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**On The Cover:** Foretravel's newly redesigned IH 45 luxury diesel coach cruises the back roads of Nacogdoches, Texas (see the evaluation on page 46). **Photo by Bob Livingston.**

# DINGHY TOWING FEVER

**T**owing a dinghy vehicle is more popular than ever. It almost looks strange to see a coach on the road without one. We left our dinghy home on our last trip and it felt as though we were missing a friend. You know that sinking feeling when you hit the road and discover you left something at home? It's not quite like forgetting your dog, but leaving our Jeep at home was almost as traumatic. We weren't in camp 15 minutes before whining about needing transportation to run an errand. Fortunately, our friends — towing a dinghy, of course — were on their way.

Dinghy watching is almost as much fun as checking out the other coaches in the park. Over the years I've seen just about every possible type of vehicle being towed. There are four groups of people: the more conservative owners looking for practical transportation, the 4WD and SUV crowd, people looking for basic transportation in a subcompact car, and those who want to make a statement.

The conservative approach focuses on four-door sedans with preferably an automatic transmission and capable of transporting at least four people. This probably makes the most sense because typically the dinghy vehicle serves double duty as a daily driver when home.

There are quite a few sedans and subcompacts suitable for towing on all four wheels without making drivetrain modifications, as you'll see by checking out the official "2013 Guide to Dinghy Towing" that's poly-bagged with this month's issue. Subcompact fans will like the Chevy Spark featured on the cover of the guide and can always consider cars like the Fiat 500 or Honda Fit.

If you really want to be practical, consider one of the four passenger cars that are powered by hybrid drivetrains. Ford offers two C-MAX and two Fusion models. The Energi option for both of these cars features plug-in technology and exceptional fuel economy. Hybrid cars can usually best most subcompacts



when it comes to fuel mileage and they have more room. Weight is not that much of a factor, but the sticker price is higher.

For those looking for more adventurous activities, a compact 4WD SUV (or pickup) is just the ticket. These nimble vehicles are great for exploring backroads, offer plenty of room for passengers and can hold a lot of stuff. Most 4WDs can be flat towed with automatic transmissions, but don't expect great fuel economy, although GM offers hybrid variations in a few models. You pay the price for utility, but the versatility is hard to beat — as long as you can handle the weight.

The fourth category of dinghy owners is more eclectic. These vehicles are extensions of the owner's personality. The range of choices can include classic cars to small convertibles adorned with garish trim and paint schemes.

While the list of vehicles in this year's guide is impressive, we've lost a few favorites to engineering changes that prevent dinghy towing. Notably the Ford Escape is no longer towable. Also the Chevy Cruze, which was clearly towable based on information in the owner's manual, was deemed unsuitable after Chevrolet changed its recommendation later in the model year. That put a number of people who bought the Cruze for the sole purpose of towing behind their motorhomes in a very tenuous position.

It's too expensive to get stuck with a vehicle subject to after-the-sale changes, so here's my suggestion: After confirming (with your own eyes) the vehicle is towable, consider asking the salesperson to put a stipulation on the purchase order that reflects the usage of the vehicle. If something changes down the road, you might have stronger recourse.

Dinghy towing is an extension of coach ownership; enjoy the guide — and the pull. ♦

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MotorHome (ISSN 0744-074X) is published monthly by GS Media & Events (a division of Good Sam Enterprises, LLC), 3300 Fernbrook Lane N #200, Minneapolis, MN 55447. Periodicals postage paid at Plymouth, MN 55447 and additional mailing offices. The annual subscription rate is \$19.97 per year in the U.S. For Canadian and International subscriptions, add \$12 per year. U.S. funds only.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to MotorHome, P.O. Box 5860, Harlan, IA 51593-1360.

CANADIAN RETURN ADDRESS: GS Media & Events, 4960-2 Walker Road, Windsor, Ontario N9A 6J3. Publication Sales Agreement #40012332.

CUSTOMER SERVICE: Call 800-678-1201 (U.S.) or Email motorhome@cdsfulfillment.com

Printed in the United States.

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## ARE YOU HAPPY WITH THE TV PLACEMENT IN YOUR MOTORHOME? WHY OR WHY NOT?

That's the question we asked in our January issue, and here are some of the replies we received.

### AGREE WITH PET PEEVE

TV placement has been the pet peeve for us in our motorhomes. We had a Class C that had the TV placed directly across from the sofa, but it was mounted at the far right end of the overhead cabinets and was at an angle. We had to look up and to the right to watch TV. Our first Class A had the TV mounted in the middle of the overhead cabinets over the cab. Here again, if you sat on the sofa you had to turn your head at an angle to watch TV. One person could lie down on the sofa and the other could sit at the dinette, but who wants to sit at the dinette all evening?

We are on our third motorhome and believe we have finally found the perfect TV placement (and coach). This summer we purchased a 2012 Winnebago Vista 35F. It has a sectional sofa with the large flat-screen TV placed in front of the sofa and it is at eye level. It's very comfortable to watch the TV no matter where we sit.

**GERI GALLOWAY | SWANSEA, S.C.**

### HEADSET HELPS HEARING

I can sympathize with Eileen Glaholt, who wrote the letter about TV placement. My hearing is going south on me, especially in my left ear, and I really don't like wearing my hearing aids in the house or motorhome just to watch TV. My lovely lady has perfect hearing and in order to keep from her listening to a blaring TV, I bought a wireless headset. It was less than \$20 at a local home center and works wonderfully. The model I bought is a Sylvania SYL-WH930GB. It has a 100-foot range and an FM radio receiver, too. Of course this is only going to take care of the hearing problem, not the seeing one.

**KERRY S. HARRIS | BATTLE CREEK, NEB.**

### LOVE OUR LAYOUT

One of the main reasons we purchased our 2009 Itasca Meridian was the living room layout. The couch and recliner are on the curbside slideout while the dining table and buffet are across on the street side slideout. The TV is mounted

just above the buffet. That makes for very comfortable viewing. It is close and directly in front of the seating area. As a bonus, the kitchen is not next to the seating area but next to the dining area. It's one of the best layouts I have seen in a motorhome.

**DENNIS LINSLEY | PITTSBURG, CALIF.**

### NO TV UP FRONT

When I first started reading that letter in the January 2013 issue I thought, "Finally, someone is going to recognize how absolutely ridiculous it is to have the TV up front." Boy was I wrong! I totally disagree with the author of this comment about TV location.

With the size of TVs today it is crazy to have this huge square hanging down in front on a Class A motorhome. It is a head knocker and in most cases, unless you are sitting on the couch, your neck is crammed back like sitting in the front row of a theater. Using the front seats is not an option because of their proximity to the TV, thus limiting the use other than for visitors to face the lounge area. Technology makes TV images clearer and sound better, and large screens are easy to see from a distance in any coach. By mounting the TV on the wall opposite the windshield, the comfortable driver and passenger seats become additional viewing locations.

Having been actively RVing since 2000, I often wonder if RV manufacturers ever require their engineers and designers to live in these things for six months before allowing them to engineer or design anything in the RV. I have considered removing the TV from the front and placing a larger flat screen LCD on the opposite wall. Most new RVs are moving the lounge area to center and I think that is a great use of space.

**DENNIS JENTGENS | ATHENS, GA.**

### COMFORTABLE VIEWING

We own a 2012 Winnebago Tour with the QD floorplan. This places the TV up front on the driver's side wall,



## As far as advanced adaptability goes, we did have one worthy opponent.

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slightly angled and directly across from the L-shaped couch where we spend most of our time. The TV can also be viewed from the easy chair on the driver's side and the facing chair at the dinette. When shopping for RVs this was a huge consideration for us. I did not want any configuration that would require that we keep our heads turned sideways constantly. We watch a lot of TV while on the road and layouts conducive to comfortable TV viewing were very few and far between, which made our selection process a bit easier. We ignored a lot of gorgeous motorhomes simply because the TV layout was wrong.

**PAUL GOODSPEED | MEMPHIS, TENN.**



### WHAT YOU ARE SAYING ON OUR FACEBOOK PAGE:

We asked readers to tell us if they are happy with the TV placement in their motorhome. Here's how some of our Facebook fans responded:

**Lynne Bliss:** *Bedroom set is great ... family area, not so much. To see the TV straight on, we have to sit in the dinette area. On the couch we can see it only if we turn sideways. We have a Four Winds Class C.*

**Jan Duncan Stenberg:** *No for the one in the main area. It is above the dashboard and the couch faces the door. Have to turn heads to watch TV. The one in the bedroom is perfect. We have a 2006 Class A Bouncer.*

**Greg Yancey:** *Class A Damon Daybreak ... center top of the windshield between two cabinets ... have to look up to watch, kind of hard on old necks. But the cabinet in the bedroom for the TV is so small that any TV placed in it is hard to see from the bed ... bad idea.*

Become a fan of *MotorHome* on Facebook. Go to [www.facebook.com/MotorHome Magazine](http://www.facebook.com/MotorHome Magazine) and click "Like."



### LEAVE THE TV INSIDE

With all the amenities packed into the limited space of a motorhome, ideal TV placement will necessarily be compromised. That being said, nothing is more ridiculous than placing a TV in the basement storage area so it can be watched outside. I don't know anybody who watches TV outside at home, so why does the motorhome industry think anybody would want to do it in a campground? It's just another way to disturb your neighbors.

**KENNETH NEAL PALO ALTO, CALIF.**

### MAKE THE CHANGES YOU WANT

We bought a new Class A motorhome in the summer of 2005. The first couple of years of ownership, we would attend different RV shows and always ended up saying things like, "I wish we had this or that."

After a couple of years of seeing things that we liked and identifying things about our rig that we did not care for, I started making changes. It amazes me that some RVers believe the motorhome has to remain as purchased. It is likely your second largest purchase; you can do whatever you want.

Regarding the TV in our rig, I purchased a 42-inch flat screen TV a few years ago. I went to the hardware store and bought a few items that I used to make a hanging attachment. When we are on the move, the TV lays flat on our bed. When we arrive at our destination, I grab the TV, hang it in one of three or four places that we like, run a cable to it and enjoy. It sure beats sitting and staring at the tube above the windshield.

Remember: You own it. Make it the way you want it.

**LARRY KLAUSER | LIBERTYVILLE, ILL.**

### PLAN TO RETROFIT

The location of the TV seems to be a problem in most motorhomes that I have seen. Ours, a 2004 30W Itasca, has the TV in the same place that many have been for several years: in the front overhead space between the driver and passenger seats. It is out of the way there and uses that space but there isn't a good seat in the house for watching it. The driver and passenger seats are too close and the sofa, although very comfortable to sit on, is at a 90-degree angle to the TV. We can watch the

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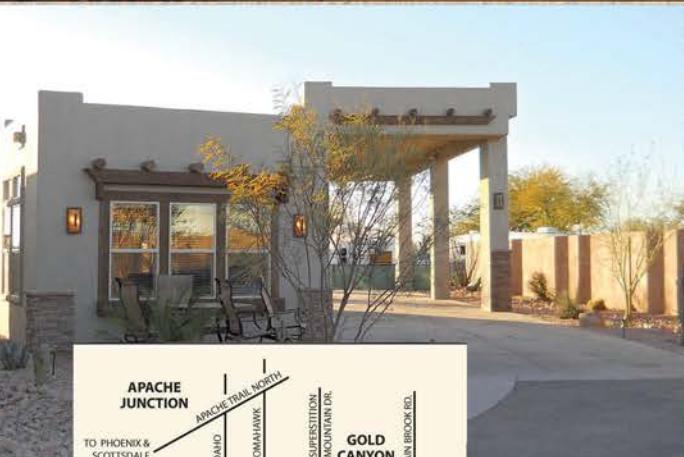
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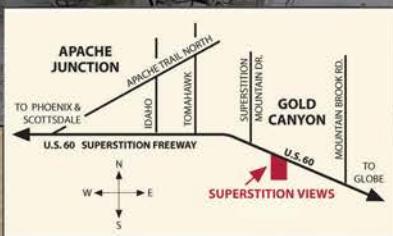


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TV from the sofa for short periods of time but if we want to sit and watch a movie we end up with stiff necks. This year I plan to remove the old TV and put in a flat-screen that we can set on the table in front of the sofa and sit down and cuddle while we watch a movie. I think that may be an idea — a TV in front of a sofa.

**BRUCE KARN | OGDEN, UTAH**

**A JOB WELL DONE**

While preparing our Fleetwood Bounder to travel to the Good Sam Rally in Daytona Beach, Fla., we developed a problem with the Power Gear levelers not wanting to retract. When they finally did retract, the control panel still indicated they were in a down position and warning lights and alarms would go off. A call to Fleetwood Customer Service yielded a work-around that allowed us to get on our way.

Upon our arrival at the Rally we contacted Fleetwood dealer La Mesa RV in Sanford, Fla., and requested a service date to have the levelers repaired. They were fully booked for two weeks. They did, however, have technicians on site at the Rally who might be able to help. We left our cell phone number and soon received a call. Ten minutes later, Tim and Ralph from La Mesa RV were at our door. They checked out the leveling system and determined a sensor switch in the hydraulic fluid reservoir was faulty and installed upside down. They made calls and had a replacement expressed from the factory. Two days later the replacement float switch was installed and the system checked out. Problem solved.

Our thanks to technicians Tim and Ralph and La Mesa RV for quickly and efficiently getting us back on the road.

**RON SWARTZ | COLUMBUS, OHIO**

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Nicknamed Georgia's "Little Grand Canyon," Providence Canyon in Lumpkin is a constantly evolving canvas. Ongoing erosion manipulates the soft Georgia clay, continuing a process that began in the 1800s when poor farming practices resulted in furrows that deepened over several decades into gullies, ravines and canyons. Today, visitors to this west central state park stand in awe of the soil and rock formations dressed in orange, red, pink, purple and tan hues. Mineral-tinted water trickles along the deepest canyon floors, and hikers can embark on three miles of trails or tackle the seven-mile backcountry trail. With virtually no light pollution, Providence Canyon is an ideal location for stargazing, and the park regularly hosts astronomy activities.

Providence Canyon doesn't offer camping, but nearby Florence Marina State Park has 43 sites with full hookups. For more information, call 229-838-6870 or visit [www.georgiastateparks.org/ProvidenceCanyon](http://www.georgiastateparks.org/ProvidenceCanyon).

PHOTO: GEORGIA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES



# Mad for Mudbugs

**Mudbug. Crayfish. Mudpup.** Crawdaddy. Crawfish. Whatever you call them, those little warm water crustaceans are delicious, relatively inexpensive, easy to cook and make a fun food to try while you're on the road.

Second cousin to the larger and more expensive Maine lobster, crawfish are small freshwater lobsters that taste like a cross between shrimp and lobster. Found in lakes and streams in North America, these native crustaceans were first enjoyed by Native Americans. Today, kids still pull the little critters out of local waterways with a line and hotdogs (or just about anything) for bait. You can catch them yourself by the trap-full or stop by a fish store or crawfish farm and pick up a few dozen for a delectable meal.

Louisiana is best known for crawfish and produces the 4-inch red swamp crawfish. However, you can find crawfish around the country. Oregon is the second

sandy-bottomed sources do not). Crawfish are traditionally cooked outdoors in a large pot over a fire or propane burner. Don't cook crawfish (or crab or lobster) in your motorhome or your rig will smell like a fishmonger's!

## CRAWFISH BOIL

A Louisiana crawfish boil consists of crawfish, sausage, potatoes and corn on the cob boiled together. Potatoes go into a large pot of boiling water seasoned with butter, garlic, lemon wedges, crawfish boil seasoning and spicy Cajun seasoning for about 10 minutes. The corn and sausage are added for 5 minutes. The crawfish go in last and are cooked with the other ingredients for 4-5 minutes. Turn off the heat and let the pot sit covered for 10 minutes.

A crawfish feast doesn't even require dishes. Drain the crawfish, potatoes, corn and sausage, and spread them on newspaper. Pass the paper towels and beer or soda and enjoy.

To eat crawfish, grasp the head with one hand and the tail with the other hand. Gently squeeze the tail end close to where it joins the head and twist. The meaty tail end easily twists out. Slide a thumb under the first few segments of the top of the tail and peel away the top part of the tail.

If catching or cooking your own crawfish seems like too much trouble, try some of my favorite crawfish eateries.

**Doguet's Crawfish Farm, Beaumont, Texas.** Tour this crawfish farm to see how crawfish are raised, buy live crawfish or try some at their new café.

**Hollier's Cajun Kitchen, Sulphur, La.** This Cajun-themed restaurant offers traditional Cajun foods, including spicy and creamy crawfish etouffée.



**At Jake's Famous Crawfish in Portland, Ore., chilled crawfish take center stage as an appetizer.**

**Jake's Famous Crawfish, Portland, Ore.** Uses only Oregon crawfish and serves French-style (not spicy) crawfish boil, chilled crawfish appetizer and crawfish etouffée.

**My Brother's Crawfish, Portland, Ore.** Two Vietnamese brothers from Texas whip up some really tasty crawfish boil and crawfish etouffée spiked with sweet Asian hot sauce.

**Sartin's West, Beaumont, Texas.** Fill up on a bucket of Sartin's crawfish seasoned with spicy Tex-Joy seasonings.

**Seafood Palace, Lake Charles, La.** This casual café serves crawfish boil, crawfish etouffée (spicy, flavorful roux studded with celery and chunks of sweet crawfish), and local fish, oysters, shrimp and gator. Crawfish is available December through May.

**Steamboat Bill's, Lake Charles, La.** Check out this place for pistolettes, stuffed fried bread rolls, topped with creamy crawfish etouffée.

**Mudbug Madness Festival, Shreveport, La.** Every Memorial Day weekend, people come to eat crawfish boil and etouffée and dance to foot-stomping tunes.



*Got a favorite mudbug haunt? Let Bobbie know at [hasselbring@bctonline.com](mailto:hasselbring@bctonline.com) ("Road Foodie" in the subject line).*



**Crawfish etouffée is a spicy roux studded with celery and chunks of crawfish meat served over white rice.**

PHOTOS: BOBBIE HASSELBRING

largest commercial crawfish producer and its native species, *Pacifastacus leniusculus* or the "signal" crawfish, is sweeter and a bit larger (up to 6 inches).

Some prefer the delicate flavor of West Coast crawfish; others like Louisiana's version (it stands up to hot spices). Spring/early summer is Louisiana's traditional crawfish season; the West Coast season lasts until early fall.

Crawfish, like crab or lobster, must be cooked live and Louisiana crawfish need to be purged for 15 minutes in salt water to remove any mud (crawfish from

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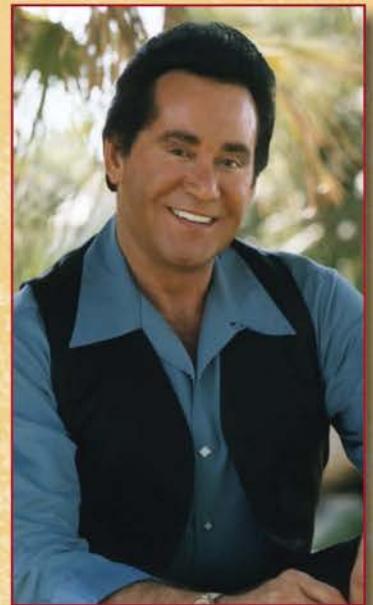
Just look at some of the things we have in store for you:



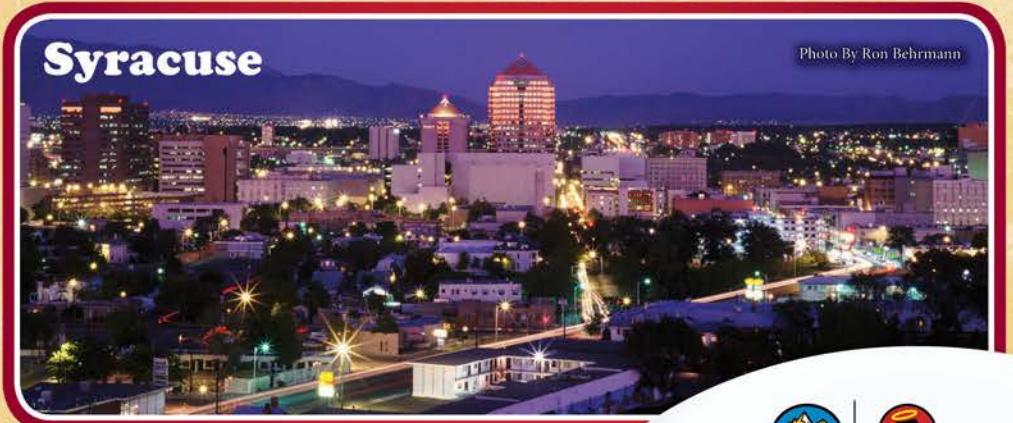
**Queen of Country:** Thrill to country music and TV icon **Reba** in an encore performance after last year's unforgettable show at the Daytona Rally!

**Mr. Las Vegas:** Prepare to be starstruck by **Wayne Newton** as he brings his electrifying Vegas style and showmanship to the Syracuse Rally stage!

**Record-Breaking Potluck:** Bring a big appetite and a dish to share as we attempt to break the record for the **World's Largest Potluck** and go down in history!



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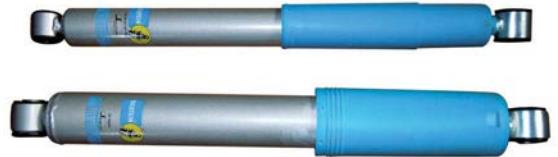




## MOTORHOME ROOF CARE

Adding to its lineup of RV maintenance products, **Chempac Corp.** now offers the Roof Shield twin pack of cleaner and sealer. The Roof Shield twin pack includes 100 ounces of RV cleaner and 100 ounces of RV sealer in a convenient, ready-to-use bucket with a bonus RV holding tank chemical drop-in sample pack. The RV roof cleaner is said to remove black streaks, dirt, oxidants and road film buildup, while the RV roof sealer is formulated to protect from rain, sun, grime and prevents drying, cracking and oxidation. The cleaner and sealer work together to create a barrier between a rubber or TPO roof and the elements to increase overall protection while making the roof surface easier to clean in the future. Both products are environmentally safe, according to Chempac. The Roof Shield twin pack is available at RV dealers and service centers nationwide and retails for \$49.75.

**Chempac Corp., 800-423-5350, [www.chempacerv.com](http://www.chempacerv.com)**



## SUPER SHOCK ABSORBERS

**Source Engineering Inc.** recently introduced its new Platinum Series tuned Bilstein shocks for Navistar RV's Roadmaster chassis. The Platinum Series is available for new and late model Roadmaster chassis in 46mm and 60mm piston sizes. Source Engineering, which develops motorhome chassis enhancement and repair parts, said the Platinum Series shocks are precisely tuned for the unique considerations of the RV market. The shocks have a nitrogen-filled monotube design and carry a lifetime warranty.

The Platinum Series was developed for individual motorhome chassis, the company said, and Source Engineering is expanding the line for additional chassis applications. The shocks are available directly from Source Engineering or through its network of dealers in the United States and Canada. MSRP for the standard 46mm shock is \$169; the new Super 60mm is \$269.

**Source Engineering Inc., 541-935-0308, [www.rv-chassis.com](http://www.rv-chassis.com)**

## NAVIGATION ON THE SMALLER SIDE

Drivers of Class B and C motorhomes often contend with smaller dashboard spaces, something **Magellan** has addressed with its new 5-inch GPS model, the RoadMate RV 5365T-LMB. This RoadMate offers the same capabilities for owners to set up profile data about their motorhome's dimensions and choose navigational preferences to customize the best routes but in a smaller device.

The Good Sam Campground Directory and Good Sam discount locations are pre-loaded into the RoadMate RV 5365T-LMB to provide travel resources featuring comprehensive North America campground information and amenities, RV services, pet-friendly campgrounds and parks, Wi-Fi and more. This model also has Spoken Street Name guidance to give turn-by-turn directions and the integrated Bluetooth wireless technology enables drivers to talk hands-free



when the GPS is paired with a compatible Bluetooth phone. Magellan offers free lifetime map updates and traffic alerts.

The RoadMate RV 5365T-LMB, with an MSRP of \$299.99, is available online through Camping World.

**Magellan, 800-669-4477, [www.magellangps.com](http://www.magellangps.com)**

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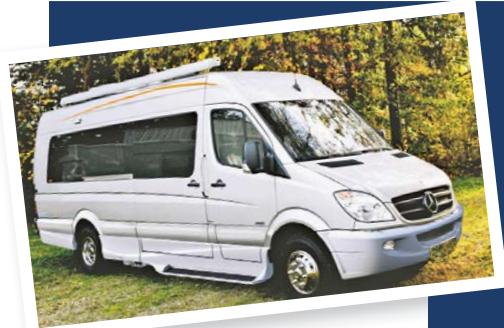
## HALL OF FAME DISPLAYS CAMPAIGN COACH

### The RV/MH Hall of Fame

and Museum now boasts some Indiana campaign history. Gov. Mitch Daniels presented his 2004 campaign motorhome, RV-1, to the museum in Elkhart, Ind. Daniels is donating the Damon Daybreak Class A, covered with signatures of constituents from all of Indiana's 92 counties, to the Indiana State Museum and it is being displayed as the newest exhibit in the RV/MH Hall of Fame and Museum. BJ Thompson, a member of the Executive Committee of the RV/MH Heritage Foundation, accepted the keys. Thor Industries, manufacturer of the Daybreak, sponsored the presentation event.



Gov. Mitch Daniels (left) presents the keys to his campaign motorhome to BJ Thompson, a member of the RV/MH Heritage Foundation.



## ADVANCED RV JOINS CLASS B MARKET

### A new Class B motorhome

builder has entered the factory-direct market. Startup manufacturer Advanced RV, founded by entrepreneur and engineer Mike Neundorfer and based in Willoughby, Ohio, debuted its Ocean One motorhome at the Florida RV SuperShow in January. The Ocean

One, like every Advanced RV model, is built on the Mercedes-Benz Sprinter platform. Neundorfer, who has purchased multiple motorhomes, said he opted for the factory-direct model to deliver a vehicle that's personalized for the way each customer wants to travel.

Each of Advanced RV's three models can be customized to include numerous features such as integrated Silverleaf controls and monitoring system, a heated floor, 15,000 Btu air conditioner, queen-size sofa bed, granite countertops, luxury cabinets and an entertainment system. The company plans to produce 50 units per year. For more information visit [www.advanced-rv.com](http://www.advanced-rv.com).

## News Briefs

The National Association of RV Parks and Campgrounds (ARVC) recognized the achievements of top private park operators, state associations and industry volunteers during its annual Outdoor Hospitality Conference and Expo. Park of the Year awards were given to RV parks and resorts based on several criteria, including customer service, employee training, operational excellence, national directory ratings and community service.

Winners included: Small Park of the Year, The Vineyards Campground & Cabins in Grapevine, Texas; Medium Park of the Year, Bentsen Palm Village RV Resort in Mission, Texas; Large Park of the Year, Holly Shores Camping Resort in Cape May, N.J.; Mega Park of the Year, Bethpage Camp-Resort in Urbanna, Va.

Several parks received Plan-It-Green awards for their efforts to become environmentally friendly: River's End Campground & RV Park in Tybee Island, Ga., Cypress Camping Resort in Myrtle Beach, S.C., and Sun N Fun RV Resort in Sarasota, Fla.



### Good Sam Enterprises

extended its partnership agreement with the QBE Group through 2017 to provide customers with RV-mechanical breakdown insurance. Good Sam has been a partner with insurance provider QBE since 1999, offering customers financial protection in the event of a mechanical breakdown or failure, as well as expert claims administration. Years in the making, the new Preferred Provider Network helps match problems to the right repair facility, accepts direct payment from Good Sam for covered repairs and includes facilities that stand behind their work. Benefits of the Good Sam Extended Service Plan include full-service claims administration, sign and drive repair, customized payment plans and travel reimbursement. Customers can also visit any Camping World SuperCenter for a free 22-point RV inspection. The Good Sam Repair Network has more than 10,000 providers nationwide.

## RV SHOWS

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Providence, R.I.  
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— D. Crowell  
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## HISTORIC BEAUTY IN HOLYOKE



PHOTO: JEFFREY BYRNES

**Bedecked in original leather wall coverings and boasting ornate woodwork, vaulted ceilings and parquet floors,** the Wistariahurst Museum in Holyoke, Mass., presents an engaging lesson in the history and culture of the area and the home's former inhabitants. First built by prominent silk manufacturer William Skinner in 1868, the Second Empire-style home was dismantled and rebuilt at its present location in 1874 following a major flood. The 26-room mansion and garden estate remained in

the Skinner family until 1959, when Katharine Skinner Kilborne, the youngest child of William and Sarah Skinner, gave Wistariahurst to the City of Holyoke.

Listed in the National Register of Historic Places, Wistariahurst takes its name from the wisteria vine planted along the house by Sarah Skinner in the 1880s. Today, the expansive gardens have been brought back to life and the house museum offers an array of exhibits on the Skinner family, Holyoke history and the textile and paper-making industries. The house is open every Saturday, Sunday and Monday from 12-4 p.m. for guided tours at a cost of \$7. The gardens and grounds are open daily until dusk. For more information, call 413-322-5660 or visit [www.wistariahurst.org](http://www.wistariahurst.org).

## THE SPIRIT OF THE WEST

**The small town of Cody, Wyo.,** near the eastern entrance to Yellowstone National Park, is home to a remarkable Western history museum, the Buffalo Bill Historical Center, named in honor of the town's namesake, William F. "Buffalo Bill" Cody. Affiliated with the Smithsonian Institution, the center houses five distinct museums.

The Plains Indian museum chronicles the lives and culture of the Native Americans who lived between the Mississippi River and the Rocky Mountains. In the Buffalo Bill Museum, learn about William Cody, who led a life any Western history buff would envy, from cowboy to gun fighter to Pony Express rider to showman, his most famous role. Art enthusiasts will enjoy the Whitney Gallery of Western Art, which has a collection ranging from the early frontier artists (Charles Russell, Frederic Remington and Thomas Moran) to contemporary painters and sculptors. Or explore the Yellowstone Natural His-



tory section covering plant, animal and geological topics. I learned that what I thought were antelope are really pronghorns. In the Cody Firearms Museum visitors will find a comprehensive collection of early American weapons, with nearly every significant arms manufacturer in the world represented.

Tickets are \$18 and are valid for two days. You'll need both to begin your exploration of this complex. The Ponderosa Campground with full hookups is within walking distance of the Center. For more information, call 307-587-4771 or visit [www.bbhc.org](http://www.bbhc.org). — David Barber ♦

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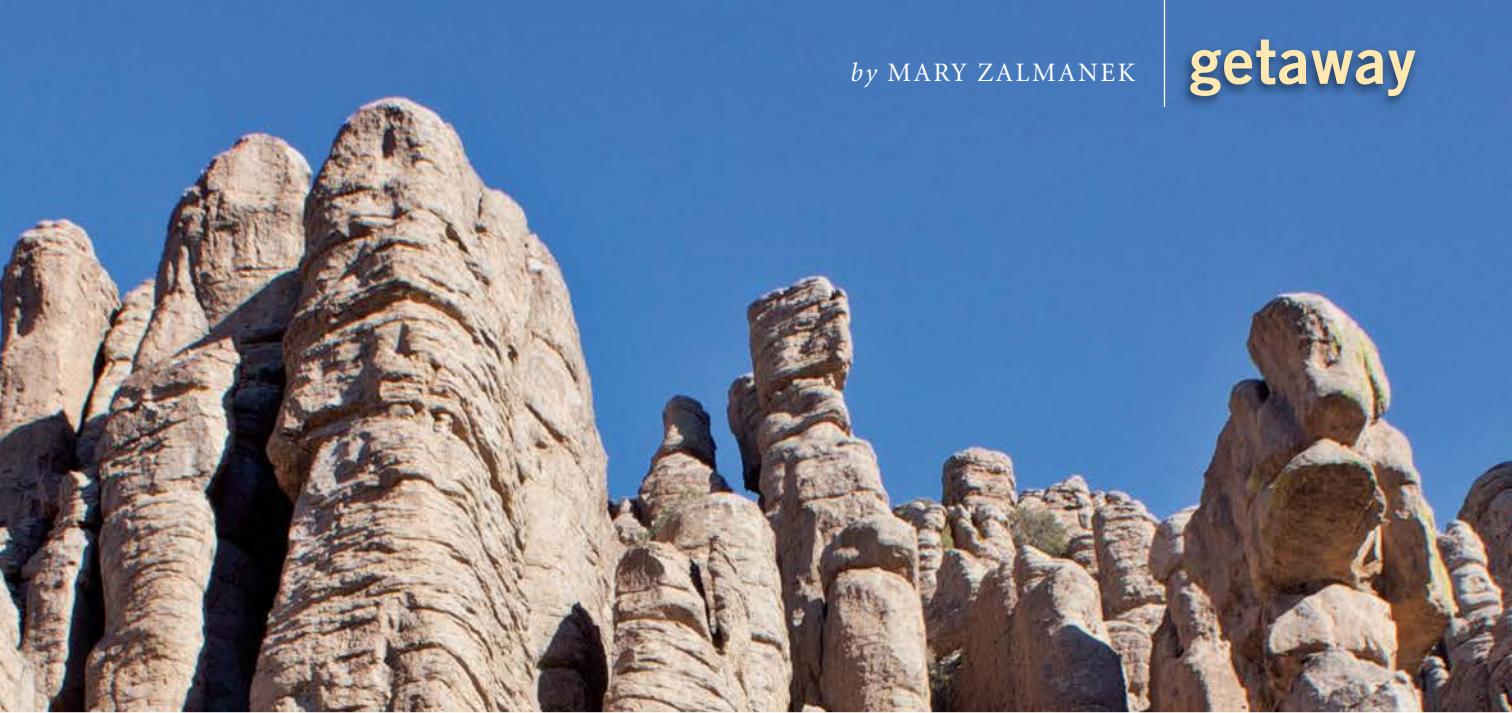
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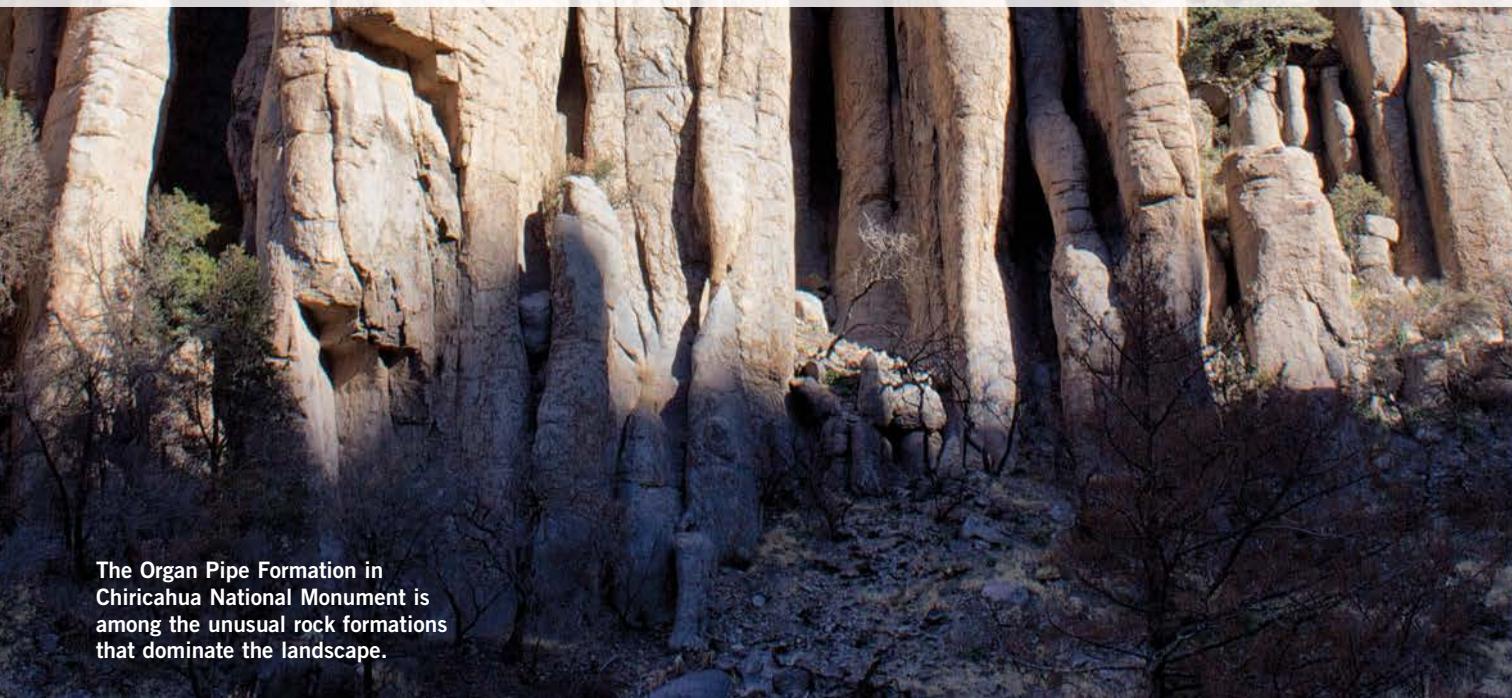
# COCHISE COUNTY, ARIZONA

FROM MOUNTAINOUS  
LANDSCAPES TO  
HISTORICAL SIGHTS,  
UNCOVER THIS STATE'S  
SOUTHEASTERN TREASURES

PHOTOS: MARY ZALMANEK

**D**uring a recent two-month trip in our motorhome, my husband, Jim, and I joined the migration of snowbirds seeking sunshine and adventure in Arizona. As our sojourn drew to a close, we spent five days in Cochise County, Arizona, exploring natural and historic sights in the southeastern corner of the state.

Our first stop was Kartchner Caverns State Park, 10 miles south of Benson. The caverns were discovered in 1974, purchased by the state in 1988 and opened as a state park in 1999. Two tours of the pristine limestone cave are available. Highlights of the Throne



The Organ Pipe Formation in Chiricahua National Monument is among the unusual rock formations that dominate the landscape.



Since 1976, more than a million visitors have donned yellow slickers, hard hats and miner's lanterns to journey by train 1,500 feet into the Queen Mine in Bisbee.

Tour include one of the world's longest soda straw stalactites, measuring more than 21 feet; the 58-foot tall Kubla Khan, the tallest and most massive column in Arizona; plus 45,000-year-old bat guano.

On the Big Room Tour, visitors enter the largest room in the cavern at 400 feet long and 240 feet wide. It contains the world's most extensive formation of the creamy white brushite moonmilk flowstone. "Cave turnips," speleothems shaped like turnips that hang from the ceiling, were first discovered in the Big Room. Exhibits at the Discovery Center explain the unique features of the caverns and how water, minerals and time — 200,000 years and counting — created these magnificent formations. Kartchner Caverns offers RV sites with electric hookups.

We drove to Palomitas, a small town near Bisbee, and parked our motorhome at a friend's house. Using this as our home base, we had several days to explore the area. Ready to stretch our legs, we rode our bikes along the San Pedro River with our host, Al, and his two Dobermans. The San Pedro Riparian National Conservation Area contains more than 56,000 acres of public land between the U.S.-Mexico border and the town of St. David. This area is a favorite of birders since it supports more than 350 species. Thirteen trailheads, some with interpretive kiosks, are located along this 40-mile stretch of the river. During our stay, we also accessed the riparian area at San Pedro House, hiked the trails, listened to birds and relaxed



Bikers enjoy a ride in the San Pedro Riparian National Conservation Area.

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near "Bailey," the 80-year-old cottonwood that is more than 36 feet in diameter.

The next day, we explored sights near Sierra Vista. Since Jim is an amateur birder, a must-see sight was the Ramsey Canyon Preserve, run by The Nature Conservancy. Ramsey Creek is a key tributary to the San Pedro River. We had the good fortune to get an impromptu tour from Brooke Gebow, southeastern Arizona preserves manager for the Conservancy. She told us how technology has changed birding. With a smartphone app, people can identify a bird by its call and post a rare bird sighting on the Southeast Arizona Rare Bird Alert website. Within minutes of an alert, avian aficionados will arrive to see birds like the elegant trogon, sulphur-bellied flycatcher or berylline hummingbird. The best birding is from March through September; the hummingbird migration peaks in April and August. Guided nature walks are offered from March through October.

Flanking Sierra Vista to the west and north, Fort Huachuca is a military post founded in 1877. It played a key role in the settlement of southeast Arizona and the



**Fort Huachuca Museum honors the Buffalo Soldiers, African Americans who served in the segregated army from 1866 to 1941.**

1886 capture of Apache chief Geronimo. The fort was also home to the Buffalo Soldiers, African Americans who served in the segregated army between 1866 and 1941. Many soldiers stationed at Fort Huachuca today are involved in military intelligence.

The Fort Huachuca Historical Museum exhibits uniforms from various periods, early equipment and weapons. The nearby U.S. Army Intelligence Museum traces the evolution of military intelligence from the Revolutionary War to the present. U.S. citizens may obtain a visitor's pass at the gate. Because this is an active

military installation, a valid photo ID for all passengers 13 and older and vehicle registration and proof of insurance is required.

South of Sierra Vista bordering Mexico, Coronado National Memorial commemorates the first major expedition into the American Southwest. In 1540, Francisco Vasquez de Coronado, accompanied by 339 Spanish soldiers and 1,100 Native Americans, explored what is now the southwestern United States looking for the mythical Seven Cities of Gold. Though he failed to find gold, he discovered several famous landmarks, including the Grand Canyon.

Today, a three-mile winding dirt road leads to the scenic overlook at Montezuma Pass, elevation 6,575 feet. We hiked the half-mile trail to the top of Coronado Peak and read the signs posted along the way that told the story of Coronado's journey. From there, we had a panoramic view of Arizona, Mexico and the 18-foot-high fence that separates the two.

We devoted a full day to Bisbee, a small, artsy town known for its mining past. In its heyday, Bisbee's mines produced more than 8 billion pounds of

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copper, 2.8 million ounces of gold and 77 million pounds of silver. The mines closed in 1975 after almost 100 years of continuous production. In 1976, tours began at the Queen Mine. Since then, more than 1 million visitors have donned yellow slickers, hard hats and miner's lanterns to journey by train 1,500 feet into the mountain. Our guides, all former miners, made the tour special by relating their personal experiences from their years underground.

The Bisbee Mining and Historical Museum, an affiliate of the Smithsonian Institution, explains why Bisbee was once known as the Queen of Copper Camps. We also browsed the shops and art galleries on Main Street, had a beer in historic Brewery Gulch and ate a fine dinner at Cafe Roka.

When we left Palomitas, we headed toward Willcox. En route we stopped in Tombstone and found RV parking on the street. Tombstone was dubbed "The Town Too Tough to Die" in the early 20th century. With the wooden boardwalks on Allen Street, gunfighters in period costume and horses pulling stagecoaches around town, it doesn't look like it's changed much either. It's safer these days, since the Wyatt Earp and Doc Holliday look-alikes shoot blanks in the daily re-enactments of the gunfight at the O.K. Corral.

We visited the Tombstone Epitaph building, where the oldest continuously published newspaper in Arizona is still being printed. The first issue was printed in 1880 and covered the famous gunfight in 1881. Jim was so fascinated that he subscribed to the monthly Tombstone Epitaph National Edition.



**The ruins of several building, including the cavalry barracks, are preserved at Fort Bowie National Historic Site.**

In Willcox, we checked into an RV park. In our dinghy, we explored Chiricahua National Monument, Fort Bowie and the Amerind Museum. If you want to take your coach into the monument, the maximum length in the Bonita Canyon Campground is 29 feet and there are no hookups.

During our visit of Chiricahua National Monument, we were awed by the massive stone columns and balanced rocks, remnants of a huge volcanic eruption 27 million years ago. As we hiked through the fir and pine forest, a troop of coatimundi ran by us with their tails held high. Cardinals, quails and a variety of birds tweeted their unique calls. The scene was enchanting.

Fort Bowie, a National Historic Site, commemorates the bitter conflict between the Chiricahua Apaches and the U.S. military. From 1862 to 1894, Fort Bowie and Apache Pass were the center of military operations culminating in the surrender of Geronimo in 1886. After the fort was abandoned, many of the historic artifacts disappeared. But in 1960 Fort Bowie was declared a National Historic Landmark and since then, collectors or their descendants have returned many of the relics.

The visitor center is a 3-mile-round-trip hike from the parking lot. The easy hike

passes by the ruins of an old mining shack, stagecoach station, cemetery and a replica of an Apache hut. The ruins of Fort Bowie come into view at the crest of the hill.

The Amerind Museum, 26 miles southwest of Willcox, houses a collection of Native American art and artifacts. It tells "the story of America's first peoples from Alaska to South America and from the last Ice Age to the present." The impressive collection includes baskets, pottery, jewelry, katsina dolls and a bow made and signed by Geronimo.

Cochise County is rich with history. I confess that history was not one of my favorite subjects in school, but now I find that trekking to the ruins of a military fort, traveling 1,500 feet into an abandoned mine and exploring a cave where bats have been hanging out for 45,000 years brings history alive. ♦



Mary and Jim Zalmanek enjoy traveling in their 2003 Safari Trek when they are not at home in Monument, Colo. Mary is the author of *The Art of the Spark* ([www.artofthespark.com](http://www.artofthespark.com)).

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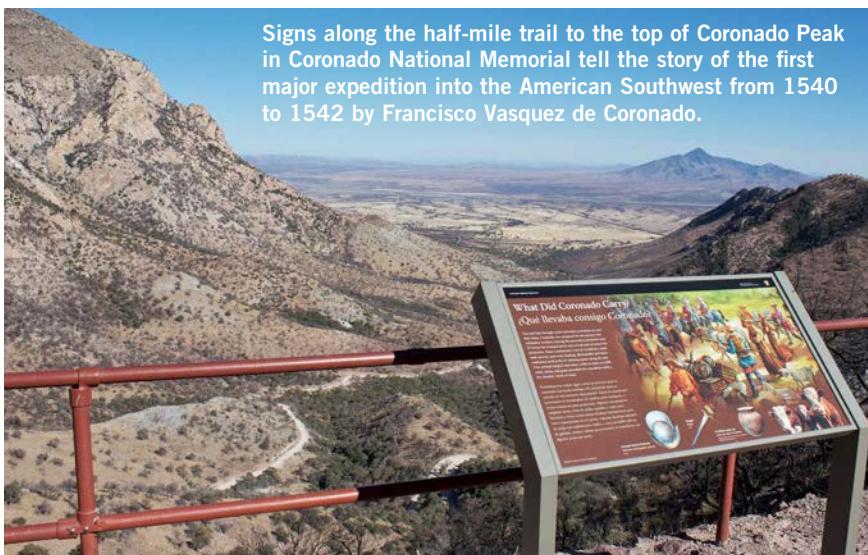
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Signs along the half-mile trail to the top of Coronado Peak in Coronado National Memorial tell the story of the first major expedition into the American Southwest from 1540 to 1542 by Francisco Vasquez de Coronado.



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# WHIDBEY ISLAND: A WORLD AWAY

by BOBBIE HASSELBRING



PHOTOS: BOBBIE HASSELBRING



## ON THIS PUGET SOUND HAVEN, QUAIN T VILLAGES MIX WITH SENSATIONAL VIEWS

**S**ometimes you need to get away, but you've got only a few days. Located just 30 miles from Seattle, Washington's Whidbey Island is a hop north of the bright city lights, but a relaxing world away filled with museums, boutique farms and wineries, one-of-a-kind art studios, and bucolic rolling hills coupled with dramatic ocean scenery. There's also plenty to keep the adrenalin pumping such as biking, hiking, kayaking, birding, fishing and whale watching. And it all comes in the perfect RV package — not too far away, with easy access, and plenty of beautiful and affordable places to park the rig. So, for us, it was "destination Whidbey" for a four-day motorhome escape.

From Portland, Ore., we approached Whidbey from the south on the Mukilteo-Clinton ferry, which runs to the island

every 30 minutes. In the summer, folks line up early, so be prepared to wait in line for an hour or so. (From the north, you can simply drive over the spectacular Deception Pass Bridge.) We queued up and joined the throngs at iconic Ivar's Mukilteo Landing's outdoor order window for creamy clam chowder.

Washington State Ferries are fast, efficient and an easy way to transport a motorhome (fares vary from \$31.80-\$63.70 depending on RV length and are higher during peak season). And of course, you sail through some gorgeous scenery. In addition to seabirds and seals, you might spot some of Puget Sound's resident orca (killer) whales.

Wanting to get right into the island groove, we headed to Langley, a historic, über-cute village where Whidbey Island Kayaking Company offers guided kayak

tours and rentals. Owner Ed Young and Travis, our guide, gave us life jackets and a lesson in paddling and steering our slim, ocean-going tandem kayak. We paddled from the marina, hugging the shoreline as all around the Cascade and Olympic mountains rose up like great, snowcapped titans. We passed beaches and waterfront homes and, around one bend, spotted an eagle's nest with the resident female keeping watch.

Our two-hour paddle was over too soon and we struck out to explore Langley. Whidbey Island is only about 35 miles long and 1.5 to 12 miles wide. The largest island in Washington and among the largest in the United States, it has only 58,000 residents and, thanks to forward-thinking planners who fiercely protect the area's agricultural land, natural areas, and picturesque villages, Whidbey retains its rural charm.

Our first stop was Sweet Mona's Chocolate Boutique, an artisan chocolatier that uses high-quality Ecuadorian

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PHOTO: ANNE WEAVER



**Strict land-use laws protect farmland on Whidbey Island and ensure it retains its rural character.**

PHOTO: ANNE WEAVER



**Whidbey Cupcakes in Langley offers fun and pretty cupcakes.**

chocolate to make terrific truffles, peanut butter cups and chocolate salt caramels. Then it was on to a small farmers market featuring Whidbey Island-grown fresh fruits and veggies and island-made products like creamy Mr. Mobley's Tahini Sauce. It's also where we met the mother-daughter team behind Whidbey Cupcakes, delightfully moist little cakes with Northwest names like Mount Rainer and Deception Pass.

We loaded up on produce and stopped at Langley's eclectic Star Store for a few more provisions before traveling on the scenic Langley Loop to 525, the main north-south island highway. Our base for the next couple of days was Fort Casey State Park, located right on Admiralty Bay with great water and Olympic Mountain views.

This state park, along with two other military forts, was once part of the Puget Sound's "triangle of fire" that protected



**The decommissioned Admiralty Head Lighthouse at Fort Casey State Park was built with 18-inch-thick walls to withstand the concussions from the fort's big guns.**

Admiralty Inlet. The forts were famous for their "disappearing guns," named for their ability to be lowered behind emplacements during reloading. At Fort Casey and adjacent Fort Ebey state parks, the old gun batteries and some canons are still in place, and we had great fun scrambling over them, imagining a time gone by.

Another park must-see is Admiralty Head Lighthouse, a squat light tower and keeper's quarters built in 1903. Its fourth-order Fresnel lens shot a 270-degree directional beam that warned mariners until it was decommissioned in 1922. The lighthouse boasts 18-inch-thick stucco-covered brick walls that could withstand the concussions of the fort's big guns.

Our RV site at Fort Casey was a gravel-topped pull-through with water and electric hookups, right on the water. While there was no shade, we had a fire ring and picnic table, plus an up-close view of Keystone Harbor and the comings and goings of the Coupeville-Port Townsend ferry. There is also a public dock here for RVers who bring their boats.

The following day, we rose early to explore Coupeville, another waterfront village with interesting shops and eateries, including Mosquito Fleet Chili, home of fiery chili and sinful cinnamon rolls. Coupeville features the Island County Historical Museum, which documents early island life and an original blockhouse, a tiny, two-story fort built in 1855 where

residents could gather in case of an attack.

We headed toward Oak Harbor, the island's only "real" city where you'll find chain stores and lots of shopping opportunities. We traveled a few miles out of town to Wildwood Farm, an 80-acre equestrian center that offers riding lessons and trail rides. My mount was eager and responsive and an hour of riding the center's 20 miles of wooded trails flew by.

After a quick lunch, we toiled over to the Whidbey Island Naval Air Station. Since World War II, Whidbey has been home to Navy fliers, including aviators who flew the Catalina PBV, a workhorse seaplane that saved thousands of downed airmen during the war. It's also where the all-volunteer PBV Memorial Foundation has established the Naval History Center, a museum dedicated to preserving the PBV and the island's naval legacy.

We were met by Will Stein, the Naval History Center's director of operations, who told us there were about 3,200 PBVs built. "Today, there are about six dozen left and only a dozen of those are still flying," he said. "Our PBV was actually stationed at Whidbey Naval Air Station and we love that connection."

That personal tie is present in many of the exhibits. Through colorful stories and anecdotes, volunteer docents connect the memorabilia, whether it's a flight suit, a sword or a photograph, to the men and women who fought the battles.

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**Cook on Clay, an artisan pottery studio that produces clay cooking vessels, is part of the Whidbey Island Art Trail, which features more than two dozen artists' studios open to visitors.**



PHOTO: ANNE WEAVER

**Lavender Wind Farm grows eight varieties of lavender and sells lavender bath and culinary products.**



PHOTO: ANNE WEAVER

**Fort Casey State Park offers RVers water views and easy beach access.**

While the Naval History Center features displays from World War II to present conflicts, the museum's centerpiece is the PBV that sits partially restored in the parking lot. With Stein and museum curator George Love, we climbed into the cavernous plane. As we sat in the cockpit, we could feel the spirits of the aviators who had flown these old planes, risking their lives for our freedoms.

After a restful night at our Fort Casey RV camp, we drove a few miles into the countryside to Cook on Clay, an artisan pottery studio that makes functional clay cookware.

"We fire Cook on Clay flameware at 2,300 degrees in this soda-vapor kiln," said master potter and co-owner Robbie Lobell, pointing out the fire-breathing, brick-lined monster. "They have a non-porous surface that won't leach into food or into the environment."

Cook on Clay is one of more than 25 stops on the Whidbey Art Trail, a self-guided tour that allows travelers to visit the studios of craftsmen who produce everything from pottery to paintings and glasswork. After purchasing a cookware pot, we drove to Lavender Wind Farm where Sarah Richards has been growing eight varieties of lavender on a spectacular chunk of waterfront for the past 12 years.

We strolled through the lavender fields snapping photos of vibrant purple flowers and walked the farm's lavender-trimmed labyrinth, letting the heady floral scents envelope us. In the small gift shop, the lavender perfume was even stronger as we ogled the dizzying array of lavender soaps, candles and even lavender ice cream.

We motored back to the main highway toward Deception Pass State Park, the busiest campground in Washington and with good reason. The park offers 125 electric and water hookup sites in forested settings. It also features 38 miles of hiking trails, nearly 15 miles of saltwater shoreline, a freshwater swimming beach, three lakes, fishing, and spectacular water and mountain views.

We spent the afternoon and part of the next day exploring the park's trails and beaches, including a dip in Cranberry Lake, a lovely freshwater lake within sight of Puget Sound. The lake offers rental kayaks and it's a great place for beginners to get their sea legs before tackling more challenging ocean kayaking.

For our final island day we met Captain Brett of Deception Pass Tours for a boat tour of the strait separating Whidbey from Fidalgo Island. Deception Pass is a dramatic seascape where, during low tides, swift currents create standing waves, large whirlpools and roiling eddies. The boat tour gives visitors a unique way to experience the Pass and Deception

Pass Bridge, a 976-foot span that soars nearly 200 feet above the swirling waters.

With powerful engine roaring, our Island Whaler jet boat sped through the water. Occasionally, we slowed and the interpretive guide regaled us with stories of the area's history. We cruised past Ben Ure, a former pirate island, and a cave high up the cliff that had been a prison mining camp. We watched eagles swoop and dive for fish and spotted seals bobbing in the waves.

Then we cruised under the bridge for a jaw-dropping view of this engineering wonder and out into open water. Looking back, we could see Deception Pass, the magnificent bridge, and green and beautiful Whidbey Island. At that moment, we knew there was so much more to discover and vowed to return to this island oasis again and again. ♦



**Bobbie Hasselbring is an award-winning travel and food writer and editor of [www.realfoodtraveler.com](http://www.realfoodtraveler.com), which covers authentic food and travel. Bobbie owns a 2003 Jayco Greyhawk SS Class C.**

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by CHRISTINE GOODIER

# LATER, ALLIGATOR: 3 DAYS IN EVERGLADES NATIONAL PARK

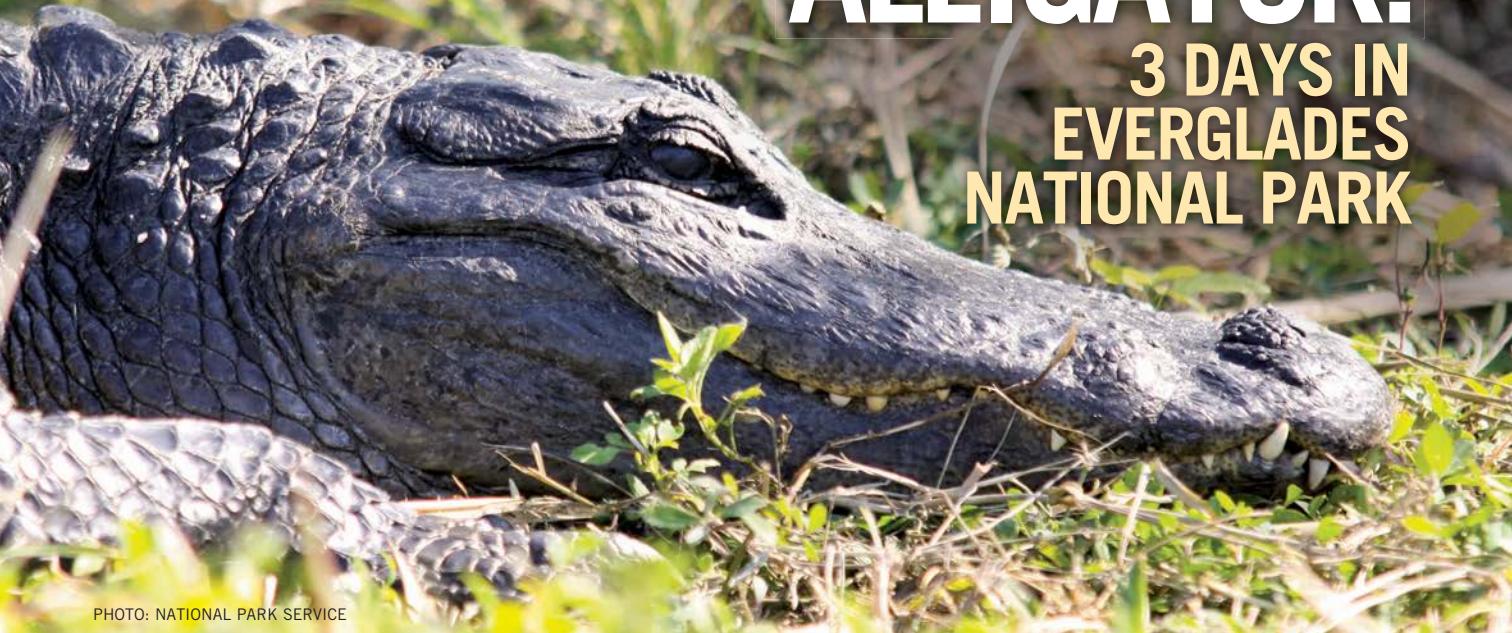


PHOTO: NATIONAL PARK SERVICE



A male anhinga bird along the aptly named Anhinga Trail dries its striking plumage in the sun.

PHOTO: ROBERT GOODIER

## EXPLORE A VAST WILDERNESS IN SOUTHERN FLORIDA

**'Il admit it: we watch reality TV shows set in swamps** — the ones where gutsy gals and gritty guys search for enormous reptiles. So in a quest to learn more about our country's wild creatures, my husband, Bob, and I made a detour last spring during our trip to Florida. After leaving the Florida Keys, we turned our Class B motorhome toward America's largest subtropical wilderness.

After stocking up on food and fuel in Florida City on U.S. Route 1, we arrived at the Everglades National Park entrance on State Road 9336. Since the park comprises a whopping 1.5 million acres, we needed to prioritize our time. At the bustling Ernest Coe Visitor Center, a helpful National Park Service (NPS) ranger marked our brochure map with enough must-do activities to fill the next three days.

We cruised down the flat, lightly traveled main park road through 38 miles of pine forests, cypress swamps and sawgrass marshes to Flamingo Campground on Florida's tip and, at the road's end, checked into a site with 50-amp electric service.

At the Flamingo Visitor Center and marina perched on Florida Bay, we learned the 2005 hurricanes Wilma and Katrina had irreparably damaged the park's only lodge where my late father loved to stay for fishing trips. Plans for a new lodge complex are stalled by financial and environmental considerations. But by arriving in a self-contained RV, we could spend peaceful nights inside the park and enjoy a noncommercial, "old Florida" atmosphere, just

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PHOTOS: ROBERT GOODIER

**Just four miles from the Everglades' main park entrance, the wheelchair-accessible Anhinga Trail starts from the Royal Palm Visitor Center.**

**Ranger Bob Showler gives a "Croc Talk" using gator and croc skull replicas.**

as my father had done decades before.

Sitting on shaded benches, we listened to a "naturalist's knapsack" talk about sharks and other creatures that live in Florida Bay, the expanse of shallow water in front of us. We could see a bird colony standing on a sandbar and watched the occasional angler, kayaker, canoeist or power boater set off to enjoy the bay. Some had brought their own gear and others rented it from the marina.

After watching a pair of West Indian manatees cavorting in the harbor, we walked over to the marina's small convenience store and reserved space with the NPS concessioner for a backcountry boat tour the next morning.

On the one-mile trip back to the campground we parked at the Eco Pond, a highlight the ranger had circled on our map, and took an easy, half-mile walk around its circumference. Birds rule in this placid spot where we stalked herons, egrets and ibises with our binoculars as they waded in search of food. A colony of roseate spoonbills stood foraging near a

distant bank, fluffs of cotton-candy-pink reflected in the still pond water.

We had heeded NPS advice to prepare for mosquitoes year-round and applied repellent before approaching any of the park's ponds. But a brisk breeze kept our campsite almost bug-free, temperatures dropped into the 60s by sundown and we slept comfortably after preparing dinner in our motorhome.

Blessed with a sunny spring morning, we drove back to the marina and boarded the twin pontoon "Sawfish" with six other visitors. As our captain motored north through the narrow, three-mile Buttonwood Canal, he pointed out crocodiles sunning themselves along the banks as alligators swam nearby. It was a serendipitous sight. South Florida is the only place in the world where these two species coexist.

Our boat glided past nesting birds and dense mangroves, following the Wilderness Waterway into Coot Bay, Tarpon Creek and finally Whitewater Bay. We returned to Flamingo after almost two hours and vowed to take a second excursion that heads south

into Florida Bay on our next visit.

That afternoon, we attended naturalist Bob Showler's "Croc Talk" at the marina store by the canal, a reptile hang-out. The ranger invited us to take a look through his spotting scope and, with replica skulls, explained the physical differences between the threatened American crocodiles and more common American alligators we were viewing.

The next morning, we packed up and drove north to the Royal Palm Visitor Center near the park entrance to enjoy an Everglades treat accessible to all, including those who use wheelchairs. The unfenced Anhinga Trail, just eight-tenths of a mile roundtrip, led us through sawgrass marshes populated by critters galore. Long-necked male anhinga birds spread their bold plumage to dry in the sun a few feet from our path while gators snoozed in the muck. Cormorants swam for fish and young anhingas clustered in trees adorned with blooming red bromeliads.

Saying farewell to the south part of the park, we drove north on Highway 997



PHOTO: JENN MILLER

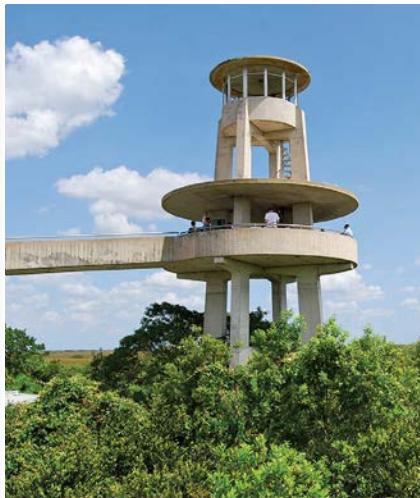
## WHEN YOU GO

Everglades National Park (vehicle admission \$10 for seven days or free with a Senior Pass) has two seasons: dry and wet. The best time to visit is during the dry, cooler months from mid-December to March when numerous, free guided ranger programs are offered. Bring mosquito repellent, binoculars and a camera.

The Park Service Flamingo Campground's spacious, flat sites (\$16 per night) can be reserved at [www.reservation.gov](http://www.reservation.gov). Rates are discounted 50 percent for Senior Pass holders. Sites with electric hookups can also be reserved in advance (\$30 per night, site assigned on arrival).

Stock up on food, water and fuel before leaving Homestead/Florida City — it's an undeveloped 50-mile drive from there to Flamingo where supplies are limited. On the way, you'll pass a produce emporium called "Robert Is Here."

The story about Robert goes ... In 1959, a farmer positioned his son on a corner to sell cucumbers. When no one stopped, 6-year-old Robert's father realized drivers couldn't see the child. The next day, he added signs proclaiming, "Robert is here." The little boy soon became a veggie baron and has been at the intersection ever since selling tropical fruits, vegetables and more. Local key lime juice makes wonderful pies — Robert will give you the recipe ([www.robertishere.com](http://www.robertishere.com)).

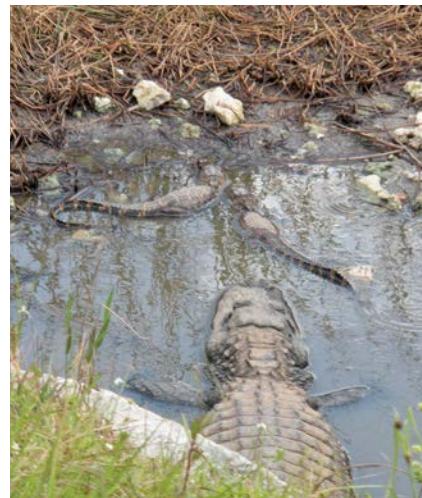


**The Shark Valley tram takes visitors down a 15-mile paved road deep into the Everglades where an observation tower gives a great view.**

to U.S. Highway 41, the Tamiami Trail, and turned west 22 miles to the Shark Valley Visitor Center where we re-entered the park. We bought tickets and boarded an open-air covered tram for a two-hour excursion into the Shark River Slough narrated by a park-trained naturalist guide. (Visitors can also walk or bike the trail with their own or rental bicycles.)

The tram driver stopped often for views of wildlife on both sides of the 15-mile trail: mother alligators guarding their babies, soft-shelled turtles, wading birds, newly-hatched anhingas and visitors peddling bicycles. Although we did not see any snakes, our guide shared the saga of invasive Burmese pythons, some longer than 17 feet, that multiplied out of control after people dumped unwanted pet snakes in the Glades.

At the end of the paved road an hour into our tour, we got out of the tram and



PHOTOS: ROBERT GOODIER

**A mother gator watches over her young as the Shark Valley tram slows down to give passengers a look.**

walked past a pond teeming with more gators than I could count. We climbed a spiral ramp leading to Shark Valley's concrete observation tower where a 360-degree view of the Everglades awaited. I gazed across miles of open space with no end in sight, named the "River of Grass" by the late journalist Marjorie Stoneman Douglas who championed the creation of the park.

At the tour's end, we concluded our park visit and drove west through the Big Cypress National Preserve to Collier Seminole State Park's campground where we would spend the night. South of the city of Naples, this park is a rare natural habitat for Florida royal palm trees and contains one of only three native stands found in the state.

We had heard much during our three days in the Everglades about catastrophic environmental damage caused by decades of dredging, draining and building



**Well worth the gradual climb, Shark Valley's observation tower provides a panoramic view of the "River of Grass."**

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PHOTO: ROBERT GOODIER

in South Florida's tropical wetlands; we are grateful that the park was established in 1947 in an attempt to save them. While exploring the state park, we came upon a symbol of that destruction: the last existing Bay City Walking Dredge, a machine built in 1924 to carve the Tamiami Trail through the Everglades and Big Cypress.

We had come in our motorhome to South Florida looking for a swamp, some gators and fun, and found all that plus a good deal more — a vast wilderness where visitors are surrounded by wild beings living in their natural habitats. We had learned that this was a designated World Heritage Site and Wetland of International Importance. We realized that there was much more to see and do in Florida's Everglades National Park, and that the River of Grass will have new things to teach us when we return. ♦



Christine Goodier is a freelance writer and editor who lives on the North Carolina coast and travels with her husband, photographer Bob Goodier, in a Class B Sprinter motorhome.

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by JEFF CRIDER

# FULL-TIMER TRANSITION

## CONVENIENT HOME BASE LETS RVERS CONTINUE LIFESTYLE

In many ways, Jill and Clint Baumann are deep into the motorhome lifestyle and love it. They have been full-time RVing for almost 12 years, with children and grandchildren spread across California, Arizona, Texas, Florida, Pennsylvania, Maryland, Ohio and Michigan.

And even though the Baumanns plan to continue RVing in their 40-foot Monaco Knight for years to come, they are making plans for a future when they will no longer drive as much.

That future includes the recent purchase of a 720-square-foot manufactured home with an RV port at Superstition Views, Cal-Am Resort's newest adult-only resort in Gold Canyon, Ariz. The Baumanns spent the winter in Superstition Views before they left on their next RV adventure.

"We were coming to this area to visit friends. We thought we'd put one day aside to check this place out and we haven't left," Jill said. "We just fell in love with this place."

Their manufactured home includes a living room, kitchen and dining area, a bedroom and bathroom and a covered RV port.

"We can use our RV for overflow," Jill said. "Since our home is a one-bedroom home, the motorhome gives us bedrooms two and three. This gives privacy to whomever comes to visit and it gives us privacy, too."



PHOTOS: CAL-AM RESORTS



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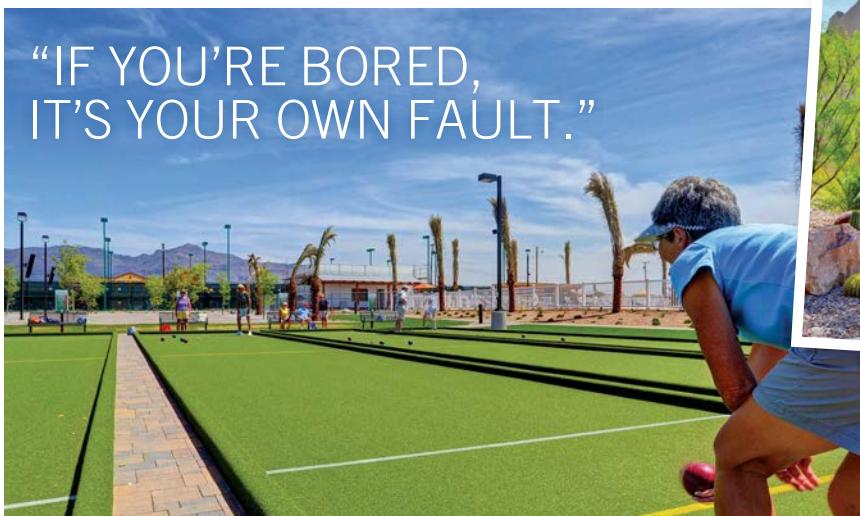


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“IF YOU’RE BORED,  
IT’S YOUR OWN FAULT.”



**Left:** Swimming and tennis are just two of the activities Superstition Views property owners can enjoy. **Above:** RV garages are an available feature at Superstition Views.



across the country from coast to coast, the Baumanns always have places to go. They typically stay put during the winter months and had previously been wintering at a park in South Texas, but they fell in love in with Superstition Views. And with the RV ports, Jill said they can “close down the house and go off and play whenever we want.”

And with eight children and stepchildren and 18 grandchildren, the Baumanns plan to be on the road a lot this summer.

At the time of this writing, the Baumanns were not sure if they would head farther east after their trip to Dallas or take off in another direction. But their manufactured home is so well insulated they’re already talking about coming back to Superstition Views to see what it’s like in the summer months. ♦

The Baumanns plan to do a lot of entertaining of friends they’ve met in their travels. They also have family in neighboring Flagstaff, including one of their grandsons, a diesel mechanic who keeps their coach in fine shape.

Their manufactured home was built by Phoenix-based Cavco Industries, a company Jill called “fabulous” as she talked about their positive experience getting settled.

Prices at Superstition Views start at \$99,900 for a one-bedroom, one-bathroom manufactured home and go up from there, depending on the additions that are requested. The development has 157 sites.

As Superstition Views property owners, the Baumanns have access to all the comforts available at Canyon Vistas RV Resort, another Cal-Am property that’s right next door to Superstition Views. Amenities include a swimming pool and spa, lighted tennis, pickleball and horseshoe courts, and exercise facilities. Superstition Views property owners

can also take part in all of the activities that are offered at Canyon Vistas, which include wood carving classes and a hiking club to dinner dances and other nighttime entertainment.

“We use all the amenities. They have more things to do than any place we’ve ever been to,” Jill said, adding, “If you’re bored, it’s your own fault. There are just pages of things to do.”

A retired nurse, Jill was born and raised in Pittsburgh, Pa., and lived in Cleveland, Ohio, for many years. She met Clint, a retired engineer, when they lived in Ohio and soon discovered they had a mutual interest in RV travel.

“He’d been retired for some time and he retired me,” she said. “The next thing you knew we were on the road.”

So far, they have taken adventure caravans to the Canadian Rockies and Alaska and visited many of the national parks. They’ve also spent time in Florida, Michigan’s Upper Peninsula and Charleston, S.C.

And with their family literally spread



**Jeff Crider** is a Palm Desert, Calif.-based freelance writer, photographer and camping enthusiast who previously covered the RV industry and tourism for newspapers in Southern California.

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PHOTO: BOB LIVINGSTON

# FORETRAVEL **IH45**

COMPLETELY REDESIGNED MOTORCOACH TAKES ITS NAME AND LUXURY FROM THE OLD RAILROAD DAYS OF ELITE TRAVEL AND ITS QUALITY CUES FROM FORE FAMILY TRADITION

by BOB LIVINGSTON

**L**yle Reed loves trains. He spent most of his career as an executive for a number of railroads and retired from his CEO post in 1996. He's also a motorhome enthusiast who bought a specially built 42-foot Foretravel in 2003 (not his first) and by 2005 he led a group of investors that bought the company. Reed named his latest endeavor the "Iron Horse" in reference to the railroad days (hence the "IH" designation), and what resulted is a gorgeous motorhome that echoes the romanticism of the Old West when the wealthy traveled in private, opulent railroad cars. "Iron Horse" is the name Native Americans gave the locomotive when they first saw it crossing the plains.

While Foretravel motorhomes haven't been around quite as long as the railroad lines that helped settle the frontier, the name-

plate was established in 1967 and the company has built a long-standing reputation as one of the best in the business. Today's Foretravel motorhomes exude precision craftsmanship while integrating systems and appliances representative of the high-tech world. What rolls off the assembly line in its Nacogdoches, Texas, plant are coaches that appeal to discriminating buyers who actually have a heavy hand in the manufacturing process.

We took a look at the IH 45 Quad Slide, which represents the company's first completely redesigned coach in 25 years. It's a magnificent creation that easily satisfies anyone's desire for extreme luxury and comfort, as long as one can afford the seven-figure price tag.

Obviously, a widebody coach with 45 feet of length and four



slides to augment interior spaciousness affords great latitude for the designer and prospective buyers, who work as a team. For the test coach, a relatively conservative floorplan — although extremely popular and well proven — zeros in on the bath-and-a-half concept complemented by a front living room salon, center kitchen and master bedroom just forward of the rear main bathroom — all under a sculpted ceiling of exceptional beauty.

First impressions are everything when entering any luxury coach. Well-placed, flush-mounted LED ceiling lights supported by accent lighting and wall fixtures illuminate the inside in grand fashion. When privacy is not necessary, the power MCD shades can be lifted, allowing in plenty of ambient lighting that contrasts perfectly with the handsome laminate structures and finely upholstered furniture in the test coach. Walnut, cherry and maple wood finishes are standard fare but potential owners can opt for more exotics like Bubinga and African mahogany. Flooring is also a matter of personal taste, and for this coach

wood was used throughout, except for the bathrooms. When tile is chosen, radiant heat is part of the package.

Oposing slides really open up the front living area. Couches are placed in each slide on flush-fitting floors. Curbside, a table on an electrically operated pedestal can be used for dining. Once the cockpit chairs are turned, the front becomes an even nicer conversation area with plenty of elbowroom that has “entertaining” written all over it.

The galley, positioned about mid coach, is not exceptionally large but it does have all the necessary accouterments for planning most meals. Sink covers improve the counter space, made of natural quartz, and since it’s an all-electric coach, the cooktop is flush mounted, providing additional room when the burners aren’t needed. A high-end microwave/convection oven can be used for the majority of cooking chores. The sink has special strainer attachments, making food prep and clean up more convenient.



**Above:** Oposing front slideouts add space to the living room salon. **Far left:** Flush-mounted cooktop and sink covers improve counter space. **Left:** A SlumberEase mattress occupies the master bedroom suite.

PHOTOS: FORETRAVEL

Across from the galley is a home-type double-door refrigerator with the customary water and ice dispensers built in the front panel. A large freezer drawer below the double doors provides sanctuary for frozen foods. If that's not enough, a 100-pound capacity freezer is mounted in one of the storage bays. The rest of the foodstuff can be stored in the various surrounding cabinets and the pullout pantry with carpet-lined shelves. Just about any kitchen appliance/ accessory can be ordered, including the dishwasher and finely crafted faucets and fixtures in the test model.

Before entering the master bedroom suite, the half bath can be accessed on the curbside. Inside is a vacuum-flush china toilet, just like the one used in the rear master bath. Most 45-footers are equipped with the half-bath feature, which keeps guest traffic out of the bedroom.

An electrically operated SlumberEase mattress sits proudly in the bedroom, accentuated by the massive headboard and surprisingly small nightstands. Remote controls are used to position the bed for sleeping or reading. On the opposite wall, the dresser and cabinet



PHOTOS: FORETRAVEL

**From left to right: The rear master bathroom boasts plenty of cabinet and drawer storage while another section of the closet houses the stackable washer and dryer. A well-appointed vanity is next to the vacuum-flush china toilet.**

water system will see to that.

Clothing and shoes are easily swallowed up by the quasi-walk-in closet with hang-up rods, shelves and drawers, cleverly positioned for easy access. Another section of the closet ensemble houses the stackable washer and dryer. The tastefully appointed bathroom vanity is adjacent to the second vacuum-flush toilet. Properly placed lighting

and other electrical componentry, but the electrical package in the test coach provides plenty of self-sufficiency when untethered from hookups.

Part of the fun of owning a coach like the Foretravel IH 45 is driving it. The proprietary chassis is powered by a 600 HP Cummins ISX engine with 1,950 lb-ft of torque. The Allison 4000MHR transmission moves the power fluidly and the excellent power-to-weight factor provides smooth sailing on any highway, regardless of grade. The 304-inch wheelbase is a comfortable fit for this coach and the 54-degree wheel cut allows good maneuverability in close quarters.

Exceptional fit and finish, inside and outside, temper any rattles and creaks, leaving the driver a quiet cockpit without the annoyance of wind noise and extraneous cacophonous distractions. An active air suspension system will smooth away most bumps and combined with the front independent configuration gives the coach great road-hugging manners.

**"PART OF THE FUN OF OWNING A COACH LIKE THE FORETRAVEL IH 45 IS DRIVING IT. "**

structure (with direct and accent lighting) add the right touch of class to the bedroom; a TV is built into the upper portion of the structure.

The bathroom is definitely the eye candy. A walk-in, glass-enclosed shower is graced with beautiful, custom tile work and an adjustable showerhead. You might not want to leave this shower too quickly; the Aqua Hot comfort heating and hot

fixtures and mirrors allow any user to luxuriate in this bathroom. All the lighting throughout the coach is controlled by a multiplex switching system with redundancies throughout the coach.

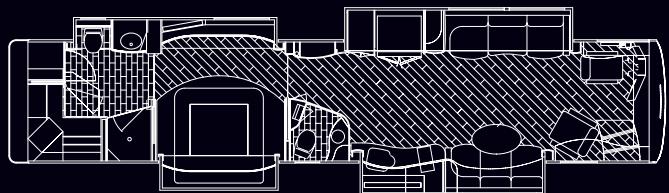
Electrical needs are serviced by a 20 kW diesel generator and a massive battery bank tied to dual 2,800-watt inverter/chargers and a solar charger. Owners can enhance capacity by adding solar panels

**SPECIFICATIONS**

**CHASSIS:** TRAVELRIDE II  
**ENGINE:** CUMMINS ISX 600 HP  
**FUEL:** DIESEL, 200 GAL  
**GVWR:** 54,000 LBS  
**LENGTH:** 45'  
**WIDTH:** 8' 6"  
**HEIGHT WITH A/C:** 13' 2"  
**INTERIOR HEIGHT:** 7'  
**WHEELBASE:** 304"

**FRESHWATER CAP:** 135 GAL  
**HOLDING TANK CAP:** 145 GAL  
**LP-GAS CAP:** N/A  
**BASE MSRP:** \$1,175,000  
**MSRP AS REVIEWED:** \$1,201,370

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Driver comfort and visibility are excellent and the Silverleaf glass dash incorporates all the information necessary for piloting a coach this complex, and for keeping tabs on key systems. The passenger seat is equipped with its own goodies, including an articulating screen to help with GPS navigation or to simply while away the miles in personal electronic entertainment.

"Smooth" is the operative word when describing the exterior of this coach. Striking graphics and flush-mounted windows, slides, awnings, baggage and entry doors — and even the step compartment — are aesthetically kind to the eyes. Massive below-floor storage lockers will accommodate just about anything an owner wants to take along. All the accessories and hardware sharing these compartments are neatly organized, including the utility center. Here, stainless steel shrouds the necessary utilities like an outside faucet and water, electrical and sewer hookups. The 50-amp power cord and water hose are on electrically operated take-up reels. Outside entertainment can be accessed on the patio side and the generator slides

out of the front via a push of a button. Rear access to the engine is excellent.

As part of the buying experience, prospective owners can become intimately involved with the process or choose one of the company's existing — and more popular — floorplans. Regardless of how the owners elect to become involved, the company encourages them to spend several days in the area after delivery. Most new owners and even some repeat customers spend a number of nights on premises in one of the factory's adjacent campsites, and almost everyone is exposed to at least three to four hours of training per day. Foretravel staff members will spend as much time as needed to ensure that the ownership experience is positive. That's a trait inherited from the Fore family and continued by Reed and his staff.

While the IH 45 is not restricted by tracks like its brethren of yesteryear, the freedom of exploration and luxury of the mighty railroads of the past are certainly instilled in the Foretravel coaches of today. That's what keeps railroad man Lyle Reed smiling. ♦

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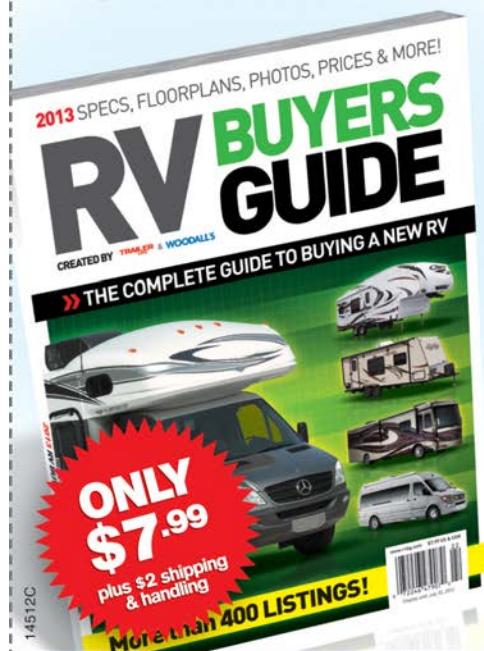


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# WIPER BLADE BATTLE

by E. DON SMITH

## GOOD WINDSHIELD WIPERS MATTER; WE PUT 7 TO THE TEST

**L**ast year it seemed as if every time I drove my motorhome it was raining, which led to the realization that I needed new and better wiper blades. All it takes is a few hours behind the windshield in a torrential downpour to give you some perspective on the significance of good wiper blades. In our October 2009 article “Clear Vision,” we covered in great detail how important it is to use windshield water repellent; we hope you are already following that tip. Combine that with a great set of wipers and you are ready to hit the road no matter how hard it is raining.

My coach (a 2008 Tiffin Phaeton) came from the factory equipped with a large wiper arm and J-hook that made finding replacement wiper blades difficult and expensive. After a little research I found out the OEM now offers a new upgraded wiper arm that allows the use of “traditional” automotive-size wiper blades, which is exactly what I wanted. Next, I ordered a set of new wiper arms and installed them, something I will describe in this article. With the new arms in place I could select wiper blades from one of many stores, including department stores, auto parts stores and Camping World.

There are several different types of connectors used among wiper arm and blade manufacturers, with the most common being the 9-by-3 or 9-by-4 J-hook. The 9-by-4 is often used on larger vehicles but sometimes you can even find a motorhome with the side pin or bayonet style. After a careful examination of your wiper arm and current blades, you should be able to identify the correct replacement blade. If in doubt, take a photo of the blades and take it to your local dealer; a service person should be able to help you pick the right model.

Going back a few years, most coaches had slightly smaller

front windshields and they used 26- to 28-inch wiper blades. Today, however, many of them come equipped with 32-inch blades just as our Tiffin did. The larger size gives you a larger pane of clear glass to look through, but honestly you don't normally need or use that entire 32 inches of viewing area. We mention this because locating 32-inch wiper blades can be difficult while 26- to 28-inch models are plentiful. For this article we tested mostly 28-inch models since they were easier to find and less expensive. After using various sizes for many hours I could not tell any difference and often had to resort to a tape measure to see what was on the motorhome during testing.

Another advantage noted on the 28-inch wiper blades is



PHOTOS: E. DON SMITH

All of the wipers tested are the new frameless design except for the Michelin (second from left), which is a hybrid model with a covered spring-style beam under the outer cover.

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## WIPER BLADE BATTLE



After five years of use these wiper blades were tired and in need of replacement. In order to allow for the use of standard wiper blades we decided to replace the wiper arms with a universal fit style at the same time.



To remove the wiper arms, simply raise the plastic cover and loosen the bolt shown here. If your wiper arms have a rubber hose connected for the washer fluid, you will also need to disconnect it from the fitting on the coach.



After the bolt is removed you will need to remove the wiper arm by rocking it back and forth as it slips off the splined shaft that drives the wipers.



Once the old wiper arm is removed you can start the reassembly process.



Before attaching the arm to the coach you will first need to install a wiper blade to prevent the metal arm from rubbing against the windshield. This Anco blade has a simple, easy-to-use connector that allows you to slide the J-hook on the arm into the new wiper blade. Most of the wiper blades will snap in place, indicating it is fully seated. Make sure this is the case or you risk the wiper coming off while in use.



When installing the new arm, make sure you position it so that it is level with the bottom edge of the windshield. In this photo you will notice that the new arm doesn't have splines like the old one. The arm is soft metal and it will conform to the hardened steel drive stud and create its own splines when properly torqued to the stud.



After the arm is in place and level, reinstall the washer and nut on the threaded drive stud and tighten.



The manufacturer of this particular wiper arm (TRU Vision) recommends that the new arm be torqued twice to ensure it is properly seated. Then reconnect the washer fluid hose and you are ready to move to the other side and repeat.

they seemed less likely to chatter and shimmy back and forth while in use like the 32-inch models did. I assume this is due to their shorter and perhaps slightly stiffer design. After installing numerous pairs of wiper blades, as well as testing and researching them, I concluded that for my purposes a 28-inch blade is plenty long and cleans a huge area of the windshield significantly above and below my normal viewing area.

Years ago, buying a wiper blade was a simple matter with only one or two choices for each size and the nice person who filled up your car with fuel would also check your wipers and install new ones for a dollar or two. Today the search for

blades will present you with more options than you ever imagined. The traditional style blades with a metal frame and a rubber insert are still available but they are now less common than the new flexible-style frameless blades. This new design promises better contact between the glass and the entire length of the wiper blade. The old metal frame style relied upon four, six or even eight pressure points along the blade to keep it pressed securely against the sometimes-curved glass windshield.

All of the blades in our test were either completely frameless or a hybrid design. None of them were the older frame style like those installed when the coach was built in 2007.

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## TRICO ONYX

LENGTH 28"

TYPE Curved frameless

FEATURES Connector was harder to use than others, but very solid once installed. Aero shape and a great wiper.

PRICE \$26.95

WIPING QUALITY  
1 2 3 4 **5**

STABILITY  
1 2 3 4 **5**

CONNECTOR  
1 2 3 **4** 5

OVERALL SCORE **14**



## BOSCH ICON

LENGTH 28"

TYPE Curved frameless

FEATURES Aerodynamic wing design and the best connector of the group.

PRICE \$24.99

WIPING QUALITY  
1 2 3 **4** 5

STABILITY  
1 2 3 **4** 5

CONNECTOR  
1 2 3 4 **5**

OVERALL SCORE **13**



## TRICO NEOFORM

LENGTH 28"

TYPE Curved frameless

FEATURES Blade is Teflon-coated, steel beam insert. Connector was finicky and required several attempts to install properly.

PRICE \$18.99

WIPING QUALITY  
1 2 3 4 **5**

STABILITY  
1 2 3 **4** 5

CONNECTOR  
1 2 **3** 4 5

OVERALL SCORE **12**



## TRICO FLEX

LENGTH 28"

TYPE Curved frameless

FEATURES Great value, steel beam insert very rigid in use.

PRICE \$18.99

WIPING QUALITY  
1 2 3 **4** 5

STABILITY  
1 2 3 **4** 5

CONNECTOR  
1 2 3 **4** 5

OVERALL SCORE **12**



## ANCO OEM

<b>LENGTH</b>	32"
<b>TYPE</b>	Straight metal
<b>FEATURES</b>	32 inches long, nice stiff blade and a good connector.
<b>PRICE</b>	\$22.47

**WIPING QUALITY**  
1 2 3 **4** 5

**STABILITY**  
1 2 3 **4** 5

**CONNECTOR**  
1 2 3 **4** 5

**OVERALL SCORE** **12**



## RAIN-X REPEL

<b>LENGTH</b>	28"
<b>TYPE</b>	Curved frameless
<b>FEATURES</b>	Streak-free wiper, but connector was fair. Includes Rain-X pretreatment solution for windshield.
<b>PRICE</b>	\$28.99

**WIPING QUALITY**  
1 2 3 **4** 5

**STABILITY**  
1 2 3 **4** 5

**CONNECTOR**  
1 2 **3** 4 5

**OVERALL SCORE** **11**



## MICHELIN STEALTH

<b>LENGTH</b>	28"
<b>TYPE</b>	Hybrid spring steel covered frames
<b>FEATURES</b>	Connector was fair. Lowest cost wiper of the group.
<b>PRICE</b>	\$17.99

**WIPING QUALITY**  
1 2 **3** 4 5

**STABILITY**  
1 2 3 **4** 5

**CONNECTOR**  
1 2 **3** 4 5

**OVERALL SCORE** **10**

One of the wiper blades from Rain-X (Repel) also comes with a blade pretreatment solution said to treat the windshield with water repellent and reduce chatter during use. Another interesting feature found on the Trico Onyx blade and the Bosch Icon was a large airfoil that uses the airflow while driving to help keep it firmly pressed against the windshield.

We wish we could report the longevity of each of these wiper blades, but testing them each for six to 12 months was not

practical. Instead, our scores reflect the other factors we could observe.

When it came time to add up the scores on these wiper blades all performed quite well. But there are minor differences that we point out in the ratings section. The message here is if you are driving with old, worn-out wiper blades that are wiping against untreated glass, get them taken care of now. Not only is it a safety issue, but you will notice an improvement in your fatigue level when

driving in the rain once you are able to see better. Don't delay any longer and be sure to use a wiper blade cover when the blades are not in use. This greatly reduces wear and UV damage on the rubber blades and increases their lifespan. ♦



E. Don Smith is a Tennessee-based freelance writer and photographer who has been a frequent contributor to *MotorHome* magazine since 2006. He is the proud owner of a Tiffin Phaeton coach.



# ALL NEW FOR 2013

A LOOK AT THE LATEST MOTORHOMES FROM  
THE NATIONAL RV TRADE SHOW

by BOB ASHLEY

**E**very year, the Recreation Vehicle Industry Association (RVIA) hosts its National RV Trade Show, an event where motorhome manufacturers preview their latest offerings. During the recent show, several coachbuilders ventured into new markets for 2013, while others refined their existing lineups with new floorplans and upgraded amenities — all of which are designed to give the outdoor enthusiast more of what they are looking for, whether it's an inexpensive Class C motorhome or a luxury diesel-pusher coach.

Some of the show's highlights included Thor Motor Coach's new Four Winds 33SW "Super C" with a gross vehicle weight rating (GVWR) of 19,500 pounds, Jayco's entry-level Redhawk Class C and Canada-based Pleasure-Way Industries' new Pursuit. These were complemented by other coachbuilders such as Roadtrek, which introduced



a Class B that uses a bank of batteries to power appliances rather than relying on LP-gas; Navistar RV, which redesigned the luxury Monaco Dynasty diesel-pusher for the 2014 model year and now features striking front and rear caps; Leisure Travel Vans, which created a Class B Sprinter with a streetside slideout in its Free Spirit SS; and Fleetwood RV, which introduced a low-profile

Excursion diesel-pusher that can be housed out-of-sight in a 12-foot-high garage.

Here's a more detailed look at some of the motorhomes that you're likely to see on RV dealers' lots this year.

## COACHMEN PURSUIT

Coachmen RV's hyper-affordable new Pursuit by Mirada Class A gas-powered motorhome is priced to compete with used units, Class C motorhomes and ultra-competitively priced Class A's. "It's less money than most Class A's and it's more



COACHMEN PURSUIT

at a price point of a mini motorhome,” said Dave Miller, general manager of Coachmen’s Class A division in Middlebury, Ind., who added the Pursuit retails for less than \$100,000. Built on a Ford F53 Super Duty chassis with a GVWR of 18,000 pounds, the Pursuit by Mirada, designed with a one-piece windshield and substantial exterior storage, is available in 29- and 31-foot floorplans with colored fiberglass side walls. Features include an electric awning, convertible U-shaped dinette, sofa bed, electric dropdown bunk over the cockpit, a large galley countertop, broom closet and double-bowl stainless-steel sink. “While it’s entry-level, it’s still a clear step above ultra-low end,” Miller said. “You get a lot of features at an inexpensive price.”

#### FLEETWOOD EXCURSION AND DISCOVERY

Building on the momentum from this year’s debut of the compact Excursion diesel-pusher series, Decatur, Ind.-based Fleetwood RV showed two new 35-foot, low-profile floorplans at the trade show. Designed to fit under a 12-foot garage door, the 35B boasts an economical 10-14 MPG while still offering 8-foot ceilings. Built on Fleetwood’s Powerbridge chassis utilizing the Freightliner XCS



FLEETWOOD EXCURSION

series chassis, the 35B is equipped with a 300-hp Cummins ISB 6.7-liter engine and two slides. Features include a Hide-a-Loft option with a drop-down bed, mid-coach residential refrigerator and a hide-away dinette and breakfast bar, which increases dining capacity to six people. Base MSRP is around \$188,000. Fleetwood also showcased its 40E Discovery, marketed as a full-timer’s coach on a non-tag axle platform. Offering a large pantry and a bath-and-a-half layout, the triple-slide 40E retails for around \$281,700.

#### GREAT WEST VANS LEGEND

Under a new owner, Great West Vans, Winnipeg, Manitoba, has redesigned its Legend, Legend SE and Legend EX with new interiors and exteriors while continuing to build Class B motorhomes on the Sprinter 3500 chassis with a GVWR of 11,500 pounds and a high-mileage 188-hp diesel engine. “We had an interior designer come in and go through all our color schemes,” said David DeBraga, who purchased the company last April. “We plan to keep technology and quality really high.” Features in the 22-foot 9-inch Legend and upgraded Legend SE include solid wood cabinets, side screen doors,



GREAT WEST LEGEND EX

recessed LED lighting, Avonite countertops, laminate flooring and rear under-bed storage. The Legend EX is built on a 24-foot 6-inch extended Sprinter chassis and offers additional seating options along with a hydronic heating and hot water system and an 85-watt solar panel. Base MSRPs run from \$116,000 for the Legend to \$133,000 for the Legend EX.

#### JAYCO REDHAWK

Jayco’s new Redhawk Class C motorhome is the Middlebury, Ind., manufacturer’s re-entry into the entry-level market. Offered initially with three floorplans — the single-slide 26-footer with a corner queen bed, the 32-foot double-slide 29XK equipped with bunk beds and the 32-foot triple-slide 31XL — the Redhawk is built on a Ford E-450 cutaway chassis with a GVWR of 14,500 pounds and equipped with a 305-hp Triton V-10 engine. Featuring molded fiberglass front caps, the floorplans are designed with overcab bunk beds. Standard amenities include backup cameras, 32-inch LCD TVs, residential linoleum floors, under-bed storage with gas struts, both dinettes, laminate countertops with composite sinks, beachwood cabinets and power driver seats. MSRP: \$84,809



JAYCO REDHAWK 31XL



**LEISURE TRAVEL VANS FREE SPIRIT SS**

Offering an innovative twist on the Sprinter chassis with a GVWR of 11,030 pounds, Canada-based Triple E Recreational Vehicles has added a streetside slide to the Class B Leisure Travel Van Free Spirit SS. The slideout in the 22-foot 9-inch Free Spirit SS is mounted behind the driver's seat across from the screen-equipped sliding entry door. It increases the living space while containing a fold-down memory-foam sofa bed. A large storage compartment, big enough to hold two golf bags and other paraphernalia, is accessible through swing-out rear doors. A 22-inch LED TV is mounted on an articulating arm so that it can be viewed inside or out. Equipped with European-style curved wood cabinets, Ultraleather furniture, Corian Private Collection countertops and wood-look vinyl flooring, the Free Spirit SS gets an estimated 19-22 MPG. Base MSRP: \$119,470.

**MONACO DYNASTY**

Navistar RV, Wakarusa, Ind., has redesigned the 2014 Monaco Dynasty diesel-pusher motorhome with a distinctive front cap featuring a triple-chevron design set off by LED lights. Available in two 44-foot bath-and-a-half floorplans — one a quad-slide, the other a triple slide with a full wall extension — the 2014 luxury Dynasty is built on Navistar RV's propri-



etary Roadmaster chassis with a 44,000-pound GVWR and a 475-HP Navistar Maxx-Force 13 engine with an aluminum side-mounted radiator. Standard with a king bed and rear wardrobe, amenities include stainless-steel appliances, residential refrigerator, solid-surface countertops with LED accent lighting, glass-enclosed shower, Aqua-Hot 450 hydronic heating system and five-color full-body paint. The Dynasty also is pre-wired for optional two or four 95-watt solar panels with controller and remote display. MSRP: \$433,065.

**NEWMAR DUTCH STAR**

Newmar Inc., Nappanee, Ind., has created a distinctive look by adding stainless-steel accents and LED lights to the redesigned front caps of the 2013 Dutch Star diesel-pusher, while rear caps have been equipped with automotive taillights with LED accents. The Dutch Star, in 10



37- to 43-foot floorplans, is mounted on a Freightliner XCR chassis and is equipped with a 400-, or 450-HP Cummins ISL engine. The coach's GVWR ranges from 34,600 pounds to 47,000 pounds. Retailing from \$375,000 to \$380,000, the 2013 Dutch Star offers solid wood cabinets, updated fabrics, L-sofas, new fireplaces in some models and "televators," which feature TVs that store below the window on some floorplans.

**PLEASURE-WAY INDUSTRIES PURSUIT**

Named runner-up for Best of Show by industry publication *RVBusiness*, the new 22-foot Pursuit Class C motorhome from Pleasure-Way, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, is the company's first offering outside the camper van market. "This is a new venture," Vice President Dean Rumble said. "It's a big thing for us." Initially offered with two floorplans — one with a cabover entertainment center, the other with a trundle bed arrangement — the Pursuit is built on a Ford E-350 cutaway chassis with a GVWR of 12,500 pounds and is powered by a 305-HP, 6.8-liter V-10 engine. With a stylish, modern interior,



the Pursuit features Corian countertops, a standup shower, LED lighting, Ultraleather furniture, rear U-shaped lounge and maple cabinet doors. The motorhome is built with molded one-piece fiberglass front and rear caps, and fiberglass side walls bonded to a steel superstructure. The Pursuit is equipped with a multiplex system that controls many of the coach's electronics along with the RVID "Smart RV" system that keeps an eye on service needs and includes optional portals that can monitor the coach as it travels. "Kids can log into their own portal and watch mom and dad tool around the country," Rumble said. MSRP: \$103,870.

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ROADTREK RS E-TREK



### ROADTREK RS E-TREK

Canada's Roadtrek Motorhomes, Kitchener, Ontario, unveiled the RS E-Trek Class B motorhome on a Sprinter chassis that incorporates the latest propane-free technology enabling extended, environmentally conscious dry camping. According to the company, with eight 6-volt AGM batteries charged by a 3,500-watt generator/alternator mounted to the van's diesel engine, RS E-Trek can operate independently for nine hours through a 5,000-watt inverter for appliances such as air conditioning, water heater or furnace. Available with a second row of captain's seats and full-body paint exteriors, the RS E-Trek also comes with a 250-watt solar charging fuel-cell generator option, additional engine generator/alternator, surge protection, power monitoring plus optional lithium-ion batteries. "There has never been an RV like this," said Roadtrek President Jim Hammill. "The introduction of this model is industry leading, environmentally responsible, all-electric [appliances], all with no loss of functionality.

### THOR MOTOR COACH CHATEAU/FOUR WINDS 33SW

Thor Motor Coach has launched its first "Super C" motorhome, rolling out the 33SW Four Winds floorplan built on a diesel-powered Ford F-550 chassis with a 19,500-pound GVWR and offering an expanded living area with 82-inch ceilings and a full-wall driver's side slide. "With the Super C platform we were able to add

THOR FOUR WINDS 33SW



TIFFIN ALLEGRO

an extra foot in the bathroom, including more shower space, while also opening up the bedroom by building the wardrobe into the full-wall slideout," said Jerimiah Borkowski, director of communications for the Elkhart, Ind.-based builder. Equipped with Ford's PowerStroke 6.7-liter diesel engine, the 33SW offers 300 HP, 660 lb-ft of torque, a six-speed transmission that maximizes the 10,000-pound hitch receiver and a standard electronic brake controller integrated in the dash. The interior offers a full residential kitchen with refrigerator, 30-inch over-the-range microwave and solid-surface countertops. Other amenities include solar and privacy window roller shades and an 1,800-watt power inverter. On the exterior, Thor's exclusive HD-MAX full-color, gelcoat exterior graphics package offers a polished, high-end look. MSRP: \$135,000.

### TIFFIN ALLEGRO RED

Tiffin Motorhomes for 2013 has added a 33-foot floorplan with opposing flat-floor slideouts to the Class A Allegro RED. Although this is the shortest of five RED (rear-engine diesel) floorplans, "The flat floor gives us incredible width and the ability to do different configurations," said Jerry Williamson, national sales manager for the Red Bay, Ala., motorized manufacturer. "You could hold a wedding inside." Tiffin has spiffed up the 2013 RED with interior LED lighting throughout, a new burlwood cockpit dash, Gibraltar solid-surface countertops and solid wood cherry

cabinets. An ultra-thin flat-screen bedroom TV, one of four in the coach, is built into an overhead cabinet door that flips up to expose the entertainment center. Built on a raised-rail Freightliner XC chassis with a 29,500-pound GVWR and equipped with a 340-HP Cummins ISB engine, the 33AA floorplan retails for \$220,290.

### WINNEBAGO VISTA AND MINNIE WINNIE

For 2013, Winnebago added three new floorplans to its ultra-affordable Vista Class A lineup, a market-leading gas-powered Class A motorhome series. The new single-slide 27-foot 26HE weighs in with a \$69,999 MSRP with the triple-slide 28-foot 27N at \$108,291 and the 36-foot 35B at \$123,763. All five Vista floorplans are assembled on a Ford F53 Super Duty chassis with a GVWR of 16,000



WINNEBAGO VISTA



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ALL NEW FOR 2013

to 22,000 pounds and are equipped with a 362-HP Triton V-10 engine. Additionally, Winnebago has weighed in with a new motorhome with an old name: the Minnie Winnie, which has returned on an entry-level Class C motorhome. The 2014 Minnie Winnie, an iconic name that Winnebago retired in 2005, retails in the low- to mid-\$60,000 range and is built on a Ford or Chevy cutaway chassis in 25- to 31-foot lengths with an even smaller version in the works. ♦

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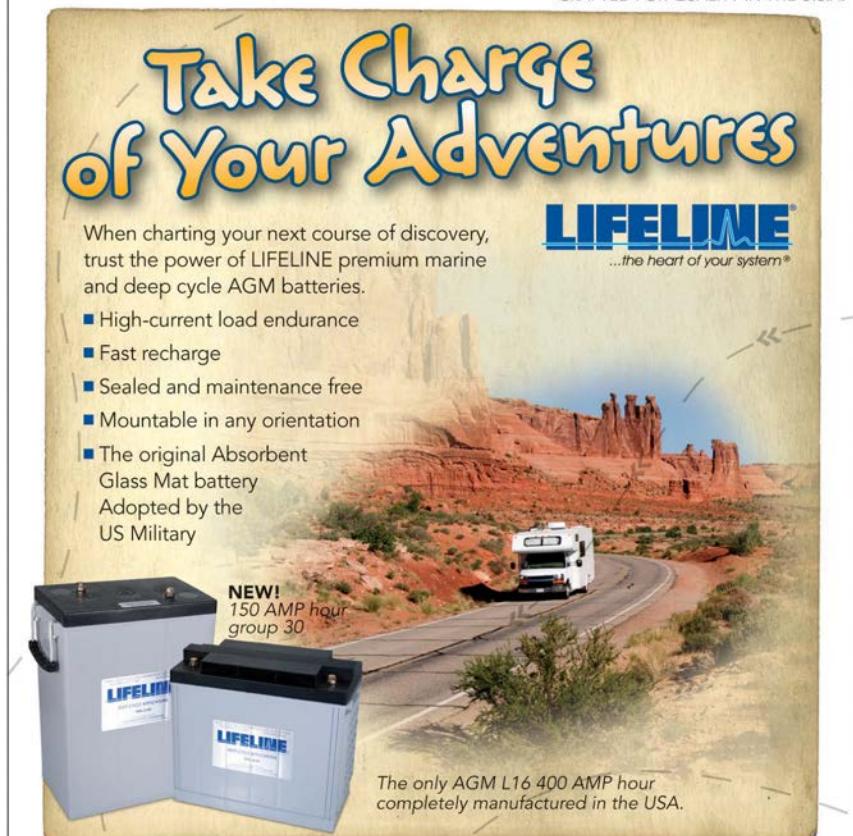
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## STOVE COVER ADDS SPACE

I used some leftover laminate flooring to make a stove cover in my motorhome. It makes for excellent storage space when the stovetop is not being used. It also works well because the foam underneath serves as a noise buffer for rattling stove grids. The flooring is very durable, so I'm not concerned about scratches. Because the slats lock together, it looks clean and attractive.

**WILL GARNER**  
GRAND JUNCTION, COLO.

## WALL HOOK HELP

I screwed various hooks into my motorhome's walls in order to hold things such as keys, a small flashlight, a calendar, sunglasses, fuel discount cards, etc., but the hooks would work themselves loose in no time. I found that the thin plywood wall panels do not have enough material to hold the threads well. My fix was to attach a 3/4-inch-thick piece of wood in the appropriate location using glue and recessed wood screws. Wood plugs cover the screw heads and give it a factory-like look. Using the original wood species adds a touch of class.

**FRANK WOYTHAL** | ANDOVER, N.Y.



## SHORT QUEEN BEDS

With otherwise excellent RV equipment, there are still frequent complaints by tall people about short queen beds (60 by 75 inches). As a 6-foot 1-inch person who likes to sleep flat on his back, I found the 75-inch bed caused foot cramps and toe pressure problems. My wife and I teamed up for an easy solution.

Realizing that the way I lie on a normal pillow wasted about 6 inches between my head and the wall, we made a narrower pillow. We opened a fiber-filled pillow (shredded foam, feathers or other filled pillow will also work) enough to remove about one-third of the filling and then sewed it back to about two-thirds of its original width, while keeping its original length and thickness.

Now the top of my head is about an inch from the wall and I sleep as comfortably as in our regular queen-size bed at home.

**PAUL BINDER** | SARASOTA, FLA.

## WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!

**Quick Tips**, *MotorHome's* monthly column of handy, simple tips by fellow RVers, is looking for submissions. Please send your favorite do-it-yourself ideas to: *MotorHome* Quick Tips, 2575 Vista Del Mar Drive, Ventura, CA 93001, or email [letters@motorhome.com](mailto:letters@motorhome.com). Be sure to include photos, illustrations or drawings, if necessary. If your tip is selected for publication, you'll receive \$35.

ILLUSTRATIONS: BILL TIPTON

CONTINUED ON PAGE 66

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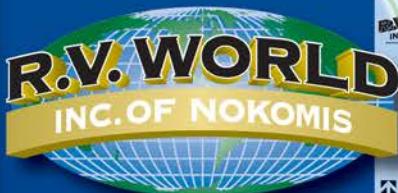
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## ◀ KEEP CLOTHING IN PLACE

We finally solved the age-old problem of hangers falling off the clothes rack while we're on the road. We bought a box of 50 hangers and a package of small hair bands at a discount store. We simply slip the band onto the hanger's hook, hang the item of clothing on the bar and pull the band down over the open end of the hook. Now all of our clothing stays in place.

**KAY AND PHIL FILIPCZUK | GRAIN VALLEY, MO.**

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## STAY ON TRACK

The glass doors on our RV's shower always jumped the tracks when we were traveling, even when the doors were locked with the knob on top. My solution is to slide both doors to the right and insert two wooden dowels in both tracks. That way there's no need to tighten the doors and they stay in place.

**DALE CAGENELLO  
HARWINTON, CONN.**

## THREE FOR THE ROAD

Keeping your RV looking good is a tough job, especially when you're on the road. Here's a hat trick of stain-busting ideas.

- For water stains on wood furniture, use a soft cloth and fine ash (from wood ashes) mixed with a bit of water to make paste. Rub gently on the stain and let it set. Wipe off with water and another soft cloth. If the stain isn't completely gone, repeat the process.

- For water stains on fabric use Febreze spray, rub it in, let it stand, and when dry — presto! The stain is gone. Use a second treatment for stubborn stains.

Works well even on drapes and window cornices.

- After washing and waxing the RV, rub with wet fabric-softener sheets. Bugs will come off easier at the next washing.

**GLORIA STOUT  
PEEPLS VALLEY, ARIZ.**

## ROOF-SAVING SLEEVE ▶

Our new RV has a fiberglass roof. When washing the roof, I didn't want to scratch the edges, so I needed something to cover the hose. My solution was to make a felt sleeve for the hose. I bought a 1-foot-long piece of 45-inch-wide felt from a fabric store. Then I cut the felt into two 6-by-45-inch pieces and sewed them together to make a piece 6 inches wide and 90 inches long. After folding the piece in half and sewing a 1/4-inch seam, I now have a soft sleeve to slide around the hose and hold in place with a rubber band.

**SUE MCGARTLAND | LIVINGSTON, TEXAS**



## AIR ESCAPE SOLUTION

When nighttime temperatures drop drastically and I need a quick and simple way to keep warm air from escaping through my RV's ceiling vent, I use Glad Press'n Seal wrap. Its adhesive side sticks nicely to the vent frame and leaves no residue when removed. The wrap's roll is 12 inches wide; so two short lengths cover the frame. Since I've been using the Press'n Seal, drafts have been reduced, and the RV furnace cycles on much less often.

**TOM BECKER | BERNALILLO, N.M.**

## BIGGER IS BETTER

We recently purchased a motorhome. The kitchen area has all the appliances we have at home, but the counter area is obviously smaller than we are used to. Our coach didn't come with a sink cover, so we resolved to fix that.

To increase the counter area, I purchased a wood cutting board at a home center. It is large enough to completely cover one bowl of the double sink. To the bottom of the cutting board, I attached four wooden cleats so they would fit snugly into the sink bowl, and the board would rest on top of the sink.

Not only did we gain valuable counter area and a cutting board to work on, but the board hides the sponge and other cleaning items in the sink.

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# techsavvy

HANDS-ON | HOT LINE | COACH & POWERTRAIN

HANDS-ON | *by* BOB LIVINGSTON

## VIEWING LOCAL TV

Winegard's ultra-thin Rayzar antenna pulls in HD-quality signals without programming costs

### At the risk of dating myself, I remember jury-rigging

a rabbit-ear antenna to a portable TV that we tried to use while RVing. After painful maneuvering, we were able to pull in a few over-the-air channels, but dealing with a snowy picture was part of the experience. Broadcast TV has taken a back seat to cable and satellite service, but the digital transformation has made major networks and a host of other independent channels readily available with HD clarity — for free — in most geographical markets.

Winegard introduced the Rayzar high VHF and UHF antenna with a new twist on “rabbit ears.” Actually, the Rayzar has no resemblance to the rabbit ear antenna, but it's the first one that can be used indoors that actually works.

Made of thin translucent plastic, the 12-by-13-inch antenna is designed for mounting in a window. While the antenna is multi-directional, users will find there are preferred locations for better reception. Suction cups that clip to the antenna are used to secure the thin plastic to the window. It's best to avoid metal window frames for better reception. The antenna is not designed for outside use.

Once the antenna is in place, the attached 15-foot mini cable is routed to the coax fitting in back of the TV. This is the connection that is typically used when hooking up to cable. Winegard offers a female-to-female barrel connector (FS-8100) to attach additional cable if needed to reach the intended TV.

The Rayzar is designed to pull in signals that are within a 25- to 30-mile range. Unless you're way out in the boonies, most towns and cities are within range to pick up at least a few channels. Users can go online at [www.dtv.gov/maps](http://www.dtv.gov/maps) and put in their zip code to find out what channels are within range. Not only will the channels be listed, but also the signal strength icons will give the user an idea of what to expect.

After the antenna is positioned and connected to the TV, the last step is to run a channel scan to locate and program available channels. This must be done every time the antenna is moved



PHOTOS: BOB LIVINGSTON

or the TV disconnected from the antenna.

For some owners, this antenna could be redundant equipment, but for those who travel in older rigs with rooftop bat wing antennas that are not suitable for digital reception, the Rayzar is a good replacement. It's also useful for those who have no antenna or one that has been damaged over the years. The Rayzar is only compatible with digital tuners — those used in all TVs manufactured after March 1, 2007.

We field-tested the Rayzar in an area the aforementioned website listed as having only a few channels within reach. Once the antenna was placed on a side window, we were able to tune in more than 30 channels, with good clarity and audio. We pulled in all the networks along with many independent channels, which were broadcast in HD. Obviously, the website needs updating.

I personally opted out of a rooftop antenna because I rely on satellite TV. But over time I missed receiving local channels, which present the news and weather in the areas we're visiting. And when the trees and buildings restrict the view to the satellites, I'm glad I tucked the Rayzar into a storage compartment.

The Rayzar retails for \$49.95, but can be found online and at Camping World for \$39.95 most of the time.

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



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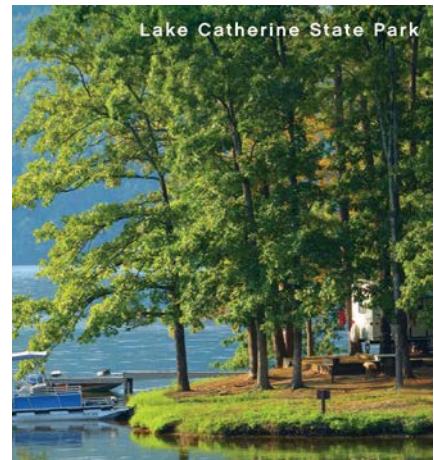
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## Paint-Protection Problem

BELIEVING THAT A MANUFACTURER SHOULD PAY DAMAGES AS A RESULT OF AN ALLEGED FAILURE OF ITS PRODUCT, A READER ASKED HOT LINE TO GET INVOLVED. HE WROTE:

I purchased my new 2010 Forest River Georgetown motorhome in January 2010 and had no problems with the exterior finish until last summer when mildew began to grow under the protective film on the front of the coach.

I didn't know what company made the film, so I searched online for "protective film" and Diamond Shield was the first name that popped up. I called the company and learned all of its installations have a Diamond Shield logo. The person there was very helpful and gave me a quote to remove and/or reapply the film, but he said my coach did not have Diamond Shield film.

Then I called April Conner at Forest River and had her check the VIN to see where the film came from. She told me that it was Coach Guard and gave me the phone number of Jim Sweet, the president at Coach Guard. I called and Sweet was not available but the employee who answered offered to help. He told me that mildew was not covered under the company's five-year warranty and that I would have to pay to have the film removed or to live with it. He also said the company has had numerous complaints of mildew from coach owners who live in warm, humid climates.

Since Forest River referred me back to Coach Guard, I believe that it should help defray the expense of the removal of its protective film. Any assistance that Hot Line can provide will be appreciated.  
**GEORGE LITTELL | VALRICO, FLA.**

*Hot Line contacted Coach Guard on Littell's behalf. The company's answer follows:*

We have received your letter regarding the complaint from George Littell and the paint protection film on his 2010 Georgetown motorhome. We appreciate the opportunity to work with you on this issue.



There are a couple of discrepancies with Littell's letter that we would like to clear up. First, we have not had numerous complaints with mildew under our film. In our 12-year history, we have had less than a handful of complaints for any type of defect with our product. The point our employee was making was that the mildew issue does seem to be limited to Florida-based motorhomes. Second, Littell seems to believe that he has a five-year warranty, which is not the case. Our warranty with Forest River is only one year.

Since Littell purchased his coach in January 2010, his warranty was up in January 2011. Littell may have seen a five-year warranty on our website, as we do offer a five-year warranty on our 3M Clear Coated film, however this is not the film that Forest River chose for us to use on its Georgetown motorhomes due to cost concerns.

As a gesture of goodwill, Coach Guard is willing to send Littell a replacement film kit. However, we cannot be responsible for the labor costs to remove his existing film or reapply the new one.  
**JIM SWEET, PRESIDENT  
COACH GUARD, INC. | ELKHART, IND.**

### WATER INTRUSION

*Seeking compensation for an ineffective motorhome repair, two readers asked for Hot Line's intervention. They wrote:*

We are asking for Hot Line's assistance in recovering repair charges we paid for under warranty. We bought a 2010 Holiday Rambler motorhome from Veurinks' RV Center in Grand Rapids, Mich., on Sept. 7, 2010. On Sept. 1, 2011, we took the coach back to Veurinks' RV and had them check a GFCI that kept popping and repair a water leak in the roof. Although the coach was under warranty, we were charged for the roof repair.

The next time we used the motorhome in the rain, the roof leaked. We took the coach to an authorized repair shop, Just Trucks, in Grawn, Mich., and the service technician there said the

roof-leak sealant was coming off. He removed the sealant, cleaned and sanded the area, and applied new sealant. He also found why the GFCI was popping: there was a loose wire on the outlet.

The work at Just Trucks cost \$1,922.98. We sent a letter to Veurinks' RV Center stating that we feel they were responsible for paying these repairs. We received a reply letter from Veurinks' RV offering to refund the payments we made for their initial service. We contend that the roof problem was not our responsibility and are therefore requesting reimbursement in the amount of \$1,922.98.

**KEN AND DIANNE SOMERO  
ARCADIA, MICH.**

*Hot Line advised Veurinks' RV Center of the Someros' displeasure. The company responded as follows:*

Thank you for bringing this matter to our attention. I have enclosed a copy of the letter that we sent to the Someros and a copy of the Navistar Limited RV Warranty.

It is unfortunate the Someros had this problem. We are willing to reimburse them, as a goodwill gesture, their service order in the amount of \$72.23. As an additional goodwill gesture we are willing to reimburse them for their GFI repair, since we could not duplicate this problem while it was under the warranty period. The total reimbursement we are offering the Someros is \$167.23

The Navistar RV Limited Warranty clearly states, "owner's maintenance items are not included under the warranty." This includes resealing exterior sealants. Any exceptions to the Navistar warranty would be up to Navistar RV.

I appreciate consumer interest groups such as Hot Line, and we certainly want to be the very best dealer and strive for excellence. I think our long-standing reputation of more than 50 years speaks for itself. I hope this will resolve the matter.

**TIM VEURINK, PRESIDENT  
VEURINKS' RV CENTER  
GRAND RAPIDS, MICH. ♦**

TO CONTRIBUTE TO HOT LINE, refer to Contact MotorHome, on page 8.

## Mileage Madness

We have a 2012 Winnebago 35P Adventurer on a Ford F53 chassis with a 362-HP V-10 engine. When we bought this coach, we were told that we should realistically get 7 to 8 MPG when towing our 2008 Jeep Liberty. After driving 12,600 miles, we are averaging a disappointing 6.6 MPG. This seems to be unrelated to whether we're driving on flat or mountainous terrain or with or without the tow/haul function operating.

I have talked to several RVers, with identical or nearly identical Winnebago or Itasca motorhomes also towing identical Jeep vehicles, who are averaging between 7.5 and 8.5 MPG. And, while a mile or so a gallon may not seem like much, it represents a 12 to 23 percent increase in fuel and cost.

In speaking with people at Winnebago, who have been extremely helpful on all other issues, they believe it is a Ford issue. When contacting Ford, the response is "Average mileage is 6 to 8 MPG," with no other explanation as to why our mileage should be so low, why it seems to vary so widely or what, if any, remedies might be available (i.e. possible engine computer settings). Is there a way to achieve better mileage or do I simply have to live with this?

**RICHARD NEWBERT  
LANGHORNE, PA.**

*Fuel mileage is certainly one of the biggest factors on the minds of most motorhome owners these days, and I feel your pain. Ford was correct in saying that most owners of F53 chassis with a V-10 engine report in the neighborhood of 6 to 8 MPG. Remember that includes many parts of the country that are flat. Your region has a lot of grades, which greatly increase fuel consumption. Another major factor is cruising speed. You didn't mention what speed you normally cruise at, but if you drive at 65 to 70 MPH, and your friend drives at 55 MPH, that could account for most of the difference between your results. Headwinds and crosswinds can have*

*the same effect as going faster. Slowing down can yield in the neighborhood of 20 percent better mileage. Smooth, steady driving with little movement of the accelerator pedal also helps.*

*The on-board diagnostic (OBDII) system can usually detect malfunctions that would increase fuel consumption, and set a CHECK ENGINE light. Since you didn't mention having a light on, I am assuming that the engine feels like it is running normally. However, it wouldn't hurt to have your powertrain checked using a Ford scan tool. Have them look for stored codes, along with short- and long-term fuel trim, and ask for the results in writing for later reference. Fuel trim shows if the engine is trying to adapt to a problem. Depending on mileage, you may want to have a service performed, and be sure to keep your tires properly inflated.*

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### ALIGNMENT ADVICE

I own a 2000 American Eagle 40-foot diesel-pusher. I recently replaced all six tires with new Goodyear tires. I have no issues with abnormal or uneven wear and no steering issues. Should this coach have a front-end alignment because of the new tires and to help protect my investment? How often should this type of coach have an alignment?

**JOHN ARCH | ALBANY, N.Y.**

*When it's time to replace tires on my own vehicles, I do a close inspection of the old front tires. That includes measuring tread depth across the entire width, and sliding my hand across the tread both ways to feel for feather edging. This is a type of directional wear that's sort of like a fish's scales, one direction they are much rougher than the other if wearing crooked from incorrect toe-in. I also check for loose or worn king pins, steering joints, etc. If any of these problems are found I repair the worn parts and have an alignment performed.*

*Check the owner's manual maintenance schedule to see if there is a recommended interval for checking alignment. However, it's really something that should be done whenever you hit a curb or severe pothole, etc. with the front wheels, or if the tires appear to be wearing unevenly. Otherwise, I would leave it alone.*

### DINGHY LIMITATIONS

Why do some vehicles have manufacturer-recommended maximum towing speeds and distance towed limits, and others none? I'm thinking of buying a 2006 four-cylinder 2WD Nissan Xterra. The manual says not to go more than 60 MPH and to stop every 500 miles and run the engine for two minutes. If the transmission is in neutral on a standard transmission, why would I have to stop and run the engine, and not tow more than 60 MPH?

**ROBERT ADAMS | VIA EMAIL**

*Manufacturers choose their own testing methods and "validation" tests. These are initially decided in company meet-*



ings, and depending on the manufacturer, this determines procedure. They generally start with the engineering department to determine if towing is feasible. Then they run a series of instrumented tests to determine if critical systems such as transmissions are negatively affected or damaged. Stability may also be tested at high speeds. After all that, the legal department usually is the last to sign off on it. Speed and distance limitations are usually set conservatively, because they know that it's human nature to stretch the rules a bit. So they leave a margin of error to allow for extreme conditions and circumstances. How conservative they are depends on how risk-averse the company and its decision makers are.

Basically, it's your choice whether you want to follow the directions or not. However, if you choose to ignore the manufacturer's advice, you do so at your own peril and at the risk of voiding any warranty.

#### **HARD TO START WHEN HOT — TIP**

I had a Coachmen motorhome with a Chevy 454-cid V-8 engine with the same problem as Keith Ecklund ("Hard To Start When Hot," January). I replaced the starter, replaced the heat shields and replaced the battery without solving the problem. Every time I fueled up I had to wait for 15 to 20 minutes before the engine would start. One day I decided to disconnect the 12-volt wire going to the distributor. The engine turned over like normal. When I connected the wire the engine wouldn't turn over. So I disconnected the wire, hit the starter and reconnected it; the engine started while hot. I installed a normally closed push-button switch on the dashboard and when the engine was hot I would push the button and then the starter, and it would start every time. The real problem is the timing. When a 454-cid engine is installed in a coach, a timing indicator is placed on the bottom of the engine. When a technician uses the normal No. 1 plug for the timing light, you get 12 to 14 degrees before top dead center. I think you are supposed to use plug 5 when you use the bottom timing indicator. But when you set the timing back to normal the engine starts when hot, but it's get up and go is lost. So I left the timing



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the way it was and used the push-button switch to start when hot.

**PAUL LUX | CROMWELL, CONN.**

*Thanks for the tip, Paul. I used to have a hot rod with a high-compression Corvette engine that was slow cranking when hot. I cured it in a similar way, but rather than a push-button, I used a hidden toggle switch that disabled the ignition. This also serves as an additional theft deterrent.*

#### **HARD TO START WHEN HOT – TIP TWO**

Regarding "Hard To Start When Hot" in the January issue, I had the same problem and I found that the ground strap was



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**COACH & POWERTRAIN**

on a bolt that when the engine got hot it expanded so that there was not enough contact to have a good ground. By repositioning the ground on a different bolt the problem was solved.

**GLEN RODICK | BANCROFT, NEB.**

*Thanks for writing, Glen. That must have been a tough one to find. A quick way to tell if you have such a problem is to measure hot cranking voltage at the starter. It should be 9.6 volts or higher. Then do voltage drop tests along the circuit.*

**TOWING A MUSTANG**

I read that it is OK to flat tow my 1998 Mustang rear-wheel drive with five-speed manual gearbox (four wheels down). Then I read it is only OK to tow a front-wheel drive flat. Which is the correct answer?

**TOM RICE | PORTLAND, ORE.**

*There is no one correct answer that applies to every front-wheel drive (FWD), rear-wheel drive (RWD), all-wheel drive (AWD) or 4x4 vehicle. As a general trend, FWD models with manual gearboxes are often towable, and many 4x4 models with manually selectable neutral positions in their transfer cases are also flat towable. However, there are many exceptions and variations, so one should never assume something is towable as-is. MotorHome publishes annual dinghy towing guides, which list the vehicles that are factory approved for safe flat towing for that year. They are available annually in print and anytime online. Your vehicle is not towable as-is. If it is towed long distances in neutral the transmission may seize or be severely damaged. If you are determined to tow the Mustang, you may be able to install a driveshaft disconnect, available from Remco ([www.remcotowing.com](http://www.remcotowing.com)).*

**SAGGING SPRINGS**

We own a 36-foot 1996 Holiday Rambler Endeavor LE on a Ford chassis that has a tag axle with only 46,000 miles. Last fall I replaced all shocks with Bilsteins and replaced the rear sway bar bushings with polyurethane bushings. This made a big difference in handling and the coach doesn't move now when a semi passes or we're driving behind one. The coach does not have any slides and the kitchen and

generator are on the driver's side. The problem is that with the coach parked and on level ground it leans on the driver's side. It is noticeable on the highway going into bends. The driver's side will dip down while the right side is firm. Following my inspection the springs seem OK. Can the front driver's side springs be repaired, and what else should be done?

**RICHARD C SCHRAN SR.  
CRANBERRY TOWNSHIP, PA.**

*The ride height of each corner should be measured to determine whether the front springs, rear or both should be worked on. Depending on their condition, sometimes an extra leaf can be added or rebuilt, or new spring assemblies may need to be installed. Your best bet is to take it to a repair shop that specializes in truck springs. A quick search turned up several in your vicinity.*

**BALLOONING ROOF**

I recently purchased a 1999 Coachmen Class C motorhome. The unit is in remarkable condition; however, I found a few areas on the roof where the rubber material has separated from the coach. A family member followed me driving down the highway and said the loose rubber was "ballooning" above the roof by as much as 8 inches where it was loose. What is the best DIY method for repairing my roof?

**BRETT WINQUIST | VIA EMAIL**

*You need to carefully inspect the whole roof to determine the extent of the problem, and mark the areas that need work. At this point you can decide if it's too much and you want to have it done by a professional. Dicor makes a kit that includes a 9-by-10-inch peel-and-stick EPDM rubber patch and a tube of lap sealant. With this and perhaps EternaBond tape you should be able to repair many typical rubber roof problems. These and other products are available through Camping World. If the roof rubber is intact, and has no tears or holes but has simply come unglued from the roof deck, the membrane will need to be re-glued down. This could require a considerable amount of edge trim or roof hardware removal to facilitate getting in under the rubber to apply the*

adhesive. This project, or if the underlying roof is deteriorated, is probably best done by a professional RV repair facility.

### WEIGHTY QUESTION

Articles about weight distribution often advise to weigh each corner of the unit individually. I have tried for years to find someone to do this. I must be looking in the wrong place because I have found no one who knows how to weigh each wheel. Please lead me in the right direction.

**DENNIS FISHER | DENVER, COLO.**

*We simply drive just the corner of the coach that we want to weigh onto the platform of the truck scale. It requires a little maneuvering, but it's fairly easy to do. If it's a multi-platform CAT scale at a commercial truck stop, you should be able to weigh both front and rear wheels at once. Try to get the wheel(s) as far as practical onto the platform to get an accurate weight, rather than just parking on the edge. Write down each reading and wheel location at the time of the reading.*

### GENSET QUILTS — TIP

In response to Bill Thom's "Genset Quilts" in the December 2012 issue, I have the same Onan generator and had the same symptoms. I found that the rubber fuel line from the tank was cracked and the pump was losing prime. I changed both gas lines and the problem was solved.

**JERRY CHRISLOCK  
BETHEL ISLAND, CALIF.**

*Thanks for writing. I have heard of this happening, and it's a cheap and easy fix that readers should consider when troubleshooting such a problem.*

### UNEVEN TIRE WEAR

We're getting premature tire wear on the inner right-hand rear dual tire on a 2003 Tioga 29-foot motorhome. I'm running load-range E tires at 80 PSI cold. The inner dual wears bald while the other rear tires still have approximately 5/32-inch tread left. The depth is even across the tread on the other tires. Any ideas?

**RED CARR | VIA EMAIL**

*Have you checked to see if that tire is a different brand than the others? Often,*

*different brands of the same size (printed on the sidewall) will be slightly different in diameter and/or width. If it's taller, it would get much more of the load and wear more rapidly.*

### HORN KILLER

I have a 1998 Winnebago Chieftain Class A motorhome. The 12-volt horns burn out, as I've had to replace them three times. The fuse seems to be OK. Could this be a defective horn relay?

**PETER DEWALD | BECHTELSVILLE, PA.**

*I assume you don't honk the horn an excessive amount. The job of the relay is to get the heavier current from the battery to the horns, while reducing the load through the horn switch contacts. About the only way it could cause the horns to burn out is if the relay contacts stuck and caused the horns to blow for a long period. Check the horns for heavy corrosion or other damage. Excessive use, physical damage (including road salt and submersion) or defective parts are the only explanations I can suggest.*

### EXCESSIVE OIL BLOW-BY

We have a 2001 Newmar Dutch Star with a 7.3-L Cummins diesel engine. It's blowing oil out of the blow-by tube when stress is on the engine, such as steep grades and when using the Jake brake. I used four quarts of oil in less than 1,000 miles. I had the engine checked by a Cummins dealer and they found no problems. I have the oil changed every 5,000 miles. Any ideas?

**KEN CULP | VIA EMAIL**

*Some oil misting is normal, but four quarts in 1,000 miles is way too much. You didn't mention how many miles the engine has on it, but I assume it's not much more than 100,000. My best guess, assuming the engine is not worn out or faulty, is that you are running the oil level too high. Try running it just above the minimum level and monitor the level closely during this period to avoid running low. I have found this trick worked on a number of engines. ♦*

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**In the interest of avoiding unpleasant surprises,** a shakedown trip should be No. 1 on the travel plan after acquiring a new or used motorhome. Motorhomes are more complex than other types of RVs, and if there are any glitches they should be discovered within a reasonably short distance from the seller or from home.

Any new owner is excited to get moving, but before loading the coach for travel it's wise to get on the scales. Fill the freshwater, LP-gas and motor fuel tanks, before the weigh-in. Then after you load the motorhome, visit the scales again to see if you're under the stated limits, which usually are posted on a cabinet or closet door. Chassis weight ratings are posted near the driver's seat.



You should plan on rolling up about 100 miles and spend several days and nights aboard in order to expose any malfunctions. In addition to kitchen supplies and your personal items, you'll need an assortment of tools that matches your mechanical ability, plus road emergency triangles or some other type of nighttime safety/visibility device.

Before takeoff, make sure all your supplies are secure so items won't fall out of cabinets, which can be very distracting while driving. Kitchen supplies should not be made of glass unless those items are carefully protected from breakage. Manually test carbon monoxide, smoke and LP-gas detectors to make sure they're functional.



Before the trip, check tire pressures (including spare) and inflate to specs listed on the tire sidewalls (cold). Be sure to also check oil and coolant levels for the engine and AC generator (unless air cooled), along with the transmission oil level. The dealer pre-delivery inspection should have covered these items — and many others — but it's good insurance to check them yourself and to create a maintenance routine.



You should also go through hitching/unhitching and towing exercises if you plan to tow a dinghy vehicle.

During your initial driving experience, be aware of any possible handling differences compared with your pre-purchase test drive of the unloaded coach. Adding quite a bit of weight sometimes changes a motorhome's handling characteristics. Negotiating tight turns, braking, backing and leveling should be on your list. In particular, be vigilant in maintaining more distance from vehicles ahead of your motorhome, respecting that it may not stop as well as your passenger car. Downshift to avoid excessive use of brakes on mountain grades, or utilize your engine exhaust brake if your coach is so equipped (diesel only).

If you're new, backing will require practice, which can be performed in an empty parking lot using wood strips or other objects as markers to simulate campground sites. Make sure to use markers that won't damage tires if you steer wrong. Frustration often occurs between the driver and co-pilot over backing instructions, and it's wise to get your procedure and hand signals down beforehand.

A primary goal of a shakedown trip is to test operation of appliances, including refrigerator, air conditioner(s), furnace, water heater, water pump, entertainment components, leveling jacks, and of course the chassis drivetrain. Operate the refrigerator on 120-volt AC power as well as LP-gas and use a refrigerator thermometer to monitor performance. Read owner's manuals on the coach as well as the appliances.

If your shakedown trip goes smoothly, congratulations! If it doesn't, you can feel comforted that you didn't have to deal with a problem in unfamiliar territory. ♦

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We've made several motorhome trips across this great nation and have had many special moments. One of the most memorable times was a drive through Sequoia National Park in California. The road we were driving on split to go between the large redwood trees. We had room to go through and decided to stop and take a photo. People going in the other direction also stopped to take our picture. This is just one of hundreds of wonderful memories we created traveling in our motorhome.

Jeff McClure  
Darien, Connecticut



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