighten it, change colors automatically, control the speed of the color changes, select an amber insect light and set a sleep timer using



**5)** A plastic scraper and mild solvent remove the remaining silicone sealer without damaging the siding. **6)** The King RV Media fixture is carefully leveled and screwed into place with the supplied screws. **7)** A bead of caulking ensures that no water will get behind it. **8)** The new fixture looks and sounds great, and provides much more lighting under the awning.

a smart device. An audio equalizer, accessible on the app, enhances the sound with six program modes.

The premium King RV Media speaker and light (RVM2000/white, RVM2001/black) has an MSRP of \$249.99. The standard model

(RVM1000/white, RVM1001/black) retails for \$199.99. 🚚

### King

952-922-6889

[www.kingconnect.com/product/premium-outdoor-speaker-light](http://www.kingconnect.com/product/premium-outdoor-speaker-light)



## THE LEVELING AUTHORITY



**Ground Control® 3.0**

### FIFTH-WHEEL LEVELING SYSTEM

With the push of a button, Ground Control® 3.0 levels and stabilizes the RV in a matter of minutes and features automatic re-hitch memory that remembers the exact height at which the RV was unhitched to save RVers time when hooking up.

### PRODUCT FEATURES



**AUTOMATIC, ONE-TOUCH ELECTRIC LEVELING**



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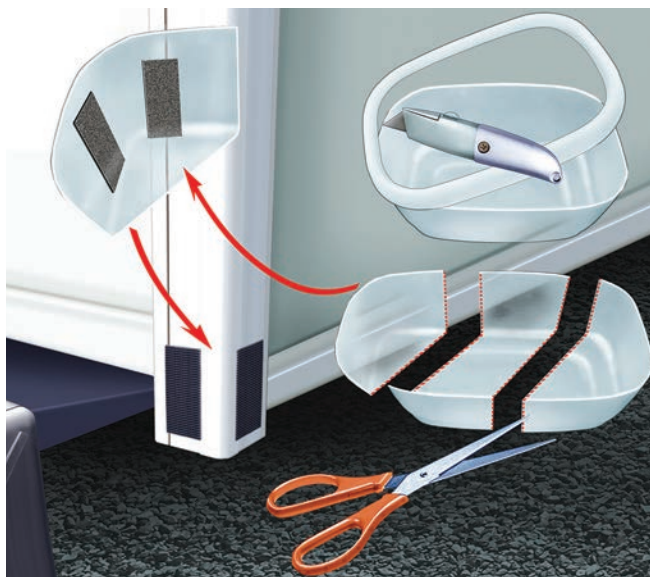
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## Trailer-Cover Saver

In the directions for my travel trailer's Tyvek cover, it indicates that the cover should not come in contact with sharp corners to prevent it from tearing and to keep from voiding the warranty. Naturally, all the lower corners of my trailer are sharp. After experimenting with different things, I made an inexpensive and effective solution.

I collected a couple of disposable plastic food containers, the kind that sliced sandwich meat comes in from the grocery store. I cut off the top lip of each container with a box cutter, then used scissors to cut each one diagonally to make two corner protectors and tossed out the middle part. I trimmed the jagged cuts to make them smooth. Using two pieces of hook-and-loop fastener for each corner, I attached the loop portions to the bottom corners of the trailer and the hook portions to the inside of the plastic containers so they align. I then attached the plastic corner pieces over the corners of the trailer.

These corner protectors weigh only a few grams, are easy to attach and remove, and work great. I've used them on all four bottom corners, plus the bumper corners for years.

**David Acton, Oak Harbor, Washington**



## Coffee-Canister Tableware Caddy

We enjoy the outdoors when camping in our Keystone travel trailer. To keep a supply of plastic utensils on hand that's easy to grab and take outside, I arrange them in a 52-ounce Folgers coffee container that I bought at Costco and used divider cardboard to make four sections.

The plastic container is the perfect height for forks, spoons, knives and drinking straws and, with the divider, each utensil has its own space. When the party's over, the Folgers lid goes back on, and the tableware container is stashed until the next time.

**Janice Klepper, Schertz, Texas** 🚐

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







## Peace of Mind for Pet Owners

Pet owners are always concerned when they leave their furry and feathered buddies behind. The Nimble Wireless N5 Pet Temperature Monitor from RV PetSafety provides reassurance that pets are comfortable inside the RV. Operating on a rechargeable battery, the palm-size monitor measures ambient temperature. Mobile apps for Apple and Android devices allow RVers to track indoor temperatures remotely in real time. If the high or low limit established by the user is exceeded, the monitor can send email and text alerts to as many as five contacts. For the notification service, a monthly or annual service fee is required.

**MSRP: \$179**

**Service: \$19.99/month, \$200/year**

**855-983-5566, [www.rvpetsafety.com/nimble](http://www.rvpetsafety.com/nimble)**

Circle 131 on Reader Service Card



## Bug Off!

Few things are more annoying when enjoying the outdoors than swatting away swarming mosquitoes, no-see-ums and black flies. One solution is to create a 15x15-foot mosquito-free bubble with one of several products from Thermacell. These repellants use heat-activated allethrin, a synthetic copy of the natural insecticide found in chrysanthemums. The Backpacker (right) attaches to a camping-fuel canister, and according to the company, fends off insects for up to 90 hours. The Scout Camp Lantern (left) and MR450 Repeller (center) provide the same protection using butane-lighter cartridges and mat refills that last up to 12 hours.

**MSRP: \$34.99/MR450 Repeller**

**\$39.99/Backpacker and Scout**

**866-753-3837, [www.thermacell.com](http://www.thermacell.com)**

Circle 132 on Reader Service Card



## Watch Your Waste

Making sure the RV's sewer hose stays put when connected to the campsite or dump-station hookup just got easier with the new Sewer Saddle Bag from JD Solutions. Simply fill the side-by-side pouches with sand or gravel and drape the weighted bag over the hose where it connects to the sewer hookup. The bag stays in place to protect against waste spills and helps keep a tight connection, according to the manufacturer. Constructed of 18-gauge reinforced nylon for durability in a cautionary-yellow color for visibility, the Sewer Saddle Bag is washable and made in the USA. A portion of the sale price goes to support military veterans.

**MSRP: \$29.90**

**865-851-1225**

**[www.thesewersaddlebag.com](http://www.thesewersaddlebag.com)**

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## Sweet Streaming

It's rare to find an RVer these days who doesn't use a smartphone, tablet, laptop, smart TV, media player or other device to connect with the outside world. The Winegard Connect WF1 (top) can make that connection stronger by extending the Wi-Fi range inside or near the RV. Taking RV connectivity to the next level, Winegard's new Connect 4G1 (bottom) works when Wi-Fi isn't available, linking mobile devices to a nationwide 4G LTE network, whether the rig is parked or in motion. With rooftop Wi-Fi and cellular antennas, the 4G1 provides higher signal strength for better internet streaming, according to Winegard. Simple on-screen instructions make it easy to set up multiple devices and establish a secure wireless network. A prepaid 30-day data plan is required for 4G LTE service.

**MSRP: \$549/WF1. \$749/4G1. Data plans: \$20/1GB, \$35/3GB, \$80/10GB, \$150/20GB**

**800-288-8094, [www.winegard.com/connect](http://www.winegard.com/connect)**

Circle 134 on Reader Service Card



by Bruce W. Smith

## One Wicked Turbo

Owners of 1999 to 2003 7.3-liter Ford Super Duty trucks in need of a boost now have the option of a drop-in replacement for the factory Garrett GTP38 turbo that increases power, lowers EGT and improves low-end throttle response, according to DieselSite. The company's Wicked Ball Bearing Turbo brings new life to early Power Strokes by upgrading each new GTP38 with a Wicked Wheel 2 compressor wheel, 360-degree thrust bearing, 1.0 A/R turbine housing, a beefier center section and a Turbo Master waste-gate controller. The new turbo is backed by a one-year warranty and comes with O-rings for reinstallation. DieselSite also offers a stock-size Garrett turbo replacement for 2003 to 2007 6-liter Power Strokes.

**MSRP: From \$1,150. 888-414-3457, [www.dieselsite.com](http://www.dieselsite.com)**

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## Hose Handler

Anyone who has had trouble attaching or removing the freshwater hose from the RV-park connection will appreciate the new Hose-Grip from J Wright Concepts. True to its name, the patent-pending Hose-Grip makes tightening and loosening the hose easier, particularly in cold and wet conditions and for those with limited hand dexterity or strength. The nickel-plated, lead-free fittings and short length of drinking-water-safe hose are designed to withstand burst pressure exceeding 300 PSI, according to the company.

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## Undercover Dashboard

A great way to reduce windshield glare and protect the front of your tow vehicle from sun damage is to install a dash cover, such as those from the Active RV Upholstery Center in Yuma, Arizona. Dash covers can also keep the vehicle cooler in summer and warmer in winter. Active RV Upholstery's custom dash covers for cars and trucks come in five materials and carry a 30-day satisfaction guarantee. The company also repairs RV furniture and makes cushion replacements, seat covers and dash covers for motorhomes.

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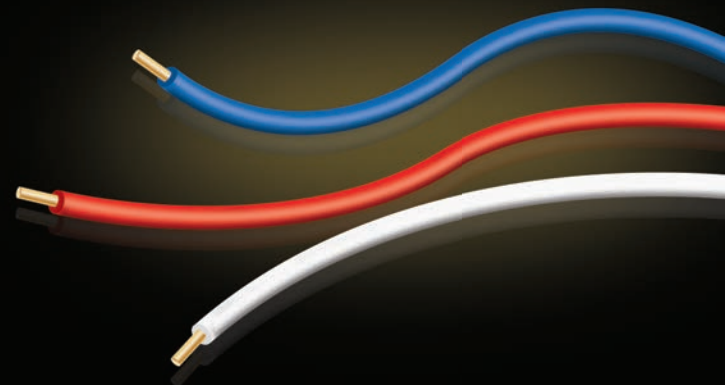


## STRAY POWER WIRE

**Q** I bought a newer trailer and swapped out the batteries. I want to wire them in parallel, as I had done in my old trailer. But this trailer has a blue wire (with a 30-amp inline fuse), a red wire (with a 30-amp inline fuse) and a white wire (grounded to the frame). I believe the red goes to the positive terminal and the white goes to the negative terminal on the other battery. Where does the blue wire go?

**Jay Monroe, via email**

**A** Since the blue wire has a fuse, it's likely a power wire for some accessory, Jay, and it should be connected to the place on the batteries where you connect the main red power line for the trailer. The fact that the blue line has its own fuse indicates that it powers something without going through the RV's fuse panel. It could easily be the power



line for the electric A-frame jack, for example, and using an inline fuse for an accessory right next to the battery makes more sense than running the wires longer distances through the fuse panel. By tracing the blue wire, you can determine what it powers.

## SAFE HALF-TON FIFTH-WHEEL TOWING

I read your response to Bryan Pollock's "Half-Ton Fifth-Wheel Towing" letter in the August RV Clinic, where it was suggested that some light trucks hauling fifth-wheels are probably overloaded, and I became alarmed that I might be part of that crowd.

I drive a 2015 Ford F-150 4x2 Crew Cab with the 3.5-liter EcoBoost engine, a 3.55:1 rear-axle ratio and the heavy-duty towing package. It has a maximum gross combined weight rating (GCWR) of 17,000 pounds and an 11,900-pound maximum loaded trailer weight rating. I pull a 36½-foot 2016 Highland Ridge Open Range Light LF295FBH that has double bunks and a gross vehicle weight rating (GVWR) of 10,995 pounds.

I happened to be leaving on a two-week camping trip when I read the letter, so I had the truck and RV fully loaded, including firewood, ice chest, chairs, games, and a full pantry and fridge. The fresh- and wastewater tanks were empty.

I weighed it at the nearby Flying J

Certified Automated Truck scale (just \$13 for two weights), and the loaded truck and trailer came in at 15,700 pounds, or 1,300 pounds less than the GCWR. Just the trailer axles on the scale came in at 8,580 pounds, or 1,820 pounds less than the trailer's gross axle weight rating (GAWR). The trailer alone, with its landing legs and axles on the scale but keeping the truck's rear axle off the scale, came in at 10,120 pounds, or 875 pounds below the trailer's GVWR.

I am happy to report that I am not among the group of overloaded light trucks hauling fifth-wheels. Thank you for teaching me how to determine this, as discussed in your reply to Richard Roper's question, "Truck and Trailer Weight," also in the August RV Clinic.

**Isaac Andrade, Benbrook, Texas**

Thank you for the detailed breakdown on checking out your truck and trailer weights, ratings, capacities and so forth, Isaac. You did it the right way with the lash-up loaded for a trip and ready to roll. To add one factor, it looks like your trailer's hitch weight was about 1,540

pounds, after deducting its 8,580-pound axle weight from the 10,120-pound overall weight. You should check your truck's rear-axle GAWR, compare it to the rear-axle weight and see if your F-150 has adequate capacity to handle that trailer-hitch weight. You should be OK, but it wouldn't hurt to verify the figures.

This is the kind of procedure that would help a variety of our readers determine how their rigs shape up. We appreciate your note, and congratulations on a safe and successful pairing.

## ROUTINE ROOF MAINTENANCE

**Q** We now own our fourth fifth-wheel trailer since beginning our RV experience in 1997. Roof maintenance has never been a concern because we bought a new fifth-wheel about every five years. We've had our current 2011 Keystone Laredo 266RL for about six years now. Should we be concerned with roof maintenance? If so, what kind and how often? We do not have the luxury of storing the trailer under a roof.

**Ron and Sue Seese  
Medical Lake, Washington**

**A** Roof maintenance consists of washing, inspecting and resealing on a regular basis, Ron and Sue. Your

### TECH EXPERT



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

owner's manual will include specific cleaning and treatment recommendations for your Laredo's rubber roof.

A regular maintenance regimen is needed to prevent chalking, black streaks and cracking. This usually consists of sweeping and hosing off the roof, scrubbing with a rubber-roof cleaner, then using a protectant product designed specifically for rubber roofs. Camco, Protect All and others offer suitable products, or you can do an on-line search for "RV rubber roof cleaner."

Always confirm that the roof is walk-on capable to prevent damage and use extreme caution when you're up on a wet roof. When in doubt, hire a reputable RV-detailing company to do the job for you. You should also keep a close eye on the fiberglass endcaps and keep those especially clean and well protected with a UV-resistant wax and sealer.

Because you can't store your trailer under cover, the best thing to do is to use an RV cover that is sized and fitted to your trailer. Choose a good-quality product and install it as directed, and you'll limit sun and weather exposure and wear and tear on the trailer. Another option for long-term durability (and low maintenance) is one of the permanent RV-roof treatments, such as RV Armor, that is applied over the roof surface and offers a lifetime material and labor warranty.

## BOONDOCKING BATTERIES II

In response to Harold Harris' letter, "Boondocking Batteries," in August's RV Clinic, I wanted to share my story. I recently added a solar system to my 26-foot Forest River Rockwood 2608SS travel trailer. I added a single 265-watt solar panel, a Morningstar ProStar MPPT charge controller with multistage charging (the one used for off-grid installations) and a TriMetric TM-2030-RV monitor that shows the exact input and draw on the batteries, which the charge controller does not. I added two 6-volt Trojan T-105 RE batteries rated at 225 amp hours each, which are more amp hours than golf-cart batteries.

Recently, we camped for four days on just solar with careful monitoring.








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EQUAL HOUSING LENDER

My cousin is a solar retailer, and he set me up with an "industrial-grade" solar package. We are headed to Montana for a month or so off the grid, and I wanted to be sure that we get as much power as possible. We have a Honda 2,000-watt generator as backup, but that silence of solar is golden.

**Robert Lauzon, Flagstaff, Arizona**

Robert, it sounds as if you've put together a functional system that covers your needs. Yes, indeed, it's nice to be able to leave the generator shut down most of the time. Choosing a charge controller that includes electrical-flow history is a good way to help monitor your system and how it's doing at any point in the charging or discharging cycle.

**BOONDOCKING BATTERIES III**

**Q** We own a fully outfitted Winnebago Micro Minnie. We try to stay at campgrounds with full hookups but occasionally have to camp with no power. Can you recommend a good 12-volt DC solar-battery charger?

**Brad Geer, Hancock, New Hampshire**

**A** Brad, check out the above letter from Robert Lauzon. He says he's had good luck with the Morningstar model, but there are numerous charge controllers on the market that will do a good job. If you're referring to the complete setup with a solar-panel charge controller, wiring and all, there are very few such complete kits available. Most solar-charging setups are designed with the customer's requirements in mind, so each is a bit different. For starters, you can consult with AM Solar in Springfield, Oregon ([www.amsolar.com](http://www.amsolar.com)), because solar installations are their specialty, and it's all they do.

**TRAILER-TIRE BALANCING**

**Q** My wife and I recently bought a new Jayco Eagle HT fifth-wheel and a truck to pull it. On our last adventure, we grazed a piece of tractor-trailer re-tread, which put a hole in the sidewall of one of the trailer's tires. The tire could

not be repaired, and we had to replace it after we got home. In so doing, I noticed there were no balancing weights on the tire and spoke with the RV service manager at our local facility who said RV trailer tires are not balanced. What?

After many years of working at gas stations and a vehicle-inspection station, and having owned two boat trailers with balanced wheels, I found that quite strange. Is this true, and if so, why? By the way, I pulled the three remaining tires and spare, and they are now balanced!

**Russ Carlow, Glenmoore, Pennsylvania**

**A** When your local service manager said, "RV trailer tires are not balanced," he was right for the most part. RV manufacturers generally do not balance the tires on new trailers that roll from their factories, most likely because it would add to the cost and hasn't been done traditionally. However, the fact that this is what most RV manufacturers do certainly doesn't make it right.

RV trailer tires should be balanced for the same reasons that the tires on your tow vehicle are balanced. The long-term benefits of running balanced tires far outweigh the minor added up-front cost. Balanced tires produce less vibration-induced damage to the RV, and although there are no occupants in the trailer to feel the shaking, it's still happening. Balanced tires run smoother and last longer with less erratic tread wear, and that makes them more reliable.

Given the current problems with cheap imported tires on many trailers and fifth-wheels, balancing the tires is the simplest way to start improving your trailer's rolling reliability.

## TRAILER-AXLE ALIGNMENT

I've read several letters lately about axle-alignment issues. Lippert Components makes the Correct Track alignment system. The factory spring shackles are replaced with the Lippert system, which has an eight-sided cam on both ends of each axle. A laser is used to align the axles. The kit also raises the trailer 2 inches, which is why

I had them installed.

In the process, the team at the Houghton Lake Camping World discovered that the factory bushings had been damaged and needed to be replaced. Houghton Lake and the other two Michigan Camping World locations are Lippert-trained and -authorized installation centers.

**Jim Truxton, Baldwin, Michigan**

The Correct Track is a great solution for aligning trailer axles, Jim, and well worth the investment in improved towing, reduced tire wear and blowouts. The system can help set the trailer axles parallel to each other and perpendicular to the hitch, and both are factors in smooth towing.

A trailer axle can also be bent, which throws the tires out of alignment. For example, if you hit a curb hard, it can tweak the spindle out of line. An overloaded trailer or undersized axle can also result in a bent axle due to excess weight. These conditions need to be

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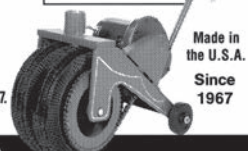
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While every effort is made to maintain accuracy and completeness, last-minute changes may occasionally result in omissions or errors.

repaired by a chassis shop familiar with solid axle adjustments. These people typically use laser alignment hardware similar to that used by automotive alignment shops, and the adjustments can make a big difference in mitigating tire issues.

## LEXUS OR YUGO?

**Q** Since buying our 22-foot 2009 Heartland North Trail in 2013, we have had years of near-flawless reliability. Despite my searching, two answers have eluded me. Can you help?

First, is there a source that rates RVs? I can find no website that is a *Consumer Reports* of trailer models. Did we luck out and purchase a trailer that is a "Lexus," or should I be aware because my "Yugo" is overdue for a breakdown?

Second, is trailer design improving? I have had only one incident of popping a circuit breaker, but I had to lie on my side with a flashlight (in the daytime) to reset it. And I still can't find the water pump (despite the very helpful people at Heartland) to be able to fully winterize. The bare-bones owner's manual is inadequate.

**Steve Preas, Loganville, Georgia**

**A** It seems like you've had great luck with your Heartland and are waiting for the other shoe to drop, Steve. There are worse problems to have.

To answer your questions, first, there are no *Consumer Reports*-type sources for long-term RV product quality or durability ratings. Many customers find it productive to visit owners' forums to see what others are saying about a product line or model.

I'm not sure I can suggest that trailer construction is improving, although manufacturers are making efforts to bump up quality. Things like resetting a circuit breaker can happen on any RV, and the engineers sometimes don't take ergonomics into account when planning component placement.

If the people who designed and built the trailer can't tell you where they installed the water pump, which seems incredible (but then again ...

maybe not), check with your dealer's service department.

## TIRE PRESSURE DROPPING

**Q** I have a 2016 Forest River Rockwood fifth-wheel and have been having issues with tires. They keep losing pressure, and when I've taken the trailer to the dealer, the tech told me the problem was the aluminum rims and to just keep monitoring them. I'm afraid that every time I add air it weakens the tire and I'm in for trouble.

Is it possible to put tubes in trailer tires? Is there another solution? We just got back from an outing and had a blowout on Interstate 90 in New York.

**Norm Underwood, Bloomfield, New York**

**A** Aluminum rims are not inherently more prone to loss of tire air pressure, Norm. That technician was wrong and gave you bad information. If a rim is indeed causing air loss, it's because of a manufacturing or equipment defect such as a bad valve stem, some of which are cheaply made and tend to leak or fail. A rubber tire naturally loses air pressure over time, which is why it's always recommended to check and adjust the pressure as needed before starting any voyage. If anything, a poor-quality tire or faulty valve stem might be a more likely source of rapid pressure loss.

A "normal" pressure loss might be about 2 PSI per month. If your trailer's tires are losing significantly more than that, a good tire shop should be able to help you find the source of the leak(s) by submerging the tire-and-wheel assembly in water. If the pressure loss is indeed excessive, you might want to present the information to your dealer because it's likely the tires are defective.

To answer your other question, yes, you can have tubes installed in the tires as a stopgap measure against excess air loss, but it's a bad idea. A tire carcass changes shape and moves a lot in use. With a tube inside, that movement results in a lot of friction between the tube and the tire, and that can cause excess heat buildup in the tire, especially in the sidewall area. That heat buildup is a surefire recipe for blowout disaster;



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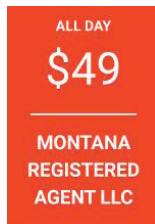


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it's better to find the cause of the excess pressure loss and cure it.

## TOW-RIG SELECTION

**Q** I plan to couple a 2017 Ford F-150 XLT SuperCrew 3.5-liter EcoBoost with a Winnebago Minnie 2500RL, very similar to the 2500FL trailer on the January 2017 cover of *Trailer Life*. The truck's towing capacity exceeds the 5,160 pounds of the trailer and gives plenty of margin for passengers, fluids and cargo. The maximum tow package allows 1,220 pounds of hitch load, which also exceeds the 695 pounds of the trailer's hitch weight.

Everything looks good, but I still have many doubts and would appreciate your advice. If I plan to use the pickup to tow the Minnie, would you recommend a 2x4 or a 4x4? Which wheelbase should I choose? Would the 3.55:1 electronic locking axle ratio be a good choice? Are extended mirrors a must? And finally, would a bed cap raise any security issue?

**Rafael Huacuja, Laredo, Texas**

**A** You need a 4WD only if you plan to drive on low-traction surfaces such as steep gravel or dirt roads, mud, snow and so forth. If not, a 2WD is fine. A longer wheelbase is generally more stable for towing, but if a shorter-wheelbase pickup is more to your liking, it will also work.

The locking differential option also relates to your question about 2WD versus 4WD. If you'll need a 4WD, the locking differential is terrific. If a 2WD tow rig works, the locking differential is less important.

Extended mirrors are legally required in many areas; check your local DMV for more information. I'm not sure what you mean by "security issue" with a bed cap, as a locking-type solid cap can help keep your cargo a bit more secure than a nonlocking cap, so a bed cap can help improve security. 🚚

**HAVE A QUESTION?** » Email [rvclinic@trailerlife.com](mailto:rvclinic@trailerlife.com) or write to RV Clinic, 2750 Park View Court, Suite 240, Oxnard, California 93036. Include your full name and hometown. Selected letters will be answered in the magazine, but time does not permit individual replies. No phone calls, please.

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# Miracle on Ice

Olympic venues, fall colors and gold-medal views greet visitors in Lake Placid, New York

I was born in 1961, 9 miles from Lake Placid, a resort past its prime in New York's Adirondack Park whose fortune was tied to the long-past 1932 Winter Olympics. Each fall, as the maples shed their autumn luster, the village tarnished a little more, too.

In 1980 Lake Placid landed its second Olympiad and got a much-needed facelift, but I was no longer there. I watched America's scrappy underdogs beat the Soviet Union's hockey hotshots — dubbed the Miracle on Ice — from my college dorm. Then life took me to other places. My infrequent trips to the Adirondacks were all about family and rarely involved the Olympic sites.

Last fall, as the leaves began their colorful show, I spent a couple of days in Lake Placid as a tourist. I swallowed my panic as my body compressed around the turns on the bobsled track. I peered dizzily down from the top of the 120-meter ski jump. I marveled at future Olympic freestyle skiers flipping and twisting in the air, practicing for their next World Cup, and I skated to imagined glory in the arena where the Miracle occurred.

Most of Lake Placid's Olympic venues are open year-round and available to the public to experience or watch. If you can't schuss the downhill runs at Whiteface Mountain, you can still ride over them in a gondola. Better yet, drive up the Veterans Memorial Highway for a bird's-eye view of the Adirondack Park. (The gondola stops below the summit.)

The top of Whiteface was the pinnacle of my return to Lake Placid. An observatory, nicknamed the Whiteface Castle, crowns this alpine landmark. Granite removed during construction of the road was used to build the castle, which was commissioned in 1929 as part of a public-works project under Governor Franklin D. Roosevelt. Completed in 1935, the project became the model for President Roosevelt's New Deal during the Great Depression.

There are 46 mountains in the Adirondacks that reach above 4,000 feet, including Whiteface (4,865 feet). From Whiteface's crown, I counted 23 of them, as well as Camel's Hump and Mount Mansfield to the east in Vermont. Crimson valleys connected these impressive punctuations on the landscape, creating an unforgettable gold-medal view.

Sometimes it takes a while before a native daughter appreciates what her hometown has to offer. 🚗



## Adirondack Allure

(Top) A snowless look down the inrun of the 120-meter ski jump at Lake Placid's Olympic Jumping Complex. (Above) Whiteface, the 4,865-foot Olympic mountain, wears a skirt of colorful fall foliage.



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