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32

FEATURES

23 | Beyond Bourbon

Although whiskey is king in Bardstown, Ky., the area is also rich in Civil War history and even includes a few resident ghosts

32 | Holiday in Halifax

Nova Scotia's capital has it all: noteworthy museums, military majesty, maritime mysteries and a full-service municipal campground

37 | Hail to the Chiefs

A tour of the libraries of six of America's modern-day presidents: Dwight D. Eisenhower, John F. Kennedy, James Carter, Ronald Reagan, William J. Clinton and George W. Bush

48 | 8 Good Reasons to Visit the Badlands

Why would anyone want to travel to a place named Badlands? Here are eight good reasons why this South Dakota region is worth a visit

58 | Be-Holding the Fort

A sampling of historic military installations across the country that offer up great camping, fishing, cycling, hiking and sightseeing opportunities

71 | The Ultimate Patio

From furnishings to decorations and more, these 25 camping accessories will help set off the summer season in style

80 | ReDISCOVERY

Fleetwood's iconic diesel pusher gets a new floorplan and thoughtful features for 2015



48



58

contents



98



111



85

85 | Boosting Cell Signals

Wireless and direct-connect radio frequency amplifiers from SmoothTalker improve phone and data service, especially in fringe areas

93 | Better Wi-Fi Connectivity

Using an external adapter with a high-gain antenna can significantly improve wireless networking performance in a motorhome

98 | Jayco Redhawk 31XL — Bunk It Up, Pack 'Em In

With up to eight sleeping positions, this Class C can easily accommodate family and friends

103 | Keep it Clean

An overview of RV sanitation-system maintenance and etiquette

111 | Tanks a Lot

How to keep the black and gray tank system flowing without complications — something no RVer wants to think about

119 | On the Level

Leveling systems provide a solid foundation for a more enjoyable motorhome living experience



119



71

DEPARTMENTS

- 6 | On Ramp
- 8 | P.O. Box
- 13 | Contact MotorHome
- 15 | Escapes
- 16 | Road Foodie
- 17 | Wheels & Gear
- 18 | Noteworthy/News Briefs
- 20 | Crossroads
- 126 | Advertisers Index
- 127 | Quick Tips
- 129 | Hands-On
- 130 | Coach & Powertrain
- 138 | The Road Ahead

On The Cover: The new Fleetwood Discovery is right at home at Emerald Desert RV Resort in Palm Desert, Calif., (see test on page 80). Photo by Scott Hirko.



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I'LL TAKE THE ROAD

I am sitting in my office fidgeting. I need to get on the road. But I just returned from an RV trip a week ago. I guess I'm addicted to travel, or as some say, "have caught the wanderlust bug." According to the dictionary, wanderlust is "an impulse, longing or urge to wander or travel." I'm there, and RVs make it possible!

For the fun of it, I surfed the Internet looking for reasons why people with certain personality types have an insatiable desire to travel. Most of the sites listed love of plane travel, hotels, restaurants, resorts and meeting people as the main reasons to see the world. In my world, only meeting people is valid; the other points gave way to RV travel long ago. And I never looked back.

I know I'm preaching to the choir when I rant about why I love to get in a motorhome and hit the road. But it's fun to make my case anyway. First of all, I think any experienced plane traveler can tell humorous stories at the end of most trips, although the subject matter probably wasn't that funny during the journey. Almost everyone agrees that the glamour of plane travel has long past. The other day I watched a news segment about how the airlines have figured out a way to put 26 extra seats on a 757. Unless you're a first-class traveler, that's not an accomplishment to look forward to.

Conversely, motorhome comfort is getting better. Motorhomes are more fun to drive, are designed for easy living and most importantly, offer independence. Sure, there can be a few problems along the way, but they pale by comparison with airline horror stories. When was the last time you heard someone rave about the terminals, security lines and process, schedules and service provided by the airlines? I hear wonderful stories about motorhome travel all the time — and experience my own.

Don't get me wrong; resorts can be fun and relaxing. But my idea of a resort is one that has big sites, full hookups and recreational facilities — and smaller crowds. Business travel forces me to



spend too much time in hotel rooms. All I think about when trying to sleep through slamming doors, noisy people and rumbling air conditioners is getting back in a motorhome — and of course, my own pillow. It's a good thing I got hooked on RV travel since I'm not very tolerant of long lines — or even short lines. My wife, Lynne, can attest to that. I'd rather be puttering around camp than wasting time in lines. By now you've probably figured that I don't fare well in traffic, either.

And what about the food? Granted there are a lot of nice restaurants and interesting off-the-beaten-path eateries, but there's nothing more satisfying than enjoying a grilled meal under the patio awning. This is one area where non-RVers can make a case for those who hate to cook. The key to success here is to share the galley chores — and eat out to change the pace. Still, I'd trade the best restaurant chef for a barbecue any day.

July is a big travel month. If you haven't made plans yet, take a look at the travel features in this issue. It's a diverse sampling of interesting and beautiful destinations. And what better way to celebrate America's birthday than to visit one of six presidential libraries (see page 37) scattered throughout the U.S.? History buff? Check out Bardstown, Ky., on page 23 and old military installations (forts) on page 58.

And if you want to make that patio the envy of any RV park, look at the suggestions presented on page 71.

Might be wheels up for many, but it's wheels down for me. ♦

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WHICH STATE PARKS DO YOU THINK ARE THE BEST IN THE NATION?

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

THUMBS UP FOR TENNESSEE

I have camped at most of the Tennessee state parks and find them to be among the best in the U.S. Most of the parks have water and electric hookups, fairly level sites, friendly personnel, trails, summer activities, pools and recreation halls. Some even have restaurants, and most are open year-round.

J.R. MABREY | VIA EMAIL

NO SITE NUMBER, NO RESERVATION

As long-time RVers, we stay almost exclusively in state parks when traveling in our 40-foot motorhome. We find the ambiance of a state park setting more to our liking as they are less commercial and more natural than private campgrounds. Most state parks are well kept, however many are older and do not accommodate larger RVs. Most also employ Reserve America for reservations, which works well. States like Georgia, which do not allow for reservations by site number, are losing out. We always write down the site numbers of campsites we like while staying at the park or just riding through, but if we can't reserve that site by number then we won't make a reservation. In most states, this is not a problem.

SEAN SEARS | VIA EMAIL

PRIVATE CAMPGROUNDS ARE PREFERRED

My family stayed at state parks when we first started using campgrounds in the '60s. In the central Southern states, we thought the Arkansas state parks were a notch above Oklahoma and more so than Texas. As the states suffered budget problems and had to raise their fees, it became apparent that private campgrounds had more to offer at almost the same rates. So, in the last few years, we have found ourselves using private campgrounds more and more. We do continue to enjoy the scenic surroundings that some state parks have to offer, but at a price — tighter parking, limited electricity, dump stations only, etc. The general public, who do what they call "camping" in RVs, are not willing to camp as most of us would have done in years past. We enjoyed the days of traditional camping, but are not willing to go back to them.

HOYT LOVELACE | FORT WORTH, TEXAS

ARKANSAS IS AWESOME

During the last 10 years, we have traveled in 44 states and have stayed in many state and federal parks. Utah, Texas, Oregon, North Dakota, North Carolina, Tennessee, Missouri and Florida have some beautiful parks. But overall I would have to compare them to Arkansas where you'll find the cleanest, most well-kept state parks, and employees are very friendly and courteous, as well as helpful and knowledgeable about the surrounding area and its attractions. We always look forward to our travels through Arkansas, which, in our opinion, has the best state parks in America!

J.W. HYDE | VIA EMAIL

CANADIAN PARKS ARE GREAT, TOO

We are nature lovers and always prefer state/provincial/national/federal parks for everything they have to offer not found in most private campgrounds. Being from Québec, and having a dog, we camp mostly at such parks outside our own province since the Québec provincial parks do not allow dogs (with a few very limited exceptions in reserves), whereas dogs are welcome everywhere else (with proper regulations and application of such).

We love to travel the northeastern states, and have been as far south as North Carolina, and we have found all such parks to be great in every aspect: clean, safe, adequate services, friendly people, good supervision, many with lakes and/or ocean beaches. Recycling may not yet be in full operation at all of those facilities, but it's getting there.

Canadian provincial and federal parks are also great (including the Québec ones, if you don't have a dog).

YVAN JEROME | LAVAL, QUÉBEC, CANADA

FLORIDA IS THE BEST OVERALL

My husband and I purchased our first RV in 2008, after having tent camped since childhood. We are both retired as of 2009 and go west for one month every fall, north every spring for a month, then spend two months camping in Florida every winter, with shorter RV trips during the summer. We camp exclusively in state parks throughout the

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U.S. and have even spent weeks camping in Canadian provincial parks and Alaska state parks.

America has an abundance of beautiful state parks where visitors can enjoy hiking, biking, horseback riding and water sports. Many parks have nature centers and feature geological as well as local history displays. State park camping prices are very reasonable, plus you are rarely stacked right on top of your camping neighbor. Most state parks are quiet and dark enough that you can enjoy the night sky without all of the light you find in urban areas.

While we check out as many state parks as possible in our travels, we have found Florida's state parks to be consistently the best in the country. Most Florida state parks have reasonably private, spacious sites, with electric as well as water hookups, clean restrooms with hot showers and laundry facilities — an amenity we wish all state parks provided. Many Florida State parks provide sewer hookups as well as convenient dump stations.

Just a few of the Florida parks we have enjoyed are Hillsborough River State Park near Tampa, Anastasia State Park in St. Augustine, Myakka River State Park near Sarasota, Jonathan Dickinson State Park near Hobe Sound and Silver River State Park near Ocala. Check out www.floridastateparks.org for a complete list of Florida's wonderful state parks, and book online at www.reserveamerica.com. We have found booking campsites in the state parks very convenient using Reserve America. I like the fact that you can get a visual image of the campground as well as the individual sites using this website.

Most Florida state parks are little oases near larger cities where you can enjoy a "back-to-nature experience" as well as take in movies, museums, botanical gardens, or dining in nearby cities. Florida state parks also have some of the best bike and hiking trails. Many provide rentals for kayaks, canoes, or boogie boards.

While we have enjoyed the state parks in 49 of our 50 states, if given a vote, we would go with Florida as being

the best overall. By the way, Florida has many awesome county parks too!

REGINA AND LYNN HOLLIS
LOUISVILLE, KY.

KUDOS FOR SEGWAY TOUR

I read Alan Rider's "The Road Ahead" in the April issue and could not agree more about his comments regarding the tour company Triangle Glides. Last January, my wife and I spent our mid-winter vacation in Raleigh, N.C., and participated in one of the Segway tours. Sandy Masinter was behind the desk and was very pleasant and helpful, answering all of our questions with a big smile on her face. I have previously had concerns with articles that rave about a particular business, but given personal experience, will now believe all that is said in your magazine. Keep up the good work.

MARK KUZAWINSKI | MAINE, N.Y.

CRUISING THE CANAL CORRECTION

I enjoyed the article "Cruising the Canal," about Hood Canal in Washington. Even though I'm close by in Seattle, I've over-

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looked it myself. I would like to point out that the waterfall shown on page 43 is actually named Rocky Brook Falls, not Rose Waterfall. It is located just 3 miles off Highway 101 near the town of Brinnon. Head west on Dosewallips Road. Additional information is easily available online.

STAN RUSSELL | LYNNWOOD, WASH.

Thank you for writing, Stan. One other correction to note in that article: Everyone who crabs or fishes in Washington, even on private property — like Glen Ayr Resort — needs a fishing license. — Eds.

WRONG WARRANTY

The warranty information in the article on the Winnebago Trend (March) was identified incorrectly. The coach warranty is actually 12 months/15,000 miles and the chassis warranty is three years/36,000 miles. MotorHome regrets the error.

MORE HUMOROUS PLATES

We are retired. Our grandchildren, Niko and Nyah, will say, "Let's go on the big

bus, PaPa!" and we are gone. No 9 to 5 for us.

**FRANK AND BARB SEIDITA
NEW MIDDLETOWN, OHIO**

THE OL'-FASHIONED WAY

Regarding humorous license plates, we have had this plate on our RVs since the '80s. We have been camping since 1967 and have traveled to 49 states.

People stop and comment on our license plate and also on our map of all the states we have visited.

**HUSHEL AND FRANCES BORDELON
WASHINGTON, LA.**

A PLATE AND A PLAQUE

We have a vanity plate on our motorhome (YGOHOME) and we put a plaque in the front with a Jimmy Buffett quote, "We are



the people our parents warned us about." Both get plenty of looks when we travel.

**ROCCI AND CATHY BRYAN
LOVELAND, COLO.**

PORTABLE PRINTER

I would like recommendations on portable printers suitable for use in a motorhome. Most printers are too bulky or fragile to use on the road. I have a mobile hotspot that allows me to use the Internet in my coach. It would be handy to be able to print out fuel prices, attractions and campgrounds, etc., while on the road. Perhaps your readers have some suggestions.

BRITT MISKER | VIA EMAIL

QUESTION:

Do you carry a portable printer with you in your motorhome? If so, which model do you recommend and why?

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edited by EILEEN HUBBARD

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A PAIR OF PARKS IN THE PEACH STATE LEAVE THE CROWDS BEHIND AT INDIAN SPRINGS AND HIGH FALLS NEAR ATLANTA

The greater Atlanta area has two well-kept secrets — Indian Springs State Park and High Falls State Park, both about an hour south of Atlanta. Together, the parks have a total of 160 sites (22 are pull-throughs). All have electricity, water, access to a dump station, swimming, hiking, fishing and easy-access paved roads. They accept up to 50-foot motorhomes.

People come from miles around to fill empty milk jugs with water from the mineral springs at Indian Springs State Park. Get all you want of what the Creek Indians called the healing waters. The spring has been open to the public since 1825. Indian Springs State Park

has 60 sites with water and 30-amp electrical hookups. Some campsites overlook a small lake. The park also offers boating, miniature golf and nature trails.

High Falls State Park, located 9 miles from Indian Springs, has 100 sites with electric (mostly 30-amp, but some 50-amp service), and a 650-acre lake that offers kayak, canoe and fishing-boat rental. High Falls, named for the tumbling cascades on the Towaliga River, encompasses more than 1,000 acres, and has beautiful waterfalls. For Georgia State Park campground reservations, call 800-864-7275. — Roger Fenton

PHOTO: GEORGIA STATE PARKS & HISTORIC SITES

COOL RV COOKWARE



Unless you're a full-timer, chances are the cookware in your motorhome's galley looks like mine — a few extras and mismatched odds and ends from garage sales and thrift stores. It's tough to make a good meal with worn-out pans and dull knives, and I recently replaced some of those castoffs with cookware that makes cooking on the road a pleasure.

What makes great motorhome cookware? First, it has to be lightweight. All of us fight the battle of overloading our rigs. Cookware like cast-iron pans, while great for cooking, are simply too heavy to cart around in an RV. Second, mobile cookware should be multi-functional. You should be able to do more than one thing with the item to limit the number of cookware pieces. And finally, RV cookware should be easy to clean and maintain. Who wants to spend time scrubbing cookware when you could be hiking, kayaking, biking, or doing other fun things the RV lifestyle affords?

As editor of www.realfoodtraveler.com, I have the opportunity to field test a number of cookware items and here are a few I recommend for the motorhome galley:

1. IMUSA Dutch Oven

Nothing is easier than a one-pot meal and IMUSA, makers of reasonably priced ethnic cookware, produces an incredibly light Dutch oven (aka caldero). The 6.9-quart nonstick Dutch oven with lid is made of cast aluminum and weighs less than 4 pounds. It's 100 percent oven safe (up to 535 degrees Fahrenheit), can be transferred from stove to oven and cleans up easily; www.imusausa.com

2. Argee Chop Keeper

These lightweight plastic chopping boards (three to a package) feature ½-inch sides to keep juices from dripping all over. In addition, Chop Keeper boards keep things where you put them so you're not chasing onions, cherry

tomatoes, or nuts, and keeps multiple foods from mixing on the board. The plastic is beefy and stands up to plenty of knife cuts; www.argeecorp.com

3. WearEver Pure Living Ceramic Cookware

Ceramic is the hottest trend in nonstick cookware because it's incredibly durable, offers quick, nonstick release and it's easy to clean. WearEver's ceramic pans and baking sheets feature scratch- and stain-resistant hard ceramic coating over an aluminum core. The surface is free of carcinogenic chemicals like PFOA and cadmium; www.wearever.com

4. Edge of Belgravia Ceramic Knives

Pans aren't the only cookware items incorporating new ceramic technology. Ce-

ramic knives are super hard and durable and don't require sharpening like traditional steel knives. The Edge of Belgravia ceramic knives have cool ergonomic handles that make cutting and chopping a breeze and they'll stay sharp as a razor for years; www.edgeofbelgravia.com.au

5. WearEver Cast Lite

For those who love cast-iron pots and pans, WearEver has come out with Cast Lite nonstick cookware that's durable and lightweight. Weighing in at about half the poundage of traditional cast iron, Cast Lite pans heat quickly, have great release without oil or butter, and put a good sear on foods. Best of all, they are guaranteed for life; www.wearever.com





RETURN OF **THE BRAVE**

The Winnebago Brave symbolizes motorhome travel during the '60s and '70s, and for those of you who long for those golden years, you'll be happy to know that the Brave is back. Sort of.

Like the current generation Chevy Camaro, Ford Mustang and Dodge Challenger, the Winnebago Brave and its sibling, the Itasca Tribute, bear an unmistakable resemblance to the original models, yet are thoroughly modern otherwise. Two floorplans, the 26A and 27B, will be offered

initially, along with a choice of three exterior graphic packages with '60s theme names like Mello Yello, Woodstock and Aquarius. The interior design is simple and clean with punches of color and industrial design elements that give it a retro-modern appearance.

The Brave and Tribute should be released by the time you read this, and the msrp is expected to start in the low \$90,000 range.

Winnebago Industries, www.gowinnbago.com, or www.goitasca.com



SEA **EAGLE**

Sea Eagle Boats Inc. recently added its new, improved-design NeedleNose NN126 to its latest line of inflatable stand-up paddleboards. This 12-foot, 6-inch tourer features an advanced shape that tremendously reduces drag, friction and the unwanted effects of the wind, according to the company. Made from a 6-inch, double-layer, 1,000-denier high-pressure reinforced core with quadruple overlapping seams, the NN126 features an extra reinforcement layer that runs the entire length of the rails to provide additional longitudinal rigidity. Weighing only 25 pounds and inflating in less than 10 minutes, the NeedleNose NN126 can be stored in the trunk of a car, ready to be rapidly deployed at a moment's notice. MSRP is \$999-\$1,339.

Sea Eagle, 800-748-8066, www.seaeagle.com



TOWED **BATTERY CHARGER**

Getting to your destination campsite or RV park and finding out that the dinghy's battery is dead can take the fun out of any adventure. The fact is, many of today's towed vehicles have a current draw on the battery when towing, which can result in that feeble ticking sound, or worse yet, nothing when you turn the key. The Towed Battery Charger from Danko Manufacturing prevents unseen parasitic loss by charging/maintaining the battery in a dinghy vehicle while towing. The premium design handles heavy-load and trickle charging, and installs in just 15 minutes, according to the company. MSRP is \$50.

**Danko Manufacturing, 800-815-2159
www.rvibrake.com**



DISNEY FILM FEATURES MOTORHOMES



Opening July 18, Disney's new animated comedy-adventure, "Planes: Fire and Rescue," features an RVing couple reliving their honeymoon at Piston Peak National Park. Harvey and Winnie (voiced by Jerry Stiller and Anne Meara) met more than 50 years ago when Harvey managed an RV tire store and Winnie became his showroom model. Now celebrating their golden wedding anniversary, the couple meets air racer Dusty Crophopper (Dane Cook), as a wildfire starts to rage in the national park. Dusty joins forces with Blade Ranger (Ed Harris), a veteran fire and rescue helicopter, and his firefighting team of Dipper (Julie Bowen) and a lively bunch of all-terrain vehicles known as the Smokejumpers. The family movie is a sequel to the 2013 Disney film "Planes." To view the movie's trailer, go to <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UkOD5LOTT30>, and for more information, visit www.disney.com/planes

ALASKA'S BEST-KNOWN TRAVEL GUIDE



"The MILEPOST," the quintessential travel planner for Alaska and Alaska-bound travelers, is back for its 66th edition. With 752 pages (including 612 photos and more than 100 maps), the 2014 guide features 30 major mile-by-mile routes and schedules for the Alaska Marine Highway Ferry. This is a particularly interesting feature of this edition, as future editions of "The MILEPOST" might not include these schedules due to a policy change by the Alaska Marine Highway Ferry System. Fares and schedules will continue to be available

online at www.ferryalaska.com. The trip itineraries in the back of the book work in tandem with the ferry schedules to help users plan an overland trip with an Inside Passage return.

"The MILEPOST" can be ordered by calling 800-726-4707, and is available in bookstores and retail outlets, online and at <http://shop.the-milepost.com>. The price is \$34.95, paperback (\$34.95 Canadian). A digital version is also available to those who purchase the print edition.

News Briefs

Luxury coachmaker **Newell Coach Corp.** announced that in response to customer demand, it is increasing production of new coaches for the first time since 2008. According to a press release, Miami, Okla.-based Newell has maintained an annual production level of 24 coaches for the past five years. This year, Newell will increase production to 26 coaches. "Expanding our production capacity on a carefully planned, incremental basis will support the strong trend in new coach sales and ensure that we can satisfy the increase in demand," said Newell Coach President and CEO Karl Blade.

With the completion of its new, state-of-the-art testing facility this summer, Burlington, Iowa-based **Winegard Co.** will establish itself as a world-class antenna testing facility. According to a press release, the newly added facilities will allow Winegard engineers to quickly and accurately characterize antennas from 50MHz to 50GHz in-house and cut design and development time in half. "This is the next step in the evolution of our company," said Winegard President Jon Manley. "Having the ability to test all of our products in-house gives Winegard a competitive advantage. Not only does this decrease development time significantly, it also reduces expenses incurred by outsourcing and improves our quality control."

In April, the **American Recreation Coalition (ARC)** testified before the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Natural Resources on reauthorization of legislation allowing federal agencies to collect and retain entrance and recreation fees.

According to a news release, ARC told the Congress that recreationists supported fees, but were concerned about the lack of focus on improvements in recreation experiences following the enactment of the 2004 Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act.

"We celebrate the marvelous shared legacy of our Great Outdoors — 1 in 3 acres of the surface of the nation managed by federal agencies and hosting well in excess of a billion recreation visits annually," ARC President Derrick Crandall told the panel.

Under existing provisions, fees generate more than \$300 million annually to help support federal recreation programs. As recently as 1996, the federal recreation fees were not retained by the collecting agencies.

ARC and other organizations believe that the public will support continued and even increased fees that deliver the experiences the public seeks when visiting national parks, national forests, national wildlife refuges, and other public lands and waters.



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KAUFFMAN HOUSE MUSEUM

Grand Lake, Colo., has plenty to offer modern-

day tourists, from ATVing and kayaking to repertory theater. Leftovers from yesteryear, including the wooden boardwalk along Grand Avenue and a 19th-century log building, add to the charm of this mountain town considered the Western Gateway to Rocky Mountain National Park.

The Kauffman House Museum was the last solid-log hotel built along the lakeshore in the late 1800s. Ezra Kauffman completed the home in 1892. It was run as a year-round hotel until his death in 1920. His widow, Belle, and three daughters used the house as a summer hotel until 1946. In 1973, the Grand Lake Area Historical Society purchased the building from its current owner and restored it as a museum. The furnishings reflect life from the late 19th century. Items like the butter churn, scrub board and chamber pot will surely make visitors appreciate the many conveniences we enjoy today.

Motorhome parking is not available near the Kauffman House, so you'll need to take your dinghy vehicle. Three RV parks are within 5- to 10-minute drives. Kauffman House is open daily from 11:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. from Memorial Day through August, and other times throughout the year.

For more information, visit www.grandlakehistory.org/museums/kauffman-house-museum — *Mary Zalmanek*



BLUEGRASS AT BELLAMY HARDWARE

Bellamy Hardware in Surgoinsville, Tenn., began in 1908, and

was open continuously for more than 80 years. In 2000, it was purchased by the Greers and the Houstons. Johnny Greer, the town's current mayor and a musician, became interested in bluegrass music. As a result, the new owners converted one section of the hardware store into a popular musical venue. On the third Saturday night of every month, visitors can hear musicians from around the area perform bluegrass music. Admission is \$5. The hardware section of the store has antiques and refreshments. Surgoinsville is located in east Tennessee between Kingsport and Rogersville and between U.S. 11W (Lee Highway) and the Holston River.

For more information, call 423-345-3372, or visit www.bluegrassatbellamy.com

— *James Richardson* ♦



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BEYOND BOURBON

GET INTO THE SPIRIT OF THINGS IN BARDSTOWN, KENTUCKY, WITH THE TOWN'S FAMOUS WHISKEY, GHOSTS AND CIVIL WAR HISTORY

PHOTO: COURTESY WWW.KENTUCKYTOURISM.COM

Bardstown, Ky., gets a lot of attention for its status as the Bourbon Capital of the World thanks to its many bourbon distilleries, but this warm, welcoming small town has so much more to offer. Former mayor, historian and author Dixie Hibbs believes one of Bardstown's greatest attractions is its history — the kind you can reach out and touch in one of Kentucky's oldest cities.

"I find that tourists want to come to small towns with beautiful old buildings," said Hibbs. "They like that they can literally walk around and touch the hand-laid brick, carved woodwork and limestone walls from 150 to 200 years ago. There are not many places in the United States you can still do that."

One of Bardstown's most prominent buildings is the Old Talbott Tavern, which has offered shelter to weary travelers since 1779. The tavern has had its share of famous guests over the years, including Abraham Lincoln (as a young boy), Andrew Jackson, Daniel Boone, French King Louis Philippe, legendary outlaw Jesse James and many others. In fact, legend has it that bullet holes found in one of the rooms were left behind by James, although some discount those claims (Frank and Jesse James made a number of trips to Bardstown during their heyday, fueling a distinct connection to the town).

The Tavern still operates as an inn and restau-



Top: Bardstown, and the surrounding area, played an important role in the story of the Western Front during the Civil War. Above: One of Kentucky's smallest family-owned and independently operated distilleries is Willett, where they make unique bourbon and rye whiskeys bottled by hand in very small batches.

PHOTO: COURTESY BARDSTOWN TOURISM



Bardstown Ghost Treks, two-hour guided tours held every Saturday, June through October, include a tour of the Old Talbott Tavern — a place where the spirits have reportedly been known to turn off lights and open and close doors on request.

rant with rooms named in honor of some of its more notable guests and a menu offering popular Kentucky dishes like the Hot Brown, burgoo stew and Southern fried chicken.

Next door to the Tavern, you'll find the Jailer's Inn that served as the county jail from 1819 to 1987. Few other jails in the United States have remained in continuous operation for such a long period of time. It's now a bed-and-breakfast, offering visitors the opportunity to spend

the night in one of the old jail cells. During a tour, you can reach out and feel the cool, 30-inch-thick limestone walls that held some of the county's most notorious criminals, push against the 800-pound cell doors and walk into the courtyard where local authorities conducted public hangings in years past. As you move from cell to cell, you can read old newspaper articles mounted on the walls about some of the more unusual inmates, while tour guide and owner Paul McCoy fills you in

on other unique jail stories. On one of the walls, you'll also come across a photo of former Nelson County Sheriff Donnie Pence, some unknown men and women, and Frank and Jesse James.

"Frank and Jesse James stayed here," said McCoy. "They stayed as guests, not as prisoners. They were friends of the sheriff."

As the story goes, the James brothers visited Bardstown and visited often, but never caused any trouble out of respect for their friend Sheriff Pence. In return, as part of a possible gentlemen's agreement, everyone left them alone. The James brothers were not the only high-profile guests to move through the jail.

"I've been told by the jailer's grandson," added McCoy, "that John Dillinger spent one night here under an assumed name as he was being transported back to Crown Point, Ind."

Both the Old Talbott Tavern and the Jailer's Inn are in the middle of downtown Bardstown, close to shops and eateries and other businesses. You can also walk up the street to visit St. Joseph's Cathedral, America's first Catholic cathedral west of the Allegheny Mountains, built in 1819.

Hibbs said that's part of Bardstown's charm, the fact that so many of its historic structures are still standing and still in use right in the center of town.

"In an area of about four square



Above, left: Bardstown has the fourth-largest Civil War museum in the nation. Above, right: Jailer's Inn, located next to the Old Talbott Tavern, is now a bed-and-breakfast that offers visitors the opportunity to spend the night in one of the former jail cells.



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BEYOND BOURBON



Heaven Hill is one of three Bardstown distilleries on the famed Kentucky Bourbon Trail. Visitors to Heaven Hill's Bourbon Heritage Center (shown above) learn about the history, heritage and lore of bourbon making and educational bourbon tasting at the multi-generational, family-owned-and-operated distillery.

blocks, you've got the core of the early buildings built in the first 50 years of our town."

She said the approach has been to hold on and preserve the past while making it work for the present. You'll find many businesses operating out of older structures that other cities might have gutted a long time ago.

"If we can't turn it back into a residence, we turn it into a commercial building, such as a lawyer's office or something. We don't just throw them out (old buildings) because the town needs more offices or something else."

Traveling throughout other parts of Bardstown, you see that same reverence and respect for history just about

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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www.civil-war-museum.org

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BEYOND BOURBON

everywhere you turn. There's Federal Hill, a mansion built in 1812 that sits in My Old Kentucky Home State Park and inspired the Stephen Foster song with the same name.

Another popular spot is the 1828 Wickland Mansion. Beautifully decorated with period furniture, the mansion served as the home to three Kentucky governors and is now said to be home to several ghosts and spirits. Group tours are available through the week, but visitors in town on a Friday evening can take part in "A Visit With the Spirits of Wickland." A medium guides the tour and will introduce you to some of those who lived in the home a long time ago. Those ghostly inhabitants range in age and background, as well as their reasons for still hanging around. An interesting demonstration with divining rods might surprise even the most ardent disbelievers.

History buffs will recall that Kentucky played a critical role in the Civil War, something well-documented in a local Civil War Museum that ranks as having



Wickland Mansion, considered one of the best Georgian-style houses in the state, was built circa 1825-1828, and served as the home to three governors. On Friday nights, visitors can take part in a ghost tour titled, "A Visit With the Spirits of Wickland."

one of the best collections in the country.

"Lincoln said, 'I have to have Kentucky or the game is over,'" noted Bob Llewellyn, who serves on the Board of Directors that oversees the Civil War Museum, and four other area military museums. "And he made a strong bid in 1862 and '63 to get a firm hold in Kentucky, which he did. In Kentucky there were two Union soldiers for every Confederate who served as soldiers here."

Popular museum items include a flag

taken from Confederate Gen. John Hunt Morgan (leader of a daring group known as Morgan's Raiders) when he was captured in Ohio, and a somewhat controversial portrait depicting Confederate Leader Jefferson Davis as wearing women's clothing when he was captured. (Llewellyn says Davis was actually captured wearing a raincoat and shawl.) "The Union guys twisted it and said he was dressed as a woman, which he wasn't," Llewellyn continued.

A nearby women's museum chroni-

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cles the role of women as nurses, spies and even Confederate soldiers during the Civil War. Another museum covers military conflicts from the Revolutionary War through Desert Storm, with many pieces donated by families of those who served.

A look at Bardstown's rich history wouldn't be complete without acknowledging the strong influence of the bourbon industry. You can do that by visiting the Oscar Getz Museum of Whiskey History or one of the nearby bourbon distilleries. The Barton Distillery has been operating in Bardstown under its current name, or as the Tom Moore Distillery, since the late 1870s. Josh Hollifield is the manager of the visitor center there.

"If you look at all of the distilleries that are close, and you think before Prohibition there was even more, bourbon was a big part of the economy," said Hollifield.

Heaven Hill and Willett also operate distilleries in Bardstown, while Jim Beam and Maker's Mark are just a short drive away. Right now, Kentucky makes 95 percent of the world's bourbon. (There



Bardstown hosts the annual Bourbon Festival in September. The event features a barrel-making demonstration, a bourbon-barrel relay and bourbon samples.

are specific guidelines required to carry the straight bourbon whiskey label. For example, bourbon must be made from a grain mixture of at least 51 percent corn and be aged in a new, charred white oak

barrel for at least two years.) Due to resurgence in the bourbon industry in recent years, it's helped provide not only an economic boost to Bardstown, but to the state of Kentucky as a whole. Bourbon is big business.

"There are more barrels of bourbon aging in the state of Kentucky than we have people," said Hollifield.

Bardstown also hosts an annual Bourbon Festival every September (this year's festival is scheduled for Sept. 16-21), which attracts some 30,000 people, many of whom return year after year.

People who visit Bardstown tend to do that — come back again and again. There must be something about the charm and hospitality of this small town that knows exactly where it came from, embraces what it is and cherishes sharing it with everyone else. ♦



Pam Windsor is a freelance writer and photographer in Louisville, Ky., who enjoys traveling and sharing the stories of the many fascinating people and places she finds along the way.

PHOTO: COURTESY WWW.KENTUCKYTOURISM.COM

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HOLIDAY IN HALIFAX

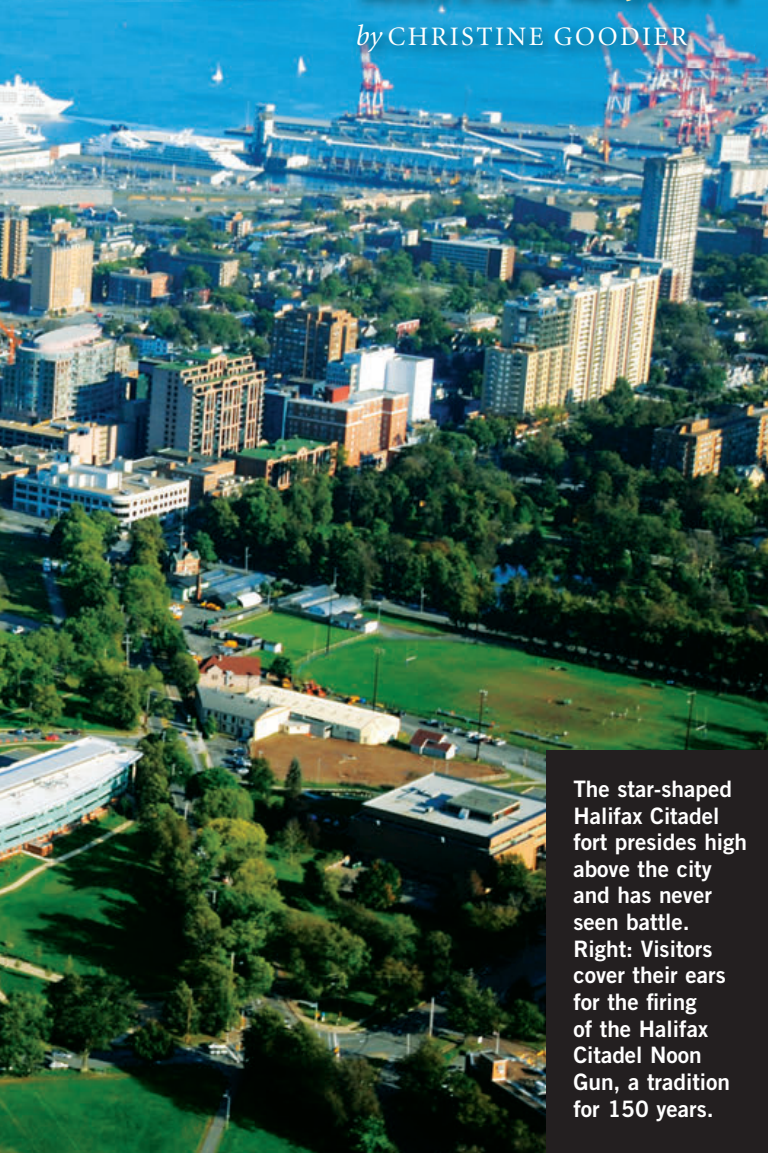


From opposite page left: Shubie Campground is in a municipal park just minutes from downtown Halifax. Oak Island in Mahone Bay holds the secret of the Money Pit. The colorful fishing village of Lunenburg draws visitors south from Halifax.

FAX

A GETAWAY TO NOVA SCOTIA'S CAPITAL REVEALS MARITIME MYSTERIES AND MILITARY MAJESTY

by CHRISTINE GOODIER



The star-shaped Halifax Citadel fort presides high above the city and has never seen battle. Right: Visitors cover their ears for the firing of the Halifax Citadel Noon Gun, a tradition for 150 years.

Halifax, Nova Scotia, has it all: noteworthy museums, outdoor cafes and even an intriguing mystery or two. Like many RVers, we sometimes skip big cities, anticipating long commutes from distant campgrounds, heavy traffic and parking hassles. But while traveling in our 22-foot Leisure Travel Vans Class B, we dove into Nova Scotia's capital without breaking a sweat. Halifax is a compact waterfront city with major sights within a few square miles. Better yet, there's a full-service municipal campground just a few minutes' drive across a bridge into the heart of downtown.

We started our Halifax getaway by selecting a campsite with water and electricity at Shubie Park Campground in Dartmouth where young staff members gave us the Wi-Fi code and pointed out laundry and coin-operated showers. The campground operates mid-May to mid-October and has grassy sites with some pine trees for shade. Serviced sites have water and electricity and five have full hookups. Shubie Park is owned and operated by the Halifax Regional Municipality as a green space for public recreation, with two lakes and walking trails along the 19th-century Shubenacadie Canal.

The next morning, we set out to see the largest city in Atlantic Canada, which comprises the provinces of Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Newfoundland and Labrador, and Prince Edward Island. Although campers can take Metro Transit bus service and a fast harbor ferry, we used our motorhome for transportation and drove first to a cemetery.

Haligonians (as residents are known) played a compassionate role after the RMS Titanic sank on April 15, 1912. White Star Line, Titanic's owner, chartered four Canadian ships to recover bodies and bring them to Halifax, where 150 were buried. The nondenominational Fairview Lawn Cemetery became the final resting place for 121 victims.

Signs lead visitors to the graves where panels explain that White Star Line paid for the plot, commissioned the design and established a trust for its care. Three rows of stones curve along a slope, suggesting the shape of a ship's bow to some who visit. The company also paid for black granite squares and the engraving of each victim's name (if known) and identification number assigned as each one was recovered.

We quietly approached to read the inscriptions and noticed that some stones, purchased by family or friends,



PHOTOS: ROBERT GOODIER



South of Halifax, visitors to Peggy's Cove find one of Canada's most-photographed and visited lighthouses.

PHOTO: COURTESY DESTINATION HALIFAX/B. MCWHIRTER

were larger and more elaborate. But all displayed a common date of death; authorities assumed that those who survived the sinking died very quickly of exposure in the freezing water.

During the past century, researchers have used coroner's notes, clothing and artifacts to identify a few more victims, but many stones still are marked with only a number. The most famous is #4, known until recently as the "Unknown Child" whose body was never claimed. Sailors of the Cable Ship Mackay-Bennett, which recovered the fair-haired toddler, paid for his distinctive marker.

However, in 2007, a 95-year mystery was solved when Canadian forensic scientists examined DNA and determined that the child was 19-month-old Sidney Leslie Goodwin, youngest of a family of eight that perished in the disaster. Touched by the story, some visitors leave teddy bears, toys and coins at the base of the stone where a panel now carries his name.

Eighteen other Titanic sites are found throughout metro Halifax including the Nova Scotia Archives, which holds the

original coroner's records, and the Bedford Institute of Oceanography, whose scientists have carried out research since the wreck was located in 1985.

Our next stop, less than 3 miles away on a hilltop overlooking the city, was Halifax Citadel National Historic Site where an unsmiling, armed soldier wearing a MacKenzie tartan kilt greeted us at the front gate. This was our first encounter with dozens of historical re-enactors who portray the daily lives of troops of the 78th Highlanders and 3rd Brigade Royal Artillery assigned here in 1869.

At the Information Center, we watched a 15-minute movie, "A Harbour Worth Defending," and joined a tour for a dose of Halifax history. Our costumed guide explained that the star-shaped masonry Citadel is the fourth fort here since 1749; not one of the four ever saw battle. Planned in the 1820s to defend against potential invasion by the United States, this final version took 28 years to complete and soon became obsolete as military weapons and tactics changed.

For 45 minutes, we walked with the

guide through the fort's nooks and crannies, into dank and dark tunnels where soldiers could fire weapons while under cover. We saw where they ate, slept and kept their gunpowder, and met re-enactors representing wives who lived here also.

The Citadel crumbled into disrepair after it housed prisoners of war in World War I and Canadian soldiers in World War II, the guide explained. In 1951, Parks Canada took over the site and spent decades restoring the site to its present Victorian-era grandeur.

Our tour concluded at the Cavalier Building's Army Museum, one that could hold its own anywhere as a stand-alone attraction. We browsed through four centuries of military artifacts including armaments, uniforms, flags and patches. The spoils of war are displayed, too: crystal wine decanters and silver candlesticks, "said to have been 'liberated' from the Presidential Mansion" during the August 1814 British raid on Washington, D.C.

Ascending the ramparts, we witnessed a 150-year Halifax tradition: the firing of the noon gun. A crowd gathered to



Fairview Lawn Cemetery is the final resting place of 121 Titanic victims.



A symbol of Nova Scotia, the tall ship Bluenose II has been undergoing restoration.

PHOTO: NOVA SCOTIA TOURISM AGENCY/
GEORGE SIMMONI

watch Royal Artillery re-enactors position, load and fire a reproduction 12-pound, muzzle-loading gun. Our three hours at Halifax Citadel ended as the 78th Highlanders' nine-bagpipe band, complete with four drummers, came marching into the courtyard playing their instruments.

Street parking downtown is scarce, but we grabbed a space just in time for a late lunch on Granville Street at one of many pubs with sidewalk cafes that attract office workers and students from the area's five universities. To accompany hearty bowls of seafood chowder, we ordered cold mugs of Keith's India Pale Ale, a product of Alexander Keith's Brewery, founded in Halifax in 1820 and available for touring.

Two blocks down the steep hill, we strolled a waterfront boardwalk lined with restored warehouses and entered the Maritime Museum of the Atlantic, Canada's oldest and largest, to view a collection of marine artifacts.

Best-known is an assortment of wood-

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HOLIDAY IN HALIFAX

en pieces that Halifax seamen on recovery ships found floating after Titanic sank. (The museum is opposed to commercial salvage on the wreck, which it considers a memorial and archaeological site.) A rare intact deck chair, a mahogany cabinet, a carved oak newel post and more are displayed, all donated by sailors' descendants.

Museum curators now believe a tiny pair of brown leather shoes belonged to the Unknown Child, Sidney Leslie Goodwin, whose grave we had visited that morning. The shoes were saved by a policeman who didn't have the heart to burn the toddler's shoes in 1912 along with other victims' clothing, and instead put them in a desk drawer hoping relatives might claim them someday.

The museum also tells the heart-wrenching Halifax story of the largest man-made explosion prior to the atomic bomb, caused by a disastrous 1917 collision of two ships in the harbor. One was filled with explosives, which leveled parts of the city, killed approximately 2,000 people and injured 9,000 more.

Help came from all over North America after the explosion, especially from the city of Boston, Mass., which still receives a huge Nova Scotia Christmas tree each year as a gift honoring the bond created between the cities. In April 2013, Haligonians raised money for victims of the Boston Marathon bombing and held a foot race to show support.

The second day of our Halifax getaway dawned clear and sunny for a drive south along a rocky coast of scenic bays studded with tiny islands and fishing villages. Just 30 miles south of the city is Peggy's Cove, famous for its red-topped white lighthouse, the most-visited and photographed in Nova Scotia.

We ventured farther south to the ship-building and fishing town of Lunenburg, founded in 1753 on a hill that slopes to a pretty harbor. An assortment of British, French, Swiss and German settlers built homes here in an array of styles, and many houses sport colorful paint jobs and the "Lunenburg bump," a large dormer popular in the late 19th century. But along with its scenic charm, Lunenburg has marine industries that are just as important to the economy as tourism.

We walked to the bright-red Fisheries



A 78th Highlanders re-enactor plays the bagpipes at the Halifax Citadel.

Museum of the Atlantic that makes it fun for visitors to soak up the history of 500 years of Banks fishing off Canada's east coast. Retired fishermen answer questions and share their stories to complement exhibits about boats, engines, whales and much more. Ship models are on display and skilled local builders create dories in the working boat shop.


At the museum, we learned that Lunenburg is the home port for Bluenose II, a replica of a historic Grand Banks racing schooner. Now a tall-ship ambassador and symbol of the province, the sleek vessel has been in a shed undergoing restoration but will soon be back on the high seas.

Before returning to the city, we couldn't resist a peek at the site of another mystery. Oak Island in Mahone Bay has been notorious since 1795 for its mysterious Money Pit, the stuff of which dreams, novels and reality TV shows are made. Men have lost their lives excavating shafts (which invariably flood) in repeated, futile efforts to reach a legendary treasure. Pirate gold? Royal jewels? No one knows for sure.

We drove up to a narrow causeway blocked by a gate with a sign warning off casual visitors, and peered past at the private island. All was still, except for a light breeze moving through the spruce trees, and the Money Pit was hidden from our view. We drove on, plenty content with all that we had mined during our summer trip: new RV travel memories to treasure forever. ♦



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.



President
Dwight D. Eisenhower



President
John F. Kennedy



President
James Carter



President
Ronald Reagan



President
William J. Clinton



President
George W. Bush



HAIL TO THE CHIEFS

TOURING THE PRESIDENTIAL LIBRARIES OF
6 OF AMERICA'S MODERN-DAY LEADERS

by DAVE G. HOUSER

For all its technical wizardry and Texas-style extravagance, a simple white bullhorn stands out to many visitors as the most iconic and evocative item on view at the new \$250 million George W. Bush Presidential Library and Museum on the Southern Methodist University campus in Dallas, Texas.

A stunned nation watched on Sept. 14, 2001, as the president stood somberly atop the still-smoldering ruins of Ground Zero — with that very bullhorn in hand — to address a cheering throng of gritty rescue workers, responding famously, “I can hear you ... the rest of the world hears you!”

Thus a common bullhorn became a power-

ful and symbolic reminder of an epic moment in America's history — while at the same time serving as a key example of the important role presidential libraries and museums play in preserving the tangible elements of that history.

America's presidential library system includes 13 libraries administered and operated by the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA). These repositories preserve and make available to the public the papers, letters, records, collections and historical materials of every president since Herbert Hoover, whose term ended in 1933.

Libraries also have been organized for presi-

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dents who preceded the official start of NARA's administration — dating all the way back to George Washington — but they are owned and operated by private foundations, historical societies, universities or states.

Congress eventually became involved by passing the Presidential Libraries Act of 1955, establishing a system of privately erected and federally maintained libraries. In essence, the act mandated that future libraries be built with funds from private and non-federal public sources and once completed, turned over to NARA to operate and maintain. Later acts established that all presidential records and materials would become the property of the U.S. government after a president leaves office. This reinforced the role of presidential libraries as the sole repository and guardian of these historic documents and materials.

Later, you'll learn what's on offer to visitors at six of the 13 NARA presidential libraries and museums, chosen with an eye to both geographic balance and political correctness, with the selection divided evenly between Democrats and Republicans.

Before visiting, there are some things you should know. These are not libraries in the traditional sense — in fact, they are much more museum than library. Most books, letters and documents are archived behind the scenes where they are available for researchers. During your visit, you'll view a collection of the most important and visual artifacts of the subject presidency. Newer libraries have gone even further, taking a page from Disney by adding high-tech exhibits, touch-panel interactive displays, aircraft and limousines.

Each of the libraries profiled here is open daily year-round, closing only on Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year's Day. Admission fees are nominal, ranging from \$7 to \$16 for adults, with discounts for children, seniors, students and military members. Purchasing tickets online in advance is strongly recommended. Be sure to check for special events or temporary exhibits on offer during your visit. These libraries are federal agencies, so everyone must pass through a security check and metal detector, just as you would at an airport.

GEORGE W. BUSH PRESIDENTIAL CENTER

Let's begin with a closer look at the latest and most expensive of these institutions to date, the George W. Bush Presidential Center. Housed in a monumental 226,560-square-foot Neoclassical structure wrapped in red brick and cream-colored limestone, it was designed to fit in with buildings on the surrounding Southern Methodist University (SMU) campus



The George W. Bush Museum features artifacts such as a piece of steel from the World Trade Center (above) and interactive displays (below).



in Dallas. Critics have described it as over the top — too large, costly and gimmicky. On the other hand, it has been lauded for its "green" design — certified LEED Platinum — featuring lots of solar and photovoltaic applications and a rainwater catchment system for landscape irrigation of the 23-acre complex.

Visitors enter the complex through a



A full-size replica of the Oval Office during former President George W. Bush's term in office is on display at the George W. Bush Presidential Center on the campus of SMU.

courtyard, greeted by larger-than-life statues of both Bush presidents, the only other father-and-son presidents since John and John Quincy Adams in the early 1800s. Just inside is the towering 67-foot-high entryway called Freedom Hall, featuring a 360-degree HD video wall screening a montage of the 44 U.S. presidents.

Permanent exhibits begin with the 2000 presidential campaign and a video relating to the controversial election result and recount in Florida. Here, too, is a full-scale replica of the Oval Office and the Decision Points Theater. Its interactive features take visitors "inside" the decision-making processes — even joining in on the action using touch screens — as the president and his aides dealt with critical events and crises including the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and Hurricane Katrina.

It is surprising to many visitors that there's no attempt here to gloss over or avoid the controversies surrounding Bush policies and actions.

"The president and first lady wanted us to lay out the facts and let the people decide," said Mark Langdale, the director of the Bush Center, "and visitors are invited to disagree if they like."

Parking for RVs is available at the Mockingbird DART station. From the DART station, visitors may take the SMU Mustang Express Shuttle.

George W. Bush Presidential Center
214-346-1650
www.georgewbushlibrary.smu.edu

WILLIAM J. CLINTON PRESIDENTIAL LIBRARY & MUSEUM

When it opened in November 2004, in a park-like 29-acre setting on the banks of the Arkansas River in downtown Little Rock, Ark., the William J. Clinton Presidential Library & Museum created quite a stir as the largest (153,779 square feet) and most expensive (\$165 million) of the presidential libraries, milestones later eclipsed by the Bush Center and the greatly expanded Reagan Library in California. It is, nonetheless, an extraordinary complex — a sleek, futuristic steel-and-glass



The permanent exhibits at the William J. Clinton Presidential Library & Museum guide visitors through a historical walkway of photographs, videos and artifacts.



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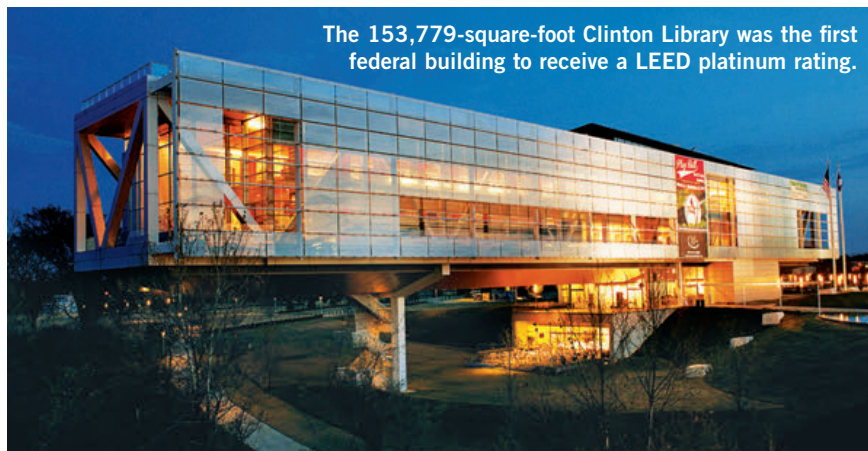


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The 153,779-square-foot Clinton Library was the first federal building to receive a LEED platinum rating.



The William J. Clinton Library hosts classroom programs and special events for kids.

edifice that cantilevers over the Arkansas River, replacing a rundown industrial site. Its design, Clinton says, was inspired by the theme of his presidency, "Building a bridge to the 21st century." The library also was the first federal building to receive the LEED Platinum rating for its environmental friendliness, a probable impetus for designers of the Bush Center.

Not only is the Clinton Library Little Rock's most popular tourist attraction, it has led all other presidential libraries in attendance, logging more than 400,000 visitors in its first year. Researchers, too, swarm its archives — comprised of 80 million pages of documents, 21 million email messages and 2 million photographs.

What draws the public is an amazing array of exhibits and more than 100,000 artifacts, including Clinton's "Cadillac One" limousine, full-size replicas of the Oval Office and Cabinet Room and a spacious second-floor gallery revealing a 110-foot timeline of the Clinton years as president as well as 14 alcoves featuring various events during his two terms in office.

Parking is free for museum visitors,

and spaces are available for RVs.

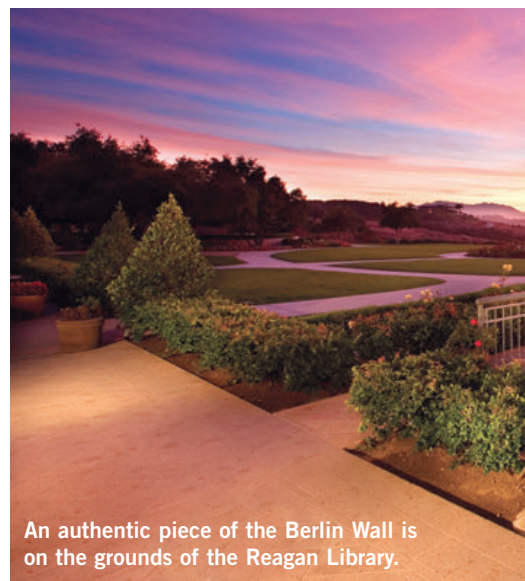
William J. Clinton
Presidential Library & Museum
501-374-4242
www.clintonlibrary.gov

RONALD REAGAN PRESIDENTIAL LIBRARY & MUSEUM

Gracing a hilltop in Simi Valley, Calif., about 40 miles north of Los Angeles, the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library & Museum honors the life and accomplishments of one of the most popular chief executives in modern American history.

The complex also serves as Reagan's final resting place following his interment there on June 12, 2004. Visitors are invited to pay their respects at the Reagan family tomb and memorial on the library grounds.

Beyond its relatively modest entrance there are some spectacular elements to the Reagan Library & Museum including



An authentic piece of the Berlin Wall is on the grounds of the Reagan Library.

the 90,000-square-foot Air Force One Pavilion, added in 2005, that features the actual Boeing 707 aircraft utilized as Air Force One during Reagan's administration.

Permanent exhibits begin with Reagan's childhood and follow his life through his film career (which included roles in 53 feature films and an eight-year stint as host of the TV series "GE Theater"), marriage to Nancy Davis Reagan, and his political career, including two terms as the governor of California. A full-scale replica of the Oval Office — common to most presidential libraries — is a prominent feature.

The museum was thoroughly renovated in 2011 with General Electric foot-

PHOTO: REAGAN FOUNDATION



Self-guided audio tours are available to visitors of the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library & Museum.



PHOTO: JOHN MARTORANO/REAGAN FOUNDATION

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PHOTO: JOHN MARTORANO/REAGAN FOUNDATION

Air Force One (tail No. 27000), which is on display at the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library & Museum, served seven U.S. presidents from 1973 to 2001.

ing much of the bill. Among the 18 galleries added during the renovation is the GE Theater, which shows excerpts from Reagan's days as host of the popular TV series. There are dozens of new interactive exhibits guided through the use of a cutting-edge device known as a GuideCam, a combination audio wand, still and video camera that visitors can rent for \$7. Using the GuideCam, you can take photos and video of your tour and the museum will email the results to you to be shared later with family and friends.

Parking is free and RV parking is available on Presidential Drive.

**Ronald Reagan
Presidential Library & Museum**
800-410-8354

www.reaganfoundation.org

JIMMY CARTER LIBRARY AND MUSEUM

Nestled on a 35-acre site just a few minutes from downtown Atlanta, Ga., and flanked by an aesthetically soothing Japanese garden, the Jimmy Carter Library and Museum opened to the public in October 1986. Predating the high-tech interactive age, it is a modest, straightforward complex compared to its more recent counterparts, and as such it nicely mirrors the gentle, unassuming nature of America's 39th president.

Measuring 69,750 square feet — with only about 15,000 square feet of it devoted to exhibit space — the complex cost just \$26 million to construct.

The most notable feature of the Jimmy Carter Library is a full-scale rep-



The Jimmy Carter Library and Museum offers an assortment of different opportunities for students to visit and learn about United States history in a fun and interactive manner ... maybe even getting the chance to meet the former president and first lady.



The Jimmy Carter Library and Museum is a time capsule of the Carter administration, and includes significant events such as the 1978 Camp David Accords.

lica of the Oval Office furnished exactly as it was during his administration (1976-1981). A permanent exhibit of significant events occurring during Carter's life and political career includes historical memorabilia, gifts received by the president and first lady, Rosalynn, photographs and interpretive text.

One particularly eye-catching display (said to be Carter's favorite) is the Crown of St. Stephan, a bejeweled reproduction of the medieval icon that for centuries has been the symbol of the nation of Hungary.

As World War II neared an end, the Hungarian Crown Guard transferred the original icon to the U.S. Army to prevent

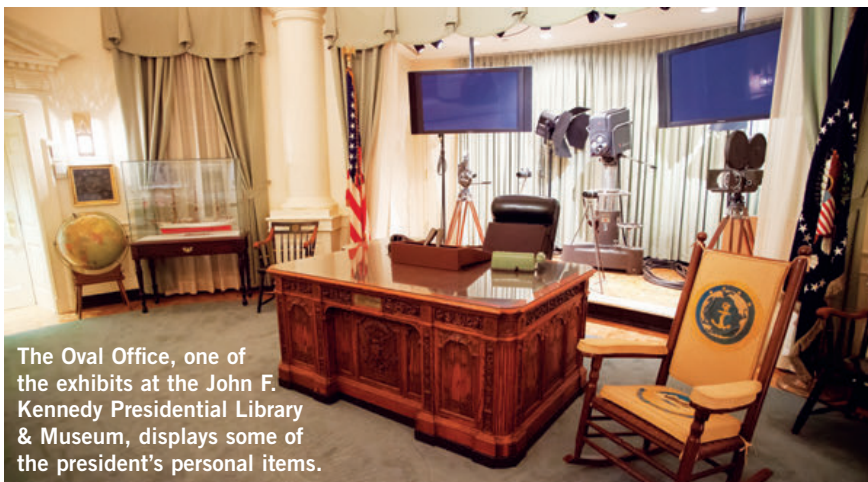
it from falling into the hands of the approaching Soviet army. It was held for safe-keeping at Fort Knox during the Cold War period of communist rule in Hungary. In 1978, President Carter decided the time was right to return the crown to Hungary. Its return led to greatly improved relations with Hungary and was viewed as a major factor contributing to the historic changes in that country following the fall of communism in Eastern Europe. Grateful for the return of the crown, Hungarian President Arpad Goncz reciprocated, presenting Carter with the replica now on view.

Another notable element of the museum deals with Jimmy Carter's prolific post-presidential accomplishments under the aegis of the nonpartisan and nonprofit Carter Center to promote democracy and protect human rights in America and abroad. Former President Carter and the Carter Center have engaged in conflict mediation in countries ranging from Ethiopia to Bosnia to Nepal, and have sent 83 election-monitoring missions to countries around the world. Symbolic of these achievements is the prominently displayed Nobel Peace Prize, presented to Carter in 2002.

Jimmy Carter Library and Museum
404-865-7100
www.jimmycarterlibrary.gov

JOHN F. KENNEDY PRESIDENTIAL LIBRARY & MUSEUM

No matter how you view it — from inside or out — the John F. Kennedy Presidential Library & Museum is defined by its striking architecture as embodied in one of the most brilliant designs ever created by



The Oval Office, one of the exhibits at the John F. Kennedy Presidential Library & Museum, displays some of the president's personal items.

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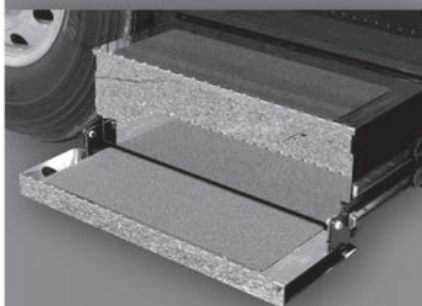
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The I.M. Pei building on Boston's waterfront houses the John F. Kennedy Presidential Library & Museum. From May through October, former President Kennedy's 26-foot sailboat — Victura — is on display on the grounds.

world-renowned architect I.M. Pei. Soaring nine stories above Columbia Point facing Boston's waterfront, the angular, modernistic complex belies its age of nearly 35 years, appearing as if it had been built only yesterday.

Overlooking the sea that he loved and the city that launched him to greatness, the library and museum stand as a vibrant tribute to the life and times of former President Kennedy and first lady Jacqueline Kennedy.

Visitors are introduced to the exhibit area with a 17-minute film about Kennedy's early life, leading to his nomination at the 1960 Democratic National Convention. Next comes a linked series of exhibition areas beginning with Kennedy's campaign against Richard Nixon — the first to feature live TV debates between the candidates — and his election as the 35th president of the United States by the closest margin since 1916.

Subsequent exhibits highlight important events during the Kennedy presidency including the "Space Race" with the Soviets and the Cuban missile crisis — all brilliantly laced with video and audio recordings that remind us of this president's extraordinary oratory skills. And, of course, there's the obligatory rendition of the JFK Oval Office.

Fittingly, too, is an exhibit devoted to Jackie Kennedy, certainly one of the most stylish and preeminent of American first ladies, who is remembered for her ceaseless efforts to instill in Washington, and the nation, a greater appreciation for the arts and culture.

Suddenly, visitors round a corner and



One of the exhibits at the John F. Kennedy Presidential Library & Museum brings to life the sights and sounds of the 1960 Democratic Convention in Los Angeles.

are confronted with a stark corridor, its walls painted black, labeled simply "November 22, 1963," where a series of TV screens loop through the chilling news of that day.

Visitors exit through a soaring glass-and-steel atrium, flooded with light and graced by a massive American flag seemingly suspended in the sky. Here, visitors are alone with their thoughts, left as Pei eloquently put it, "To think of John F. Kennedy in a different way. In the skyline of his city. In the distant horizons toward which he led us. In the canopy of space into which he launched us."

Note: Parking in Boston can be problematic, so it's best to drive your dinghy vehicle.

**John F. Kennedy
Presidential Library & Museum**
617-514-1600
www.jfklibrary.org

**DWIGHT D. EISENHOWER
PRESIDENTIAL LIBRARY & MUSEUM**



Well, Toto, we are definitely in Kansas for this one — Abilene to be exact — in a city on the Plains best known as the first “cow town” of the West and also as home to the Dwight D. Eisenhower Presidential Library & Museum.

Eisenhower grew up in Abilene, attending elementary and high school here

Above, left: A bronze statue at the Dwight D. Eisenhower Presidential Library & Museum depicts Eisenhower in his familiar World War II jacket. Above: Also on-site is the Eisenhower family home, which was occupied from 1898 to 1946.

where he was a star football and baseball player. Soon thereafter he received an appointment to the U.S. Military Academy in West Point where he graduated at the top of his class, setting the stage for a

brilliant military career. He rose quickly through the ranks, gaining distinction as Supreme Commander of Allied Expeditionary Forces in World War II and later as U.S. Army Chief of Staff and as Supreme

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Commander of NATO.

Upon his retirement, "Ike," as he was affectionately nicknamed, returned to Abilene in 1952 to claim the Republican Party nomination for the presidency, winning a landslide election to become the nation's 34th chief executive. He was re-elected by an even wider margin in 1956.

A visit to the Eisenhower Library & Museum in Abilene begins with a stop at the visitor center to view a brief film reviewing the president's life and introducing the various components of the complex, which are spread over a peaceful, park-like setting. They include a library building (open only to researchers), a low-slung white limestone museum building containing 30,000 square feet of exhibit space, the Eisenhower Boyhood Home and the Place of Meditation. The latter is a chapel that serves as the final resting place of the president and first lady, Mamie.

The museum is divided into five major galleries: the Introductory Gallery, Changing Exhibits Gallery, First Lady's

WHAT ABOUT WASHINGTON?

America's first president has, at last, joined the list of presidents with a library in his honor — and it's a dandy. The Fred W. Smith National Library for the Study of George Washington, built to the tune of \$106.4 million, opened Sept. 27, 2013, on the grounds of Washington's Mount Vernon, Va., estate. The 45,000-square-foot facility safeguards Washington's books, manuscripts and documents — but unless you're a scholar you may never get to visit, as it is currently not open to the public. It has been hinted, however, that tours of the library may supplement Mount Vernon tours sometime in the future.



Gallery, Military Gallery and the President's Gallery.

The Military Gallery seems to attract the most interest, featuring a variety of important maps, documents, photographs and one particularly fascinating artifact, the Order of Victory medallion — a five-pointed platinum star surrounded with gems, including 16 carats worth of diamonds — presented to Ike by the Soviets following WWII. It was the USSR's highest military decoration and has been handed

out to only four other foreigners.

Parking is free at the Eisenhower Presidential Library & Museum, and spaces are available for RVs.

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www.eisenhower.archives.gov ♦



Florida-based writer/photographer Dave G. Houser has contributed regularly to *MotorHome* magazine since 1985.

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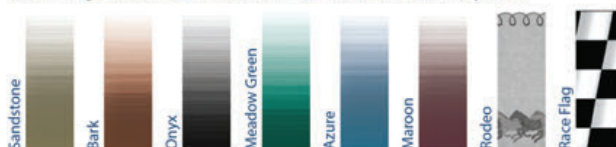
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8 GOOD REASONS TO VISIT **THE BADLANDS**

Why would any sensible traveler want to venture to a place named Badlands? Here are eight reasons — plus three nearby attractions — why you'll want to pack up the motorhome and head for this exciting South Dakota National Park.

1 OTHERWORLDLY SCENERY

First called “mako sica” or “land bad” by the native Lakota people, Badlands National Park is truly a sight to see. Resembling a giant sand castle, the enormous pinnacles, canyons and rugged buttes were created from a flat flood plain about 500,000 years ago when water began to cut through the sedimentary rock layers. Today, when you enter the park, you'll see flat prairie land on one side of the road and on the other side, you'll see a vast expanse of magnificently sculpted peaks. Journey farther into the park and you'll find a world alive and filled with fabulous formations with bold red and tan stripes and intriguing pink-banded yellow mounds. Travel the park's paved Loop Road and each turn will present another view of this fascinating scenery filled with artistically shaped spires that will tempt the photographer in you.

THIS SOUTH DAKOTA NATIONAL PARK IS FILLED WITH **BOUNTIFUL WILDLIFE, RUGGED SCENERY AND ENDLESS ADVENTURE**

by KAREN LEE ENSLEY



The prairie grassland suddenly drops into deep canyons in some regions while high pinnacles beckon in the distance.



Take a few steps on this ground that crunches under your feet and you'll know why they call it, "popcorn soil."

3 **POPCORN SOIL AND ARMORED MUD BALLS**

Some of the oddest geological sights you'll see are right at your feet. The consistency of the soil varies in the park; in some areas, it's very loose and crumbles, making it difficult to get a foothold. In other areas, you'll feel a unique crunch, crunch, crunch under your feet — this is popcorn soil. Also called, "popcorn rock," it is created from bentonite, a clay mixed with volcanic ash that when wet, can expand 20 times in size. As the clay repeatedly absorbs water and then dries out, it swells and shrinks producing the strange substance under your feet. Armored mud balls sound just like their name. Sitting randomly on the ground surface, mud balls are created when rainwater pushes mud through a wash, gathering more mud and pebbles as it rolls the mixture into balls. You'll find both popcorn soil and mud balls add a bizarre, yet intriguing element to the Badlands.

2 **TRAILS AND BEYOND**

After you enjoy a drive through the park, be sure to get out of the motorhome and take a walk among the rugged spires. There's a trail for everyone. A hiker's paradise, the 244,000-acre park offers trails from accessible ¼-mile boardwalk trails to a 10-mile-long trek. You may choose to walk on flat prairie land or take an uphill climb in this spectacular landscape. Want to venture off trail? You're permitted to wander off the trails in this park because like a crashing wave washes away a sand castle, as soon as it rains in the Badlands, your footprints disappear.

Right: A man and child gaze at the wonder of Badlands National Park. Author John Madson once described the Badlands as, "an improbable kind of place, looking like the set of a science-fiction movie."



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3 Fascinating Nearby Attractions



THE TOWN OF WALL

In this eclectic town, you'll find everything from exquisite Black Hills gold jewelry and quality Stetson hats to a mechanical piano-playing gorilla and a jack-a-lope so huge you can ride it. As you enjoy the famous Wall Drug store's fine collection of Western art and museum-worthy historical photographs of soldiers and Native Americans, don't be surprised when you hear a loud roaring and see flashing red lights as a gigantic Tyrannosaurus rex emerges from its slumber. Named for the more than 60-mile-long carved cliff known as the Badlands Wall, the town of Wall

is also the home to the National Grassland Visitor Center and the Wounded Knee Museum, which documents the 1890 massacre of Lakota men, women and children.

BUFFALO GAP NATIONAL GRASSLANDS

One of 20 National Grasslands, Buffalo Gap has nearly 600,000 acres in various areas of southwestern South Dakota, including a region near the Badlands. Here you can enjoy a plethora of outdoor activities with no admission fee. You may bike, hike and ride a horse or an ATV. Go hunting or fishing. Watch for more than 100 species of animals that make the grassland their home or try your luck at rock hounding. Check at the visitor center for the best locations to search for a variety of beautiful agates including the Fairburn agate, the state gem of South Dakota.



MINUTEMAN MISSILE NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE

During the Cold War, Minuteman II missiles were hidden in the prairie grasslands of South Dakota. The missiles were located in remote underground silos and could be launched from miles away by crews stationed at control centers. Today, you can visit the deactivated Delta-01 Launch Control and the Delta-09 Launch Facilities for free.



You'll be treated to a ranger-guided tour of the control center where you'll descend in an elevator to the underground control room. Walk through a thick vault and you'll be transported to another time; a time when turning the keys in this control room could launch a 1.2-megaton warhead that would change the world. When you leave the control center, be sure to stop by the launch facility. As you listen to a self-guided cellphone tour, peer into the silo and know that a single Minuteman II missile had the explosive equivalent of more than a million tons of dynamite. Like a fossil buried in the ground is discovered and placed in a museum, the missile hidden here in the grasslands of South Dakota is now revealed and showcased for all to see.

8 GOOD REASONS TO VISIT THE BADLANDS



The park's Yellow Mounds have a distinct color due to the fossil soil.

4 LESS CROWDED

As you drive or walk in the Badlands, you'll enjoy the park's wonders with fewer crowds than many other national parks. While nearly 1 million people visit the Badlands every year from all over the world, when you compare that to the more than 3 million people who visit Yellowstone National Park each year, you'll really enjoy the Badlands' wide-open spaces!

Bighorn sheep can be spotted along the roadway.



5 WILDLIFE

You won't have to look far to find wildlife in the Badlands. With fewer people in the park, there is a greater opportunity to see animals in a natural, undisturbed environment. Even though the park has more than 64,000 acres of designated wilderness, you're likely to see wildlife right from your motorhome. The best chance to see animals will be in the morning or early evening when you could easily see antelope, deer or bighorn sheep wandering close to the road. The park is also home to other wildlife including bison, turkey and the endangered black-footed ferret. Be sure to watch for the large prairie dog town located alongside the park road; the little "dogs" won't mind seeing your motorhome drive past them, but if you get out to take a closer look, be prepared to hear a lot of barking.

PHOTO: BADLANDS/NPS



A saber-tooth cat skull found at the Badlands National Park's Saber Site.

6 FOSSILS

As you gaze at the dry, massive pinnacles in the park, it's hard to believe that this region was once an inland sea that developed into a tropical rainforest. When the Lakota people found large fossilized bones and seashells, they correctly reasoned that this land was once covered by water and the bones were from animals that no longer existed. The park is a paleontologist's dream; even the unusual Yellow Mounds are actually fossil soil known as paleosol. Be sure to visit the Fossil

Exhibit Trail; it's an easy ¼-mile boardwalk trail that showcases replicas of some fascinating extinct creatures — including hyracodon, a small, speedy rhinoceros and merycoidon, an animal about the size of a sheep with fangs on both upper and lower jaws.

Fossil specimens from the Badlands are found in major museums as far away as Europe. It's interesting that Badlands National Park has the world's richest deposits of fossils from the Oligocene epoch, but it's exciting to know that visitors have made some of the amazing fossil discov-

eries. Two visitors once found a large fossil backbone near a picnic area that led to fieldwork uncovering 10,000 fossils! Near the visitor center is a region called the "Saber Site" because that's where a 7-year-old girl found a rare, well-preserved saber-tooth cat fossil.

7 VISITOR CENTERS

If you want to see what happens with all those fossils, you'll want to stop at the Ben Reifel Visitor Center. Here you can visit a working paleontological laboratory.

Ben Reifel Visitor Center.



PHOTO: NPS/CATHY BELL

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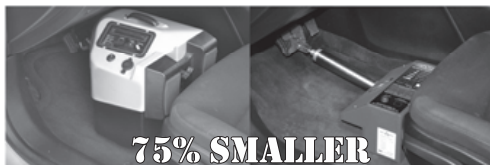


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Captivating to watch, the paleontologists prepare fossils found from various sites in the park including the Saber Site. The visitor center offers interactive exhibits such as assembling a virtual skeleton on a touch screen and a hands-on display of fossilized animal casts. The 95-seat air-conditioned theater showcases the natural and cultural history of the Badlands. The visitor center's namesake, Ben Reifel, was the first congressman from the Sioux Nation. Nearly half of the park is located on the Pine Ridge Reservation and includes several sacred sites of the Oglala Lakota. The National Park Service and the tribe co-manage this mostly undeveloped portion of the park known as the South Unit. Once used by the United States military as a practice aerial bombing range, the region still contains some World War II-era unexploded munitions. If you want to explore the South Unit, be sure to visit the park's second visitor center, White River. It is located on the Reservation and is operated by the Oglala Sioux Parks and Recreation Authority. Here you'll find additional exhibits and the information you'll need to explore the South Unit of the park.



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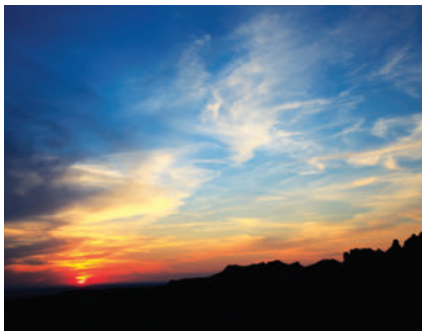
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8 GOOD REASONS TO VISIT THE BADLANDS

8 SUNSETS

When the sun sets in Badlands National Park, the rock formations that appeared tan during the day begin to turn to warm shades of gold and red. Watch the sun set over the open prairie where you'll see the vast colorful sky, or choose one of many spectacular spots such as Conata Basin. Here you can enjoy the brilliant colors of



the sunset framed by the black silhouettes of the Badlands peaks. Look at the shapes of the pinnacles and remember that the Badlands are some of the fastest-eroding

WHEN YOU GO

Badlands National Park

www.nps.gov/badl

Located 75 miles east of Rapid City, S.D.

Driving Route

There are unmaintained gravel roads in the vicinity; if you're traveling via GPS, consult these directions to the park:

- **Interstate 90** is north of the park and provides access to the Badlands Loop Road, Highway 240.
- **If you're traveling west on I-90** take Exit 131 (Interior). Follow signs south approximately 3 miles to the Northeast Entrance.
- **If you're traveling east on I-90** take Exit 110 (Wall). Follow signs south 7 miles to the Pinnacles Entrance.
- **If you're traveling State Highway 44**, this is an alternate route that intersects Highway 377 in Interior; follow 377 north for 2 miles to the Interior Entrance.

GPS Addresses

- **Park Headquarters** 25216 Ben Reifel Rd, Interior, SD 57750.
- **Northeast Entrance (I-90, Exit 131)** 21020 SD Hwy 240, Interior, SD 57750.
- **Pinnacles Entrance (I-90, Exit 110)**



24240 Hwy 240, Wall, SD 57790.

- **Interior Entrance** 20640 SD Hwy 377, Interior, SD 57750.

Travel in the Park

- **Highway 240 Badlands Loop Road**, two-lane paved; travels through the North Unit.
- **Sage Creek Rim Road**, gravel; travels north rim of Wilderness Area; subject to weather closures.
- **Sheep Mountain Table Road** located 4 miles south of Scenic on Pennington CR 589. Passable under dry conditions only; high-clearance vehicles recommended.

Entrance Fees

- **Private, non-commercial vehicles** \$15, valid seven days.

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- **Badlands National Park Annual Pass** \$30, valid one year.

Visitor Centers

- **Ben Reifel Visitor Center**
on Badlands Loop Road, 605-433-5361
- **White River Visitor Center** on Highway 27, approximately 20 miles south of Scenic, 605-455-2878
- **Backcountry hiking or camping in the South Unit** contact a ranger to ensure your safety and that you are not trespassing on private lands.

Campgrounds in the Park

There are two campgrounds in the park — Cedar Pass and Sage Creek. Both are open year-round. Campfires are not permitted due to the extreme danger of prairie wildfire.

- **Cedar Pass Campground**, located near the Ben Reifel Visitor Center, has 21 RV sites with electric hookups. A dump station is available nearby for \$1. All sites include a shaded picnic table area. Cedar Pass is managed by Forever Resorts, 605-433-5460, www.cedarpasslodge.com/campground.
- **Sage Creek Campground**, located on the

west side of the park's North Unit, near the Badlands Wilderness Area, offers dry camping only. Camping is free of charge. Bison often wander through this campground. Access is off Sage Creek Rim Road, an unpaved road that may close after heavy rains. The road provides limited turnarounds for large RVs. Pit toilets and covered picnic tables are available, but no water is on-site. Sites at Sage Creek Campground are available on a first-come, first-served basis and rarely fill to capacity. A portion of the campground is designated for horse use.

Badlands National Park Tips

- Always carry water! (Water in the Badlands is cloudy and milky white due to the sediment it carries. Particles in the water carry a slight charge of electricity and repel each other, instead of settling to the bottom.)
- Beware of rattlesnakes.
- Cellphones won't work in most areas of the park.
- The park strives for high air quality, so when you're away from your vehicle, turn off your engine; letting it idle is punishable by a fine.

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The paved road in Badlands National Park provides easy access for large motorhomes. Be sure to take the time to park the coach and explore the park; after all, the Badlands are constantly eroding and may completely disappear in another 500,000 years.

landscape in the world. Even if the original name of the park was going to be Teton National Park to avoid the negative sounding name of the Badlands, you're glad you came to see this amazing world. After all, what's in a name? While you reflect upon your visit to the Badlands, remember the words of Frank Lloyd Wright who said, "What I saw gave me an indescribable sense of mysterious otherworld — a distant architecture, ethereal ... an endless supernatural world more spiritual than earth but created out of it."

As you stand and gaze at the ever-changing painting in the sky, watch the colors in the sky glow as night draws near. Listen to the soft rustle of leaves. The trees are few on the prairie but their leaves sound like wind chimes in the gentle breeze. Everything else is silence. It was a *good* decision to visit the *Badlands*. ♦



Karen Lee Ensley is a writer and photographer with a passion to explore and photograph the beautiful, the bizarre and the places people want to see.




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My fascination with forts was accidental. In crisscrossing the nation, the fortifications, many of which sit along popular travel routes and shores, nudged their way into notice and a place on the itinerary. Before I knew it, stopping in at a fort became regular, and even sought out, activity for whiling away an afternoon. Later, I came to appreciate forts and choose them as destinations for their history, purpose and human story.

No mystery, as to their prevailing presence, forts cleared the way to opening routes, stretching horizons and keeping the peace. Forts stand in stark contrast to modern times and comfort. In our era of continuous connection and nonstop diversion, the isolation and daring of a fort existence seem almost incomprehensible but worth contemplating.

Preserved within the state and national park systems, forts unravel the American story. Within their walls you may walk with ghosts and meet the names of history books. The outposts tell of discovery, expansion, bubbling tensions, settlement, revolution, trade, a nation divided and two World Wars.

A few pick up an earlier thread when the country was up for grabs. They preserve the footholds of the British, Spanish, French and Russians; California's rustic Fort Ross represents the latter. At Wyoming's Historic Fort Yellowstone, safeguarding our national park treasury from looting and poaching fell to the military.

As the stories vary, so, too, do the physical forts. Some still stand in impenetrable stone defiance, while others, restored and reconstructed, are orderly campuses of life, drill and work. Elsewhere, simple earthwork defenses or grounds barren of structure call upon us to use our imaginations. Plaques, fort footprints and interpretive boards stir the process.

Some forts mark heroic battles, while others are testaments to desolation, tedium and duty. You may find quiet confines or lively compounds, with snapping flags, baking bread, hammered iron, bursts of gunpowder and rustling uniforms. At many, museums and interpretive centers detail events.

Forts and their surroundings offer up great camping, fishing, cycling, hiking and sightseeing opportunities. The parklike grounds, coastal shores, rivers and bays, and Western remotes fashion attractive backdrops. A few forts have adjacent campgrounds, and nearly all sit within easy driving distances of public and private campgrounds. Major sites typically have parking lots suitable for motorhomes.

The following roundup hints at the geographic scatter and range of attraction.

FORT MCALLISTER, GA.

In Richmond Hill, east off Interstate 95 via Georgia Highway 144, this state park holds heaving Civil War earthworks, remarkably preserved. Part of the port of Savannah ring of protection, this strategic Confederate defense at Genesee Point repelled seven full-on attacks by Union ironclads before falling to a backdoor land attack in 1864, during Sherman's destructive March to the Sea. The lightly manned fort

Clockwise from main: Flag ceremony at Fort McHenry National Monument and Historic Shrine in Maryland. A replica of Fort Clatsop in Lewis and Clark National Historical Park, Oregon. Fort McHenry has one of the most complete collections of Civil War-era seacoast cannons in the nation. A flagpole and cannon stand near the kitchen and mess hall at Fort Wilkins Historic State Park, Michigan.

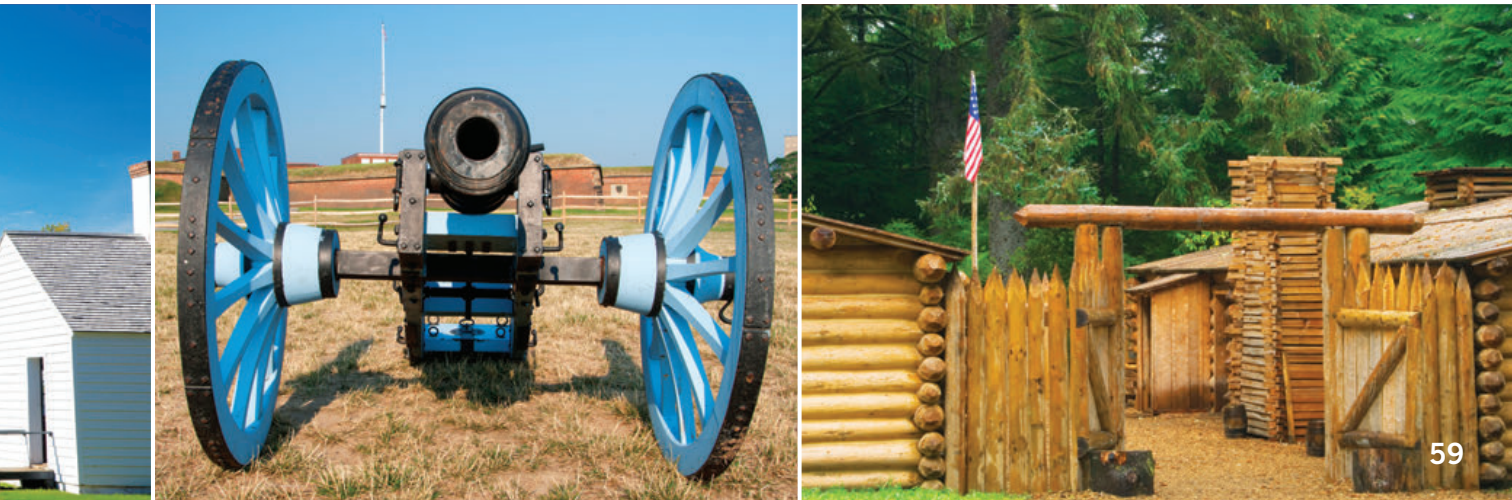




BE-HOLDING THE FORT

A SAMPLING OF HISTORIC
MILITARY INSTALLATIONS
ACROSS THE COUNTRY THAT
UNRAVEL THE AMERICAN STORY

by RHONDA OSTERTAG





Top to bottom: Located south of Savannah, Ga., and nestled among giant live oaks, Fort McAllister State Historic Park showcases the best-preserved earthwork fortification of the Confederacy. Oregon's Fort Stevens State Park has a large campground with 170 full-hookup sites. Built in 1861, the ruins of Fort Churchill are preserved in a state of arrested decay. Special events at Fort McHenry include re-enactments and living-history encampments.



BE-HOLDING THE FORT

was outnumbered nearly 20 to 1. Taking the fort gave Union troops a much-needed water-route supply line.

A museum with film, guided and self-guided walking tours, and daily Civil War programs introduce the fort and its purpose. Visitors should check events calendars for candlelight tours and the re-enactment of General Sherman's ordered taking of the fort.

The tranquil grounds still overlook the Ogeechee River, its marsh and bay — the important water route. The bombproof ramparts of river mud and sod, cannons and palisades still stand in testament to the fury.

Along with the Ogeechee River, tidal Redbird Creek and shady woods of live oak and Spanish moss fashion a pleasing setting for overnight stays at the park's 65-site campground, including 49 RV sites. Sites have water and electric hookups and can accommodate RVs up to 50 feet.

Hiking, fishing, canoeing and birding are popular. On the Colonial Coast Birding Trail, the park boasts songbirds and soaring bald eagles and ospreys. As in most places, watch for colorful migrants spring and fall. The birding guide suggests looking for painted buntings along the causeway. Campers spy deer and raccoons.

FORT MCHENRY, MD.

A national monument and historic shrine, this star-shaped fort in defense of Baltimore Harbor has a lengthy military history but one most associated with the War of 1812 and Francis Scott Key's scribing of the national anthem.

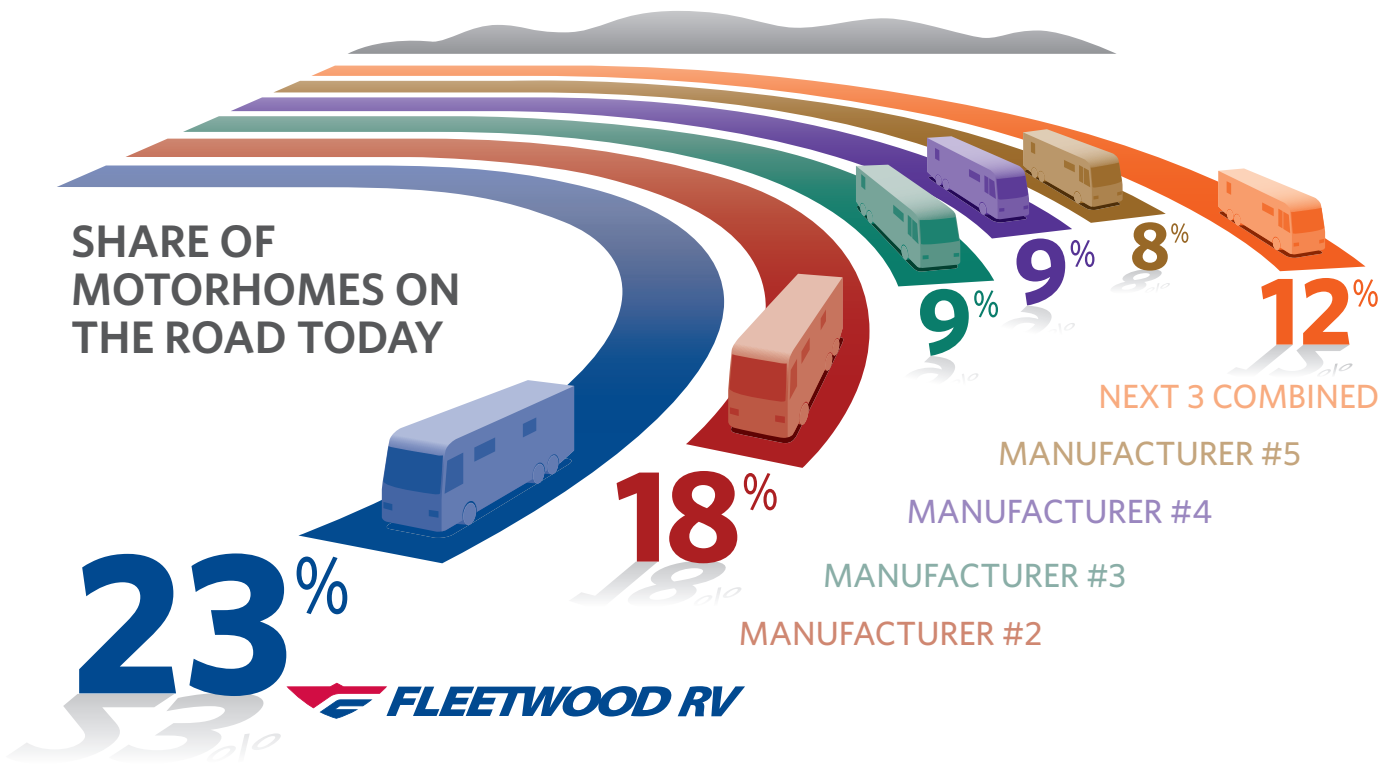
An offshore eyewitness to the blazing attack of Sept. 13-14, 1814, the young poet-lawyer drew inspiration from the fort's steadfast flag. The historic 15-star, 15-stripe woolen garrison flag (now in the Smithsonian) weighed 50 pounds and measured a whopping 30-by-42 feet. At daybreak, after the night's bombs' bursting and rocket's red glare, the certainty of this massive emblem waved over the fort.

A modern morning flag ceremony allows visitors to share in the heart-pumping moment of first sighting, as the replica Great Garrison Flag is unfolded and proudly stretched. A busload of schoolchildren helps lighten the load. Weather and daily wind speed determine which fort flag is actually flown; smaller versions also pull duty. But to behold the Great Garrison Flag — even in replica — is momentous.

Exploring the grounds of the brick fort, participating in a flag ceremony, and taking in the museum films, exhibits and memorabilia fill out a day. Special events enliven the fort.

This day-use only park has no associated campground, but motorhome travelers will find ample parking in the site's bus bay parking. Rangers tell me there is no need to phone ahead for accommodation, but you might want to check the Web for scheduled

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events; 2014 is a special year at the fort, marking the 150th anniversary of “The Star-Spangled Banner.”

Public and private camp facilities serve the Baltimore-District of Columbia travel corridor, including Maryland’s Patapsco Valley State Park, 14 miles northwest of the fort, off U.S. Highway 40. It offers 25 standard sites (maximum 40 feet) with electricity. Drivers of large units should phone ahead for site availability. For units more than 11 feet tall, access is via U.S. 40 Eastbound only. The big park is noted for its vistas, scenery, history and hiking. 410-461-5005 (Reservations: 888-432-2267), www.dnr.state.md.us/publiclands/central/patapsco.asp.

FORT WILKINS, MICH.

Open mid-May to mid-October, this Copper Harbor historic state park on Lake Superior traces its beginnings to the Keweenaw Peninsula copper boom — the nation’s first. Believing the resulting shipping and commerce would lead to crime and labor unrest, officials estab-

FORT MCALLISTER’S MASCOT CASUALTY
Animal mascots, lifting morale and easing monotony, have a long-standing tradition at military installations, including Fort McAllister. Its mascot, a coal-black feline dubbed Tom Cat, would dodge cannonballs and lead, but in the seven-hour bombardment of March 3, 1863, exhausted its nine lives. As the lone fatality, Tom Cat’s death was noted in the official report to General Beauregard. At McAllister, a historical marker commemorates TC.

lished Fort Wilkins as a deterrent. But, the upheaval never occurred, and the fort marked its days with clockwork routine, operating 1844-46. It had a second life post-Civil War.

Facing out on Lake Fanny Hooe and restored by the Civilian Conservation Corps, much of the fort stands. After you walk past the log quarters of the married personnel, you enter the main compound of classic white clapboard structures orderly arranged around the green parade ground and contained within the picket stockade. Cannons point out at the lake. Nineteen buildings, many allowing entry, depict fort use or hold exhibits. During the

summer, costumed interpreters re-enact 19th-century fort life.

Flanking the fort, along Lake Fanny Hooe, is the 159-site Fort Wilkins Modern Campground, which offers Wi-Fi and electric hookups.

Opposite the fort on Lake Superior is a lighthouse overlook. Access to Copper Harbor Lighthouse, which facilitated the shipping of copper, is by boat tour; schedule trips through Copper Harbor Lighthouse Tours, 567-344-0834, www.copperharborlighthouse.com. Another popular outing is driving Brockway Mountain Road for stunning overlooks of the peninsula woods and Lake Superior.



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FORT CHURCHILL, NEV.

South of Silver Springs via U.S. Highway 95-Alternate, this 1861 fort of the American West is one of the most visually intriguing in the country, with its adobe ruins in arrested decay and wooden structures associated with the Pony Express. Throw in a fast-moving storm over the Great Basin scrub and barren hills and you have photographers' heaven.

For nine years, the fort protected western settlement and kept the peace in Native American territory. The unrest following the reckless abduction of two Native American girls by three white men near Williams Station on the Carson River prompted Captain Joseph Stewart and the Carson River Expedition to establish a post here to ease tensions. The safety provided by Fort Churchill cleared the way for the Pony Express and Overland Stage and Telegraph.

Visitor center exhibits set the scene and point you on your way. Site markers hint at structures that once stood.

This Carson River park has a camp-

ground and picnic area. Short trails probe the historic area and canoeing is popular. The cottonwood-shaded 20-site campground is rustic (no hookups), with sites suitable for motorhomes, maximum length 45 feet. Sites are on a first-come, first-served basis. There is drinking water

and a dump station at the park.

Plan to arrive via U.S.-95A, entering via the short paved access road. From U.S. 50, Fort Churchill Road is unpaved and 16 miles long, following the river. Because summer can bring sweltering daytime temperatures, come prepared.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

CAPE DISAPPOINTMENT STATE PARK (FORMERLY FORT CANBY STATE PARK)
360-642-3078, www.parks.wa.gov/486/Cape-Disappointment

FORT CHURCHILL STATE HISTORIC PARK
775-577-2345, <http://parks.nv.gov/parks/fort-churchill-state-historic-park>

FORT MCALLISTER STATE PARK
912-727-2339, (for campground reservations: 800-864-7275)
<http://gastateparks.org/FortMcAllister>

FORT MCHENRY NATIONAL MONUMENT AND HISTORIC SHRINE
410-962-4290, www.nps.gov/fomc

FORT STEVENS STATE PARK
800-551-6949, www.oregonstateparks.org

FORT WILKINS HISTORIC STATE PARK
906-289-4215, www.michigan.gov/ftwilkins

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FORTS OF THE LOWER COLUMBIA, OREGON AND WASHINGTON

Straddling the Columbia River mouth at the Pacific Ocean, four forts record events from the arrival of Lewis and Clark through the defense of the Pacific Front in World War II: Forts Clatsop and Stevens in the Astoria-Hammond area of Oregon and Forts Canby and Columbia near Ilwaco, Wash. Collectively, the forts are gathered in the grand sweep of Lewis and Clark National Historical Park. Astoria-Megler Bridge over the Columbia stitches the two-state offering.

Fort Canby (Cape Disappointment State Park) and its Lewis and Clark Interpretive Center document the discovery party's first sighting of the Pacific Ocean, while Oregon's Fort Clatsop re-creates the fort where the explorers passed the wet winter of 1805-06, before the long return home. At both sites you get to know the leaders and crew through journal entries, artifacts and displays. Re-enactments at Fort Clatsop reinforce the fortitude of the Corps of Discovery.

Fort Canby also represents a modern defense, military and maritime. Batteries Harvey Allen and McKenzie Head recall the coastal defense. The site's two lighthouses: North Head and Cape Disappointment, still guide ships out of the clutches of the Graveyard of the Pacific.

The campground at Cape Disappointment State Park has 137 standard sites, 60 full-hookup sites, 18 partial-hookup sites and five primitive campsites.

Farther up river, Fort Columbia (1896-1947) welcomes with quiet, orderly quarters on a hillside overlooking the namesake river and more battery defenses. A day-use facility, it has signed parking for bus and RV, but access by car is still easier.

On the south side of the river, Fort Stevens took the lead role in this three-fort Columbia defense and held the only Civil War earthen fort on the West Coast — started 1863, completed one day before General Lee's surrender at Appomattox. Troop training demands called for in 1940 caused the original earthwork to be

leveled for a parade ground. A reconstruction now stands, and annually Civil War re-enactments take place.

Fort Stevens' network of imposing concrete batteries and powder and shell rooms shed light on the West Coast's readiness during World War II. In June 1942, a Japanese submarine shelled Fort Stevens, with no casualties or real damage, but the incident replaced the perceived threat with a realized foreign attack on the continental U.S. shores. Strolling the historic grounds and visiting the military museum piece together stories. Today, elk sometimes visit the fort.

Oregon's Fort Stevens State Park offers a large campground with 170 full-hookup sites and more than 300 partial-hookup campsites. Fishing, boating, hiking, cycling, beachcombing, and birding are popular pursuits. ♦



Rhonda Ostertag is a freelance writer who travels and collaborates with her husband, photographer George Ostertag. The couple live in Oregon when not on the road.



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Whether shopping for a new RV or updating the appliances and accessories for your current RV, Dometic's wide range of products will help you discover new adventures in style. These easy-to-use products offer the value and durability owners want for their active RV and outdoor lifestyle.

Awnings

When you buy a Dometic RV awning, you buy quality based on decades of experience in developing innovative awning products. The complete line of patio, door and window awnings help improve the comfort level of your RV.

If simplicity is important, look no further than Dometic's 9100 Power and Manual Awnings. The 9100 Power Awning opens and retracts with ease by pressing a wall-mounted switch, while the manual version opens with self-locking lift handles. It features woven acrylic or double-sided vinyl fabric, with hardware color choices of Polar White, Silver, Black and Champagne. Double-sided colors include Linen Fade Sandstone, Bark, Onyx, Meadow Green, Azure and Maroon, with race flag and rodeo specialty designs at an additional fee. Acrylic Shadow fabric colors are Blue, Teal, Burgundy, Forest Green, Sand and Black & Gray.

The Dometic 9500 Power and Manual Case Awnings offer the same easy deployment, rugged construction and style, with heavy-duty, double-sided vinyl Linen Fade fabric. Lateral arms are designed to withstand heavy use, and the manual pitch adjustment helps you enjoy shade every time of the day. The automatic Rain Shed prevents rainwater from pooling on the awning. 9500 Power models are available in 12V or 110V operation.

The Dometic 8500 Manual Awning features heavy-duty polyester-reinforced, double-sided, Linen Fade vinyl fabric. It is available with straight or curved hardware to fit virtually any vehicle. Universal hardware is designed for effortless one-person operation. Complement your patio awning with Deluxe Plus or Elite window awnings, made from the same vinyl Linen Fade or woven acrylic fabric and matching universal hardware. The Elite Window Awning offers a distinctive metal weathershield. Window awnings add privacy, protect furniture and draperies from sun damage, and allow open windows during gentle rains.

The Oasis door awning is totally enclosed in an all-metal case with four hardware colors—Polar White, Black, Satin or Champagne. Its 48-inch or 56-inch wide canopy provides cover for the door and side window. For power assist, the Oasis Elite model operates at the touch of a button inside the entryway, and also by remote control when used with a WeatherPro Power Awning. The Oasis Door Awning has six woven acrylic fabric color choices—Forest Green, Burgundy, Linen Tweed, Sapphire and Charcoal Grey, as well as a



Polar White vinyl fabric choice.

The Dometic WeatherPro power awning is available in vinyl or acrylic and provides superior performance, utilizing a wind sensor that closes the awning automatically when it detects high, sustained winds, helping to prevent damage to the awning or coach. Exclusive Knee Action Design™ allows the awning to automatically flex in moderate wind, avoiding nuisance retractions. In the event of rain, a unique spring-arm mechanism automatically flexes to release accumulating water away from the door. Special hardware is available for mounting the awning over slideouts and on 5th wheels.

The Patty O'Room turns your RV patio awning into a comfortable screened-in enclosure that's free from flying insects and nearly doubles your living space. Set-up is fast and simple. Or reduce the sun's intensity by more than 50 percent with the simple-to-set-up Patty O'Shade, which comes in a kit with all tie downs and stakes in 54-inch heights and 10- and 15-foot lengths. To stabilize your awning and provide the correct tension, the Optima System can be used in extended or retracted mode.

Most of today's Dometic awnings feature new double-sided Linen Fade vinyl fabric. The Linen Fade design is also available in Universal Replacement Fabrics that fit almost any awning, even non-Dometic models.

New Slidetoppers

To shield the top of RV slideout rooms, stain- and mildew-resistant vinyl SlideToppers extend automatically to keep water and debris from entering your RV when the slideout is retracted. SlideToppers reflect heat and light to help keep the interior cooler. They also enhance the look and value of your RV, and extend the life of seals and gaskets.

The Deluxe model features a vinyl weathershield. It comes in a complete kit that is quicker and easier to install than earlier versions and includes awning rail and mounting hardware.

The Elite model features a metal weathershield with wrap-around design that encloses the vinyl awning. Like the Deluxe model, it features an anti-billow mechanism and comes in a complete kit.



SlideToppers shield the tops of slideouts against moisture, debris and direct sunlight.



Americana Plus

Elite Series with ice maker



Dometic's portable ice makers produce ice in only minutes.



TropiCool cooler/warmers conserve energy and come in handy sizes.



Dometic offers standard, convection and over-the-range microwave ovens.



Portable freezers/refrigerators add extra cold food storage to any RV.

Refrigerators

Dometic invented absorption RV refrigeration in the 1950s and has been perfecting it ever since. Dometic refrigerators grace more RV kitchens than any other brand today, offering world class RV refrigeration.

The Elite 2+2 Refrigerator offers 15% improved performance and four doors. Unlike other dual-door refrigerators,

the 12.3 cubic foot capacity Elite features a divider-less freezer compartment for wall-to-wall cooling. With its upscale refinements such as through-the-door ice water dispenser and optional ice maker, the Elite lets you take home-style convenience and luxury with you wherever you go.

The New Generation refrigerator series increases storage space but not the

outside dimensions, thanks to advanced insulation technology. Available in 7 cubic foot and 9 cubic foot sizes, the self-locking door handles are designed for easy operation and security. Eye-level LED controls display fresh food temperatures for easy monitoring.

The Americana Plus refrigerator offers a contemporary exterior with electronic controls, automatic locking handles, and right- or left-swinging doors that open a full 180 degrees. With 6 cubic feet or 8 cubic feet of interior storage, it offers adjustable, removable shelving and door bins in refrigerator and freezer. A climate control system saves energy, and helps prevent condensation.

The Americana features solid steel-frame construction, eye-level automatic electronic controls and a two-year warranty—all at an affordable price. A versatile racking system offers a three-position freezer shelf and doors open 180 degrees. It's available in 6 cubic foot or 8 cubic foot sizes with positive door lock handles that ensure efficiency.

New Portable Freezers/Refrigerators

The new CFX Portable Freezers/Refrigerators utilize a fully hermetic WAECO compressor with integrated control electronics and low-voltage protection. They feature a detachable lid, USB charging port, interior light, soft-start and turbo cooler. They run on 120V AC or 12V/24V DC to freeze/cool from 50°F to -8°F.

New Portable Electric Cooler/Warmers

TropiCool cooler/warmers are great energy savers. As soon as the power is on, they cool or heat at full capacity to reach the desired temperature, then switch automatically to power-save mode.

TropiCool comes in 7-, 15-, 21- and 37-quart sizes, all featuring a thermo-electric box with detachable lid, magnetic lock, LED temperature readout and fold-away handle. They operate on 12V DC or can be plugged into 120V AC. They have a seven-stage temperature range for cooling and heating. Each unit can cool up to 48°F below ambient temperature and heat up to 150°F.

Portable Ice Makers

The Dometic Large Portable Ice Maker makes up to 33 lbs. of fresh, clean ice every 24 hours, with the first batch delivered in under 15 minutes. Choose from small, medium or large cubes.

Dometic's Compact Portable Ice Maker makes ice in less than 13 minutes and is perfect for stowing in an RV, boat or car. It produces 26 lbs. of ice every 24 hours, and a removable basket holds 1.8 lbs. of ice. Choose from small, medium or large cube sizes.

Microwaves

Quick, convenient microwave cooking is available from Dometic, with standard, convection and over-the-range sensor models. All offer touch pad controls, multi-stage cooking, one-touch reheat and popcorn buttons, plus other user-friendly features.

Dometic's DCM series microwave ovens are available in models that offer regular cook mode only, and models with grill and convection functions. All DCM series microwaves offer a 1.1 cubic foot capacity and 1,000 watts of cooking power. Ten adjustable power levels let you boil, reheat, defrost and more. These ovens have nine pre-sets for potatoes, popcorn, pizza, frozen entrees, beverages and re-heating. The control panel features a digital timer and clock with LED readout.

The over-the-range DOTR16B microwave oven has a 1.6 cubic foot capacity and 1,000 watts of cooking power. It features one-touch electronic controls for simple, reliable operation. The included turntable provides a sturdy, rotating surface for even cooking. Nine sensor cooking options automatically monitor food progress and adjust times and temperatures as needed for delicious results.

Air Conditioners

Dometic's line of rooftop air conditioners, heat pumps and RV climate control systems can help keep your trailer or motorhome comfortable all year round.

Dometic incorporates the most advanced technologies, including environmentally friendly 410A refrigerant.

The Brisk II Air Conditioner is the

result of two years of redesigning and re-engineering. One of the most popular and most imitated RV air conditioners, the Brisk II is stronger, lighter, smaller and more environmentally friendly than previous models.

The Brisk II uses its smart design, tighter specification allowances and improved materials to maximize air flow and performance. This newest RV air conditioner offers a 15% air flow increase and is 19% lighter than previous models, making it the smallest 13,500 BTU rooftop unit available. Fan motor sound-dampening brackets reduce noise and vibration, and larger air openings allow for improved air flow and cooling performance.



The Brisk II Heat Pump offers 15,000 BTUs of heating and cooling from a single unit. The blower cycles automatically in cooling and heating modes, and operates on 115V, providing all-electric heat. It fits all standard 14-inch roof vent openings and works with ducted or air box installations.

The Penguin II low-profile RV rooftop air conditioner is a versatile cooling system that is thermostatically controlled with the Comfort Control Center II Thermostat. Its low profile is under 10 inches high, and the sleek, contemporary shroud reduces drag for improved mileage.

The Penguin II heat pump features both heating and cooling. Ideal for

ducted or non-ducted cooling systems, it is a perfect match for Dometic's exclusive QuietZone system. Both the Penguin air conditioner and heat pump use eco-friendly R410A refrigerant that releases heat more efficiently.

Dometic's Commercial Grade rooftop air conditioners are designed to overcome harsh road and weather conditions where continuous, powerful cooling is required. Strong, yet lightweight at just 91 pounds, its powder-coated base pan is 15% thicker than other models and strong L-brackets tie the motor, compressor and evaporator together for vibration-free operation.

Dometic's Single Zone LCD Thermostat puts total RV climate control at your fingertips. It operates automatically or manually. A large LCD display is easy to see and use even in low light, and allows for digital calibration for consistent room comfort. It is available in three models (cool/furnace, heat pump, heat strip) that work with any RV application.

New Washer/Dryer Combo

Dometic's Washer/Dryer Combo is ventless for easy installation and is quite efficient, using 20% less water than competing brands. The system offers an easy-to-read LCD for monitoring, programmable frequent-user settings, 13-pound capacity on wash and dry and cycle-timer display with complete alarm notification. An ergonomic door handle plus easy drainage and service access are other benefits. It features three separate compartments for pre-detergent and fabric softener.

For use in the Washer/Dryer Combo, Dometic offers a new Oxy Laundry Detergent specifically for high-efficiency machines. It is available in a 24-pack and features powerful stain removal in hot or cold water.

Finding a convenient place to hang and dry bath and dish towels in an RV can be a challenge. The convenient sizes of the Dri-Rac towel bars (12 and 17 inches) and shower bars (17 and 22 inches) increase hanging space from one bar to three bars. The durable nickel-satin finish features protective bumpers that won't mar surfaces. Dri-Rac is easy to install with no assembly required.



Dometic

New D-Line™ products are effective and eco-friendly!



Dometic
310 Series
RV Toilet

Sanitation

Dometic offers a comprehensive range of RV toilets, all designed to save space in small bathrooms plus fast, easy installation. Made of high-quality materials, these long-lasting RV toilets offer the comfort and hygiene you expect.

The Dometic 320 series features an elongated, full-size enameled wood seat and deep ceramic bowl. The pressurized full-rim flush delivers a bowl-clearing rinse every time. An ergonomic one-direction foot pedal action results in easy, hands-free flushing. It's available in white or bone colors, and standard or low-profile height. A hand sprayer is optional.

The Dometic 310 series toilet features a full-sized, residential-type seat, a 100% vitreous ceramic bowl, easy foot-pedal operation and unique removable components that simplify winterization. The Dometic 310 uses revolutionary PowerFlush Technology, an extremely low-water-use flush technology that uses as little as 1 pint/.5 liter per flush. Hands-free foot pedal operation with adjustable water level offer even more convenience. The European styling comes in a white or bone color, standard or low profile height, with or without optional hand sprayer.

The new Dometic 300 ultra-light toilet offers powerful triple-jet rinse action that removes waste completely, plus an innovative drop away ball and valve system. These full-size, residential-style toilets feature efficient foot pedal operation with adjustable water level. It's available in white or bone colors, standard or low profile height, with or without optional hand sprayer. The 300 series toilets replace any standard-height RV toilet (two-bolt,

four-bolt and angled two-bolt styles) not installed on a raised platform. Some installations may require a Dometic floor flange adapter kit that is sold separately.

New Dometic D-Line™ Sanitation & Cleaning Products

Campers and outdoor enthusiasts no longer have to sacrifice effective cleaning and sanitation products in order to be eco-friendly. Dometic's new D-Line™ series of green products are named for their powerful impact as an RVer's "first defense" against dirt and odors. This powerful array of Dirt Defense cleaners and Odor Defense tank treatments and air fresheners are formaldehyde-free, campground-compatible, nature-friendly and professional strength.

The D-Line Premium Holding Tank Treatment comes in drop-in or liquid form, and includes additives that break down effluent to help tanks rinse cleaner. The 3 'n 1 Bowl Cleaner and Tank Treatment combines air freshener, bowl cleaner and tank treatment all in one. Non-toxic Clean 'n Green neutralizes waste holding tank odors, while Odor Eze Neutralizer is a powerful odor treatment for grey and black water tanks which does not use formaldehyde. D-Line Toilet Bowl & Seal Cleaner cleans, deodorizes, lubricates seals and valves plus leaves a fresh scent.

D-Line odor eliminators include

Odor Absorb Supreme that neutralizes the harshest odors for up to two months. Odor Absorb Supreme represents a breakthrough in odor-elimination technology. It absorbs and removes all odors, including formaldehyde, mildew, pet, smoke and fuel while leaving behind only a refreshing scent. Another bonus: There's no mess or clean up.

Odor Away permanently removes deep-down odors and is great for pet accidents, food spills and more. The liquid formula is safe for carpets and fabrics.

Dometic's new D™ Air Freshener hanging strips are extra-long-lasting, with deep ridges that provide more surface area. The strips hang virtually anywhere thanks to the included suction cups. Six fresh fragrances are available.

Other D-Line products include Ultra Enviro-Soft toilet tissue, Fresh 'N Up Moist Towelettes and an RV Essentials Kit with four trial sizes of tissue, 3 'n 1 Bowl Cleaner, Premium Holding Tank Treatment liquid and one Citrus Air Freshener.

D-Line RV Cleaning products include the new RV Wash 'N Wax Cleaner, a professional strength, multi-purpose wash formula. It cleans and polishes the vehicle and removes grime, grease, bugs and more, plus it offers spot-free drying.

Dometic's new RV Roof Cleaner and Sealer work in combination to provide all-weather protection, preventing drying, cracking and oxidation, and repelling dirt and rain. The RV Roof Sealer leaves a silky, UV-resistant finish. Both are available in a convenient twin pack pail.

Ultra Red Cleaner is a super-concentrated, multi-purpose cleaner that removes built-up grime, grease, black streaks, dirt and road film, leaving no filmy residue. It's great for power washing and won't harm plants.

Look for a full selection of Dometic products at Camping World and other authorized dealers. For more information about Dometic products, visit dometic.com.

Camping World offers RVers a tremendous value on Dometic products, with everyday savings for Good Sam Club members. New for 2014, Camping World offers Good Sam members \$39 installation on products like Dometic air conditioners, refrigerators and awnings, **PLUS A BEST INSTALLED PRICE GUARANTEE.** Camping World provides a large selection of Dometic products in SuperCenters, in catalogs and online at CampingWorld.com.

THE ULTIMATE PATIO

While selecting a motorhome is based on its floorplan and interior furnishings, the fact is that most of us would rather be outside, weather permitting. There's something very satisfying about setting up a site, taking in the surroundings and making friends with new neighbors. But beyond a pair of folding chairs and a side table, many RVers don't put a lot of effort into their outdoor living spaces, and that's a shame. What's under your patio awning makes it more welcoming, comfortable and personal — creating an area that's ideal for cooking, entertaining or just relaxing on a perfect summer day.

While everyone may have their own idea of what constitutes “the ultimate patio,” we can all pretty much agree that it should be well-equipped for your lifestyle and/or intended purpose, be portable and easy to take down, and of course, properly decorated. To inspire you to create your own ultimate patio, we've compiled this guide to more than 20 “must-have” items that will make you the envy of any RV neighborhood. Our prediction: There will be a new TV reality show in the future called “RV Patio Wars.” Remember, you heard it here first.

FROM FURNISHINGS TO DECORATIONS AND MORE, THESE PRODUCTS WILL HELP SET OFF THE SUMMER SEASON IN STYLE

by TORI TELLEM

SITTING/LOUNGING



Kelty created this portable love seat — it's the perfect size for two adults and has adjustable arms and even bottle openers right there with the beverage holders. The **Kelty Low-Love Chair** has a 12-inch seat height and a slight recline. It's around \$90 and you can get it at Sport Chalet, www.sportchalet.com

Meet the **Caravan Sports Oversized Zero Gravity Chair**. This recliner features lumbar support and an adjustable headrest, and folds down to just 6 inches thick for easy storage when not in use. The fabric is durable Textilene suspended by a double bungee system and it can cradle up to 330 pounds. The chair costs less than \$100 and is available from Camping World, www.campingworld.com



COOKING



Weber offers two portable grills perfect for outdoor entertaining. The **Weber Q 1000** has 189 square inches of cooking space — and for 2014, it's equipped with a split-cooking grate, which means half of the grill can be removed and swapped out for a porcelain-enameled cast-iron griddle. Read: pancakes. The Weber Q 3200 has 393 inches of cooking space, as well as two stainless-steel burners, a built-in thermometer, electronic ignition and removable folding work tables, among the features. The Q 1000 costs about \$200, while the Q 3200 runs about \$400. Check them out at www.weber.com



Trend alert: smokers. They give great flavor to all kinds of meats, and this **Smokey Mountain Cooker** from Weber can fit in most storage compartments. It boasts 286 square inches of cooking space, two plated-steel cooking grates and a built-in lid thermometer. It sells for around \$220. Weber, www.weber.com

This **Coleman RoadTrip NXT 300** propane grill has 20,000 Btu of cooking intensity, and 321 square inches of cooking space (enough for 18 burgers!), Electric Instastart ignition (for matchless lighting) and a top-based thermometer so that you don't have to open it to feel the heat. Independently controlled Even-Temp burners, porcelain-coated cast-iron grills, stainless-steel side tables and a scissor-leg design round out the notables. It's around \$280 and available from Coleman, www.coleman.com



If you're a fan of charcoal versus gas grilling, the **BBQ Pro** might be up your alley. It's uber-portable, and at only 14 inches, carrying and storing is easy. There are 151 inches of cooking space and two locking clasps keep the lid in place. It weighs less than 4 pounds and runs around \$20. BBQ Pro also offers a disposable model with 93 square inches of cooking space that costs just \$5. Get them at Kmart, www.kmart.com



Utensils are only half the equation here. Zippo came up with this idea as a way to conveniently have, yes, utensils at the ready, but also towels, cookware, condiments and spices. The **Utensil Tree** has an 8-inch tray, a patio base and a two-pronged step bar. It also breaks down for packing. The cost is about \$50. Get it from Zippo at www.zippo.com





Any patio light can help when the sun goes down, but it takes something special to create ambience. These elegant **Etched Bronze Globe Lights** can diffuse light from bulbs up to 60 watts, and are connected via a heavy-duty, black-coiled cord that can stretch to 30 feet (also includes a 20-foot straight extension cord). Made in the USA, the kit's six globes are shatter- and water-resistant. Available at Camping World for less than \$100.

Tiki torches are a sure sign of a party — and you can help get yours started with the **4-in-1 TIKI** multiuse torch. As its name would imply, it can be used four different ways: As a full-size torch, a garden torch, a deck-rail-mounted torch or a tabletop torch — just by changing pole sections. As a side benefit, it burns Citronella or OFF BiteFighter torch fuel to keep the bugs at bay. It is a real flame, however, so make sure to keep it away from combustibles like awnings. Available at Camping World and at www.tikibrand.com for around \$20.



Mosquitos ruining the party? Terminix offers a solution in its **All-Clear Mosquito Mister Lantern with Naturals**. It's a functional lantern with a button that controls the mist based on light, medium, or heavy mosquito visitation. According to the company, it covers 300 square feet for up to 10 hours with a 100 percent all-natural lemongrass formula. That means it's not a problem to stay put on your ultimate patio when it's activated; your pets can stay, too. You can learn more and where to buy (it's about \$60) at www.terminixallclear.com



Mr. Heater's Big Buddy will heat up to 400 square feet; set it on low and it'll do its work for 220 hours. No matches needed; it has push-button ignition. A built-in fan is how it spreads heat evenly, and there's a multiposition heat-level knob: 4,000, 9,000 or 18,000 Btu. Dimensions are 17.5 by 17 by 10 inches. Can be purchased for less than \$150 from Cabela's, www.cabelas.com or Wal-Mart, www.walmart.com



Burning ring of fire? That would be the **Redwood from Camp Chef**, which is a portable gas fire pit with a high-pressure burner and 12 pounds of lava rock. No wood, and no smoke. There's a 55,000-Btu burner, and it comes with four extendable roasting sticks. The msrp at www.campchef.com is \$175, but you can get it for less from Camping World, www.campingworld.com

COMFORT/CONVENIENCE



When shade isn't enough, employ the power of evaporative cooling. **Misty Mate's Cool Camper 6** mister includes a portable 2-gallon tank plus 10 feet of lead line and 6 feet of mist line. It uses clip-on attachments to secure the line to the awning. The system requires no electrical power; it is pressurized using a pump handle on the tank. Use with filtered, soft or distilled water to prevent hard-water stains on the coach and awning. MSRP is \$70, but you can get it for less at a variety of retailers including www.amazon.com and www.campingworld.com



The good ol'-fashioned ice chest has finally been rendered obsolete. **Dometic's TropiCool 37 quart Cooler/Warmer** can keep cold foods at a range of 32 to 60 degrees Fahrenheit, or warm foods at 118 to 150 degrees. A seven-stage temperature regulation with LED display features a memory function that saves the most recent power setting, and a membrane keypad protects the electronics from dust and moisture. The unit operates on 12-volt DC, and includes a 120-volt AC adapter as well. It retails for around \$350 at Camping World, www.campingworld.com



Cooking outdoors is great fun — but stepping into and out of the rig and/or having ingredients spread out on a table isn't the most efficient way to produce al fresco treats. This **Folding Camp Pantry** offers three shelves to hold supplies, a zippered door with hook-and-loop restraining straps and two rear mesh panels for ventilation. Made from weather-resistant, heavy-duty fabric, the pantry measures 31.5 inches high by 23 inches wide by 18.5 inches deep and folds for easy storage in its own bag. Around \$50 at Camping World, www.campingworld.com

If you've thrown your share of parties, you know you can never have too much ice. The **Dometic HZB-15S** portable stainless-steel icemaker will make up to 33 pounds of the frozen stuff every 24 hours; the first ice production takes less than 15 minutes. It has a 6-foot power cord, handles and a removable basket. Power is via 120-volt AC at 2.5 amps. Camping World has it for less than \$300 at www.campingworld.com



Most of us know what to bring to a party, but don't necessarily think about where to put the trash when we're done. The **StorMate Garbage Bag Holder** from Thetford sets up to hold a 13-gallon or larger tall kitchen bag, then collapses into an easy-to-store, 14.5 by 11.5 by 2-inch size. You can find it for less than \$15 at Camping World, www.campingworld.com



Once all that tasty food is prepared for outdoor dining, you'll want to keep the bugs away ... and this **Mesh Food Cover** is a quick, simple and elegant way to do it.

Just pull a string at the base of the cover to open it umbrella-style, and the 48-inch long by 24-inch wide cover locks open to protect your grub. It snaps shut for easy storage and weighs less than a pound. Sold at Camping World for about \$10, www.campingworld.com



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FLOORING



The **Prest-O-Fit** rug is not only weather-resistant, but it has rustproof aluminum grommets for stake-down. There are a couple sizes available: 6 by 15 feet and 8 by 20 feet. Various colors are also there for the choosing, including green, burgundy wine, harvest gold and brown. It's less than \$150 and available from Camping World at www.campingworld.com



A portable deck for an RV? Yup, **Decked Out RV Products** has that — low-profile deck surfaces that can be set up or put away in mere moments. Examples of what's available include the Shore Series, which is maintenance-free; it starts at less than \$2,000. The Shore Sidekick is made from anodized extruded aluminum, teak or mahogany and is 23 by 48 inches, compared to its 8-, 10- and 12-foot counterparts, and it's \$259. The Alfresco is made of marine-grade sapele ply (the texture is similar to African mahogany). It, too, has a Sidekick version; prices start at about \$2,300 for the regular, while the Sidekick is \$279. Same sizes are available. Learn more at www.deckedoutrvproducts.com

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- **Dual MAGNAstrips™** hold magnets for photos, shopping lists and more — just like home! Magnet included.
- Updated LCD control panel with built-in diagnostics
- Improved recessed handle



Plus...

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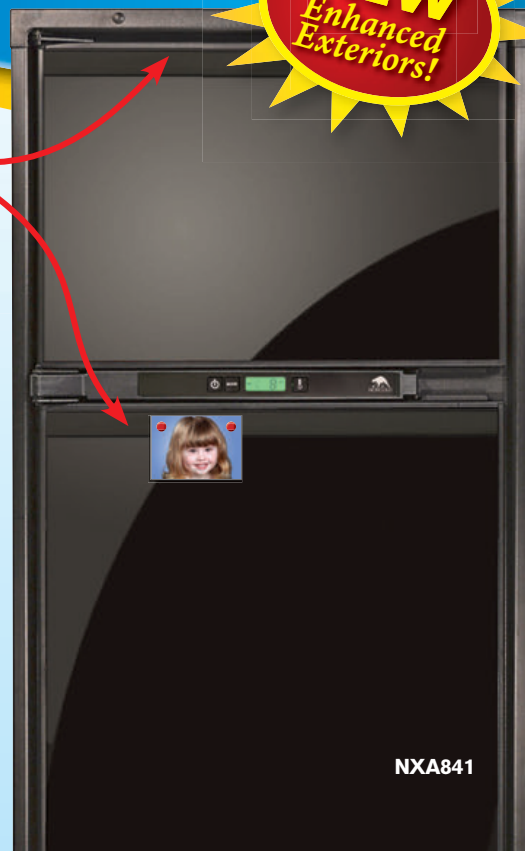
- ✓ **Colder** performance
- ✓ **Bigger** capacity
- ✓ **Lighter** weight



www.norcold.com

ON SALE NOW! PLUS, \$39 INSTALLATION at Camping World for Good Sam Club Members. Also available at other RV retailers.

NEW
Enhanced
Exteriors!



A3160

NXA841

TABLES



This **Roll-Top Table** from Cabela's is compact and lightweight. It's made from aluminum, so it's easy to clean and tough to destroy or scratch. Two sizes are available — 28 by 28 inches and 28 by 43 inches — with telescoping legs for changing its height from 27 to 33 inches. It rolls into a carrying bag. Pricing starts around \$70, and it's available through Cabela's, www.cabelas.com

Here's a remedy for campground tables that are dirty, splintered, uncomfortable or all of the above. This water-resistant **Table Cover and Pads** set is made of vinyl with a soft flannel backing, and is easy to clean with a damp cloth. Lightly padded seat covers make hard benches more comfortable, and the boxed-end construction and cord locks help keep everything in place. It fits tables up to 6 feet long and costs about \$40 at Camping World, www.campingworld.com



No patio table? No problem when you've got this handy

Folding Picnic Table

from Lifetime. It's made from UV-protected polyethylene and powder-coated steel,

so it's tough, stain resistant, easy to clean and splinter free. The 6-foot table

folds flat for storage and weighs 95 pounds, according to the manufacturer. Backed by a

two-year limited warranty, the table's open dimensions are 72 inches long by 30 inches wide by 29 inches high. Available at a variety of retailers for less than \$200 and online at www.buylifetime.com



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1 **Powersmart™**
Voltage Indicator
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2 **Faultsmart™**
Reverse Polarity and
Neutral Loss Indicator
Bright Red LED Reverse Polarity Indicator

3 **Pullsmart™**
Safe Disconnect
Revolutionary Design
Helps Prevent Neutral Loss



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RV Pigtail and Generator Adapters *Safely convert plug sizes in all weather conditions!*

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Powersmart 30 and 50 Amp Inlets

- Powersmart LED indicator
- Heavy duty marine-grade construction

ENTIRE RANGE OF FURRION PLUGS, ADAPTERS, CORDSETS AND INLETS ARE NOW AVAILABLE!

ON SALE NOW for Good Sam Club members at Camping World. Also available at other RV retailers.

MISCELLANY

As the saying goes, "It's 5 o'clock somewhere!" With this **Portable Bar from Best of Times**, you can turn an RV patio into party headquarters. Featuring steel-frame construction and standard bar height, the assembly sets up in minutes without tools and is completely portable. Three levels of shelving hold cans and bottles, and a drop-in cooler holds a case of drinks or ice. Comes with four padded stools, an umbrella, side table and travel bag with wheels. A variety of designs are available, or customize your own. Sells for around \$600 at www.bestoftimesusa.com



Bring some '50s cool to any patio with a pair of pink flamingos. Proudly made in the USA, these birds stand 27 and 24 inches high, and feature all-weather durability so their color won't fade and their legs won't rust. The **Pink Flamingo Set** comes in around \$10 at Camping World, www.campingworld.com ♦

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- Mount on RV roof without drilling
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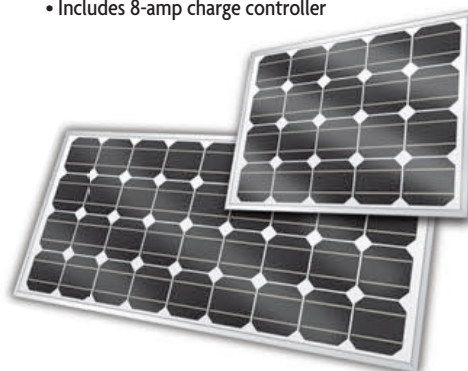
Nature Power Solar Battery Maintainers & Trickle Chargers

- Works in all weather conditions
- Plug into DC outlet or connects directly to battery
- Available in up to 2 watts/130 milliamps and 6 watts/400 milliamps rating
- Includes battery clamps, DC plug and mounting hardware



Nature Power Solar Battery Charger Kit

- Works in all weather conditions
- Up to 18 watts/1200 milliamps rating
- Link up to 6 panels for more output
- Includes 8-amp charge controller



Nature Power High Output Solar Battery Charger

- Works best in sunny climates
- Charges all 12-volt batteries including deep cycle
- Available in up to 80 watts/5.3 amps and 130 watts/8.7 amps ratings
- Includes wiring and mounting hardware



Nature Power Solar Battery Charge Controllers

- Prevent over-charging or discharging
- Reduces maintenance and extends battery life
- Models available in up to 420 watts/28 amps rating
- Works with all 12-volt batteries including deep cycle

ON SALE NOW! PLUS, \$39 INSTALLATION at Camping World for Good Sam Club Members. Also available at other RV retailers.



REDISCOVERY

WITH RECENT UPDATES AND AN ALL-NEW FLOORPLAN, FLEETWOOD'S POPULAR DIESEL PUSHER IS BETTER THAN EVER

by CHRIS HEMER



2015 FLEETWOOD DISCOVERY 37R

WHAT'S HOT

Driver-centric dash, room for entertaining, thoughtful details abound

WHAT'S NOT

Bath area tight, optional king bed limits walk-around space near closet



Swiveling captain's chairs and the extendable L-shaped sofa make for a great entertaining area, right across from the TV and fireplace. Galley features solid-surface countertops and stainless-steel appliances for an elegant, high-end feel.

The more things change, the more they stay the same.

Regardless of how you interpret this time-honored expression, there's no denying its simple truth. We can all remember the days when we called our parents old because they didn't understand us, and now we must endure the snickering that ensues when we appear puzzled by the smartphones and social media that have become an integral part of our children's (and grandchildren's) lives. We all appreciate modern conveniences like GPS-enabled navigation units and the Internet, but hold in high regard a hamburger stand or general store that still does things the old-fashioned way. Indeed, change is inevitable — but perhaps some things stay the same simply because we want them to.

In the RV industry, change can be a slippery slope. Stay conservative, and you run the risk of being overtaken by the competition; go overboard, and you could lose your audience altogether. Retaining the original message of a product, while affecting incremental improvements, is a proven formula — one that Fleetwood skillfully applied to its 2014 Discovery model lineup earlier this year. Representing the first major redesign since 2007, Fleetwood's focus was creating greater driver appeal with a new dashboard layout and a more contemporary interior design, without changing the Discovery's position as a value leader in the diesel-pusher market. Now, only a few months into production, Fleet-



wood has upped the ante again with an all-new 2015 floorplan called the 37R — and the company provided us with a preproduction model for evaluation and testing.

Perhaps the most refreshing aspect of this floorplan is the honesty of its approach; it's not trying to be the latest and greatest, nor cutting edge — in fact, in a lot of ways you might say that it's old-school. It features opposing slides in the living and bedroom areas, a two-place dinette, and is even available with a TV above the cockpit. But look closer, and you'll see subtle improvements have made this an exceptional motorhome, especially when you consider its sub-\$300,000 price tag. Tile flooring is not uncommon, but the Discovery uses 24-by-24-inch porcelain tile that gives it a palatial feel. The countertops, which look like granite, are actually solid-surface, accented by decorative backsplashes. Stainless-steel appliances, dark woods and warm fabrics top

off the look, which is contemporary and elegant, not overdone and garish.

It seems as though many coach manufacturers don't put a lot of thought into how their customers actually use the coach, which is why we appreciated the thoughtful details that went into the 37R. For example, all of the coach system controls are located in one place above the passenger seat, and there's only one panel to control the living-room slideouts, both awnings and the entry-step cover. Simply press the SELECT button until the desired function is displayed, then push the DEPLOY or RETRACT button. Above the passenger seat, there's a small light on a flexible stalk that can be aimed at the panel for better visibility in low-light conditions, or it can simply be used as a reading light. Over the driver's-side window is a cabinet door that hides an erasable whiteboard that can be used for checklists, route details, etc. ... and it can be illuminated as well.



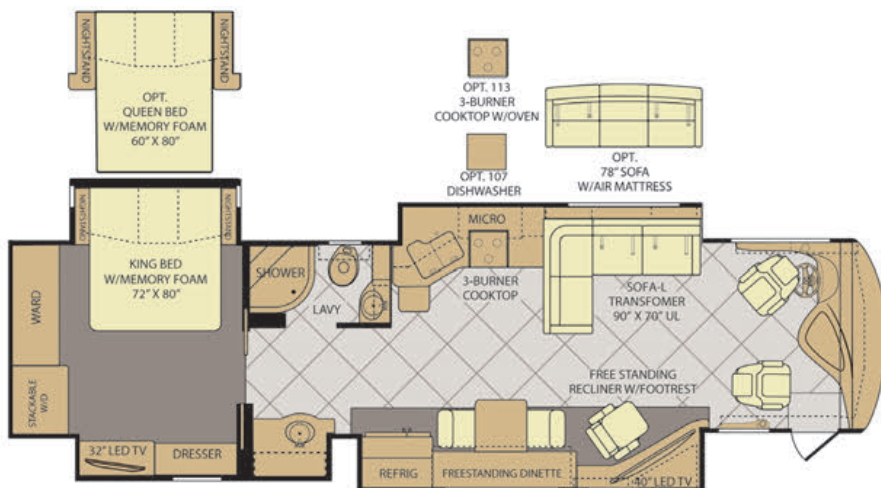
The second vanity is located just outside the bathroom door. A stackable washer/dryer is standard.

The cockpit itself is also logically laid out. The new dashboard is “driver-centric,” meaning it is angled toward the driver for easier viewing. We loved the fact that the radio/navigation display and backup camera/side camera display are on two separate screens, which makes operating either one a lot easier. Someone finally realized that it’s not convenient, or safe, to work your way through multiple screens while driving. Switches for the power windshield shades, docking lights and parking brake are all located within easy reach, are clearly labeled and are illuminated at night.

As we departed for our destination at Emerald Desert RV Resort in Palm Desert, Calif., we found that the seats were comfortable and supportive. They feature fore/aft adjustment and reclining functions and are even heated, but the armrests were awkward to adjust, particularly when driving. Most armrests we’ve encountered have a manual adjustment wheel or lever

near your hand; on these seats, the wheel is hidden underneath the armrest near your elbow, and is accessed via a slot in the upholstery. Also, the passenger seat features a power footrest, but it does not come up all the way, making it less supportive for those with long legs.

Driving the Discovery was a mostly relaxing experience; the engine is almost inaudible from the passenger seat, and there were few rattles emanating from the appliances, furniture or cabinets. However, the two sliding pocket doors that separate the bedroom/bath areas from the living area were secured by magnets on the test coach, which evidently were not strong enough to hold the doors open — and they couldn’t be latched closed. So that meant that with every corner, and even some lane changes, the doors slammed with a startling “bang!” Happily, Fleetwood tells us this design has been replaced in favor of a dual-bolt latch system in production mod-



SPECIFICATIONS

PERFORMANCE

FUEL ECONOMY: 8.2 MPG

ACCELERATION

0-60: 29.8 SEC

40-60: 14.9 SEC

CHASSIS

MODEL: FREIGHTLINER XCM SERIES

ENGINE: 8.9-LITER CUMMINS ISL

SAE HP: 380 HP @ 2,000 RPM

TORQUE: 1,150 LB-FT @ 1,400 RPM

TRANSMISSION: ALLISON 3000MH

6-SPEED AUTOMATIC

AXLE RATIO: 4.78:1

FRONT TIRES: G670 275/70R22.5

REAR TIRES: G670 P275/70R22.5

WHEELBASE: 245"

BRAKES: 17-INCH AIR DISC WITH ABS FRONT, 16.5-BY-7-INCH DRUMS WITH ABS REAR

SUSPENSION: NEWAY AIR SUSPENSION

FRONT AND REAR, SACHS SHOCK ABSORBERS

FUEL CAP: 100 GAL, DUAL FILL

WARRANTY: 3 YEARS, 50,000 MILES

COACH

EXT LENGTH: 38' 8"

EXT WIDTH: 8' 6"

EXT HEIGHT: 12' 10" WITH A/C

INT WIDTH: 8'

INT HEIGHT: 7'

CONSTRUCTION: ALUMINUM FRAMING; SOLID FIBERGLASS SIDING; CROWNED, ONE-PIECE FIBERGLASS ROOF; FIBERGLASS FRONT/REAR CAPS

FRESHWATER CAP: 100 GAL

BLACK-WATER CAP: 50 GAL

GRAY-WATER CAP: 75 GAL

WATER-HEATER CAP: 10 GAL

LP-GAS CAP: 38.7 GAL

AIR CONDITIONER: (2) 15,000 BTU FRONT, 15,000 BTU REAR WITH HEAT PUMP

FURNACE: (2) 25,000 BTU

REFRIGERATOR: 21-CUBIC-FOOT RESIDENTIAL

INVERTER: 2,000 WATT PURE SINE WAVE

BATTERY: (2) 12-VOLT CHASSIS, (6) 6-VOLT COACH

AC GENERATOR: 8 KW

MSRP: \$281,710

MSRP AS TESTED: \$292,592

BASIC WARRANTY: 12 MONTHS, 15,000 MILES

STRUCTURAL WARRANTY: 3 YEARS, 50,000 MILES

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(WATER & HEATER, FUEL, LP-GAS TANKS FULL; NO SUPPLIES OR PASSENGERS)

FRONT AXLE: 9,980 LBS

REAR AXLE: 19,360 LBS

TOTAL: 29,340 LBS

CHASSIS RATINGS

GAWR, F/R: 12,400/21,000 LBS

GVWR/GCWR: 33,400/43,400 LBS

ROCCC: 4,060 LBS

GAWR: GROSS AXLE WEIGHT RATING

GVWR: GROSS VEHICLE WEIGHT RATING

GCWR: GROSS COMBINATION WEIGHT RATING

ROCCC: REALISTIC OCCUPANT AND CARGO CARRYING CAPACITY (FULL WATER, NO PASSENGERS)

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els that solves this problem.

Likewise, the door for the optional dishwasher also opened and closed mad-deningly, but we've since learned that the dishwasher features a built-in electronic lock that is activated by turning on the dishwasher (via shorepower, generator or inverter), closing the door and holding the lock button for five seconds.

Once at our site, setting up was a breeze; the Discovery is equipped with a Power Gear one-touch hydraulic leveling system that put the coach on the straight and narrow in about 30 seconds. After that, we deployed the living-area slides, door and patio awnings from the main control panel, then walked back to the bedroom, where those slideout controls are located. Everything worked flawlessly by our estimation, but one thing that we found annoying was that the engine must be running to operate the slides, jacks and even the stairwell cover. Fleetwood tells us this is to prevent low voltage to the electric slide mechanisms and hydraulic leveling system, but that's of no consolation

to neighbors that have to listen to diesel clatter for several minutes while you set up or break camp. Considering this coach is well-equipped with six, 6-volt house batteries, there should be sufficient power to run four slides and the jacks unless the batteries had been depleted over a long period. In this case, it would be easy enough to start the engine to recharge them.

Outside, Fleetwood did a great job from both aesthetic and functional standpoints. The standard full-body paint with deluxe exterior graphics is striking, especially when paired with the frameless windows and polished aluminum wheels. There are two massive basement storage bays, the largest of which is available with roll-out trays on either side that make it a lot easier to reach your gear. All of the compartments have side-hinge doors, and Fleetwood provided for easy access to the things that require the most attention, such as the batteries and diesel exhaust fluid (DEF). The 8-kW Cummins Onan generator is in a slideout compartment up front, and there's even a smaller compart-

ment on the front street side that features a handy compressed air fitting.

The living area is a great place to entertain, with comfortable seating for four provided by the optional L-shaped, extendable sofa. It is perfectly situated across from the 40-inch flat-screen TV and available electric fireplace, but we found the footrest to be sticky to deploy and stubborn to fold down. Also, bear in mind that this couch does not convert into a bed, so if you expect overnight guests, you'll want the standard sofa with queen sofa bed. The test coach was also equipped with a movable, Euro-style recliner, which no one saw the point of. It's heavy, and the only place it's not in the way is next to the TV and fireplace — which is why it was removed for our interior photos.

The rear bedroom and bath area are a little on the tight side, but again, are thoughtfully laid out. The small, street-side bath houses a neo-angle shower with sliding glass door, porcelain toilet with sprayer and vanity with sink. There's enough room here to accomplish the busi-

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ness at hand, and Fleetwood placed the switches for the water pump and overhead powered roof vent within easy reach. Just outside of the bathroom is another vanity with sink, mirror, small cabinet and drawers, so there's a place to wash up or primp when someone else is using the bathroom. There's even a handy nightlight in this area, located near the floor.

Like many contemporary coaches, the 37R is available with a king bed, and the test coach was so equipped. Frankly, we wish it wasn't, because the bed takes up nearly the entire width of the room, leaving little walk-around space. There's also no room for nightstands, so you'll have to find another place to put your water or book before going to sleep. On the positive side, the memory-foam mattress was among the most comfortable we've ever slept on. We found it perfect for our tastes, and there's a window on either side of the slideout that allowed the cool desert breeze to flow through. At the foot of the bed is a roomy dresser and a standard 32-inch flat-screen TV that is prewired for a

Blu-ray player or other device.

The closet space at the rear of the coach is also a bit on the tight side, but this is due to the standard stackable washer/dryer, which is a great feature for a coach in this price range. We think most owners will be happy to make do with a smaller closet in exchange for such a great convenience on the road.

The next morning, we prepared breakfast. The galley is well-equipped with a large convection microwave, stainless three-burner cooktop with sealed burners, solid-surface sink and a residential faucet with pullout sprayer. The test coach was also equipped with the available residential refrigerator with icemaker and the aforementioned dishwasher. There's adequate room to cut and chop, and more space is available with the standard sink/stove covers. If you need even more room, there's a countertop extension that is positioned so it does not get in the way of walking traffic. Again, we appreciated that the switches for the task/overhead LED lighting are logically placed just below the

kitchen counter, and are equipped with a dimmer function. There's even space for a trashcan under the sink, something far too many coaches don't make provision for. In fact, about the only thing that didn't make sense to us was the pantry/spice rack, which was located closer to the bedroom than it was to the galley.

Palm Desert is hot even in the spring, so not long after breakfast, we pulled down the dual MCD shades and turned on the excellent ducted air-conditioning system. Plugged into 50-amp power, the system kept the coach at a very comfortable 75 degrees all day, and was exceptionally quiet — especially outside. We spent the majority of our days outside underneath the power patio awning, enjoying conversation with the available outdoor entertainment system providing either music or television when desired.

The 37R floorplan may be all-new, but it still carries on the Discovery's tradition of providing luxury features at an exceptional value — and we hope that's something that never changes. ♦



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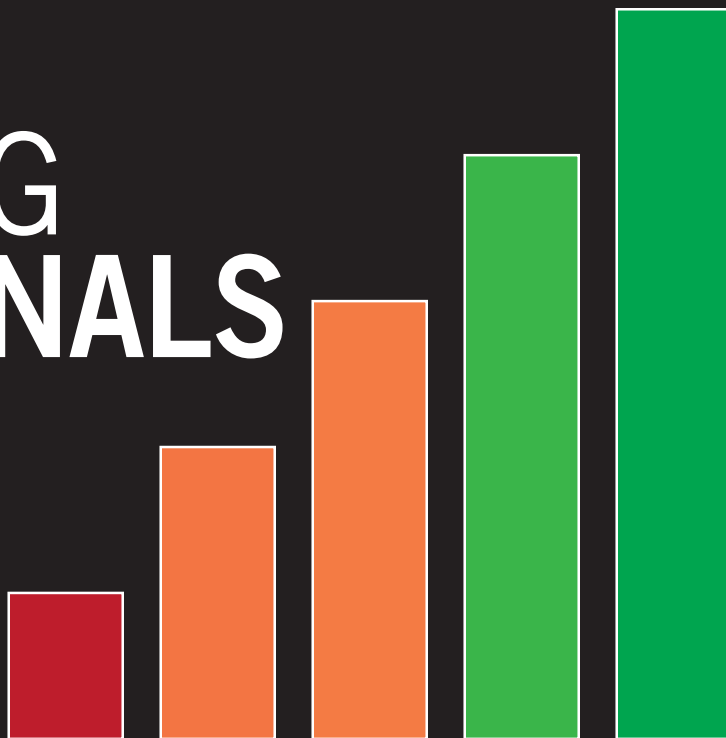
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BOOSTING CELL SIGNALS

SMOOTHALKER'S WIRELESS AND DIRECT-CONNECT RADIO FREQUENCY AMPLIFIERS IMPROVE PHONE AND DATA SERVICE, ESPECIALLY IN FRINGE AREAS

by BOB LIVINGSTON



There's no denying that staying connected is an important factor when picking places to visit in a motorhome. Many times, RV parks are chosen because of Wi-Fi availability and the ability to receive a strong signal for smartphones, tablets and laptops. But in reality, searching for signal "bars" and using electronic devices in areas off the beaten path can be irritating — especially for the tech geeks out there. This becomes even more painful when trying to conduct business while on the road. SmoothTalker, a Canadian company specializing in mobile communications, offers solutions to RVers looking for independence from weak — or overloaded — Wi-Fi in campgrounds and weak cell service in fringe areas.

The company manufactures and markets Federal Communications Commission (FCC) and Industry Canada-approved boosters — radio frequency (RF) amplifiers — that not only improve incoming and outgoing cell signals, but give users a platform for setting up a personal wireless system in their motorhomes and within a certain distance outside of their rigs. What started many years ago as boosters that plugged into flip phones, has evolved into sophisticated wireless equipment that improves signal strength for all cellphones, tab-



lets and data devices. The booster operates in 800 and 1900 megahertz (MHz) bands, which are used by the majority of cellular carriers. The user has no control of bands, and carriers commonly flip back and forth when providing service.

Historically, the 800-MHz band is more prevalent in remote areas because that's the band carriers were originally licensed to use when the cellphone industry was launched. Consequently, there are more 800-MHz towers in remote areas because those are the ones that were put up first, but more impor-

tantly the 800-MHz band is deployed wherever possible because lower frequency signals have lower path loss and travel farther than higher frequency signals. As a general rule, the more remote the location, the higher likelihood that the only cell signal will be in the 800-MHz cellular band.

SmoothTalker's BRM220-50 is its top-of-the-line wireless vehicle signal booster, designed to provide the highest gain permitted for mobile boosters within FCC guidelines. As of April 30, the FCC has mandated that mobile booster



Top: Booster kit includes AC and DC power supplies, mounting brackets and indoor antenna. Above and below: Outside antennas are available with a 14- or 2-inch whip on a magnetic base.



gain be limited to 50 decibels (dB), which still makes a huge difference in remote areas. All received and transmitted cellular signals are measured in dB, which is a whole science unto itself. For example, the received signal strength indicator (RSSI) that relates to the number of bars on the device, depending on the available service at the time, might be minus 105 dB in a fringe area. That's marginal for texting and voice, and forget about data service. Boost the signal using the SmoothTalker's amplifier by 50 dB and the RSSI will improve from 5 to 25 dB, depending on the distance from the booster antenna. This level of improvement will give the user dramatically better voice, text and data service. Don't get too wrapped up in RSSI and decibels; just about everyone deals only with the number of bars. In bar language for most phones, five bars is equivalent to approximately minus 75 dB; subtract 7 dB for each bar loss on the screen.

To test the effectiveness of the SmoothTalker booster, we set up the system in a 40-foot motorhome. Installation is relatively easy, but antenna placement is critical for optimum performance. Two antennas are connected to the booster, one inside and one outside. There are a few outside antenna choices, but for a motorhome, using a small whip antenna mounted to the roof makes the most sense. There are two choices here: a 2-inch stubby whip or one that is 14 inches tall. For most RV travel, the 2-inch is the most effective. Mounting options

CONTINUED ON PAGE 90



Users who choose not to hardwire the booster to 12-volt DC power can use an optional power supply that plugs into an accessory port.



Clever bracket is designed to facilitate antenna mounting to a rear ladder or even the side wall of the motorhome.



Inside antenna can be clamped to the edge of a cabinet door or taped to any flat surface near the phone or data device.



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Wideband High Gain Directional Antenna improves service when in fringe areas, and can be used inside RVs that are too short for optimum separation from the outside antenna.

include a magnetic base for “sticking” to metal surfaces or using an optional adjustable bracket for mounting on windows, side walls, ladders or roof racks. Routing the coaxial cable requires some preplanning, but going through the refrigerator vent usually works the best, if you don’t want to drill holes in the coach.

A slim inside antenna provided with the kit has an unusual shape that makes it capable of being hung on a cabinet door, or taped to the wall (two-sided tape included). The key to placement is keeping the separation between the inside and outside antennas far enough so the booster’s green lights don’t flash, about 15 to 20 feet. You’ll also want to position the inside antenna close to the cell device. That’s because any wireless system is subject to free air loss. Signal to the phone is reduced as the separation between the cellular device and interior antenna increases. For example, there will be a 25- to 30-dB loss when a cellphone is at a distance of 3 feet from the inside antenna.

Also, if the inside and outside antennas are too close, the level of boost is impacted, much like feedback in a sound system when the microphone is too close to the speaker. If there’s feedback, the gain (think volume control in the speaker

analogy) must be turned down; the booster does this automatically.

Performance can be upgraded by using SmoothTalker’s Wideband High Gain Directional Antenna inside the motorhome, in concert with the outdoor whip antenna. This antenna can be mounted in a number of ways using the provided bracket, or simply placed on a counter. This is a pretty versatile antenna because it can also be used as a directional outside antenna when parked in remote areas where the signal is very weak. In this situation, the antenna can be attached to the rear ladder or mounted on a pole at the

campsite and aimed at the carrier’s tower.

Another use of the wideband antenna is inside a smaller RV. If the separation distance between the antennas is limited by RV length, the wideband antenna can be placed on a counter or table (using the bracket in a pedestal configuration) with its back to the outside antenna. The bottom line: Users can experiment with multiple combinations of antenna placements, depending on the RV and available space.

For the evaluation, the amplifier was powered by the 12-volt DC accessory adapter/plug that comes with the system. The amplifier can be hardwired to the motorhome’s 12-volt DC system, but the device runs on 6-volt DC so the supplied power adapter must be used; direct wiring to 12-volt DC will fry the unit. There’s also an AC/DC power supply for connecting to standard 120-volt AC outlets.

We separated the inside and outside antennas by 16 feet. There was zero oscillation, meaning the booster did not turn its gain down during the test. Gain is indicated by the green LEDs in the booster. A solid green light confirms that the boosted signal is at maximum gain. If the green light flashes, there’s a reduction in gain. Each flash of the green LED indicates a gain reduction of 3 dB. A second, orange LED will remain solid-on if the band is functioning normally.

The tests using a smartphone showed dramatic improvement in phone signal. Of course, signal was best when the phone was closer to the inside antenna (see chart at the top of page 91).

We also performed a data test to measure differences in download and up-



Phone-specific and universal cradles are used with the connected booster. The one on the right plugs into a 12-volt DC accessory port, which doubles as the cradle support.

800 MHz Test				
	BOOSTER	BOOSTER	BOOSTER	NO BOOSTER
Distance from inside antenna	8"	3'	10'	
Phone RX signal (RSSI)	-47 dB	-69 dB	-76 dB	-87dB

1900 MHz Test				
	BOOSTER	BOOSTER	BOOSTER	NO BOOSTER
Distance from inside antenna	8"	3'	10'	
Phone RX signal (RSSI)	-72 dB	-86 dB	-89 dB	-93 dB

load speeds with and without the booster. Testing the effectiveness of the booster in a data-only session is tricky because the carrier uses multiple towers and frequency bands to provide the fastest data speeds and control traffic on its spectrum. To simulate the situation found in most remote sites with coverage from only one cell tower, a call is placed on the cellphone while the speed test is performed. The call ensured that the phone was being served by only one tower on one frequency during the test. Clearly, the results show that data speed was much faster with the use of the booster.

Data Speed Test			
	PING	DOWNLOAD	UPLOAD
With Booster	296 ms	4.19 Mbps	.91 Mbps
Without Booster	347 ms	.33 Mbps	.42 Mbps

There are two other options for those who don't need the wireless capabilities, and want to save a few bucks. The BST220-23 booster kit uses a cradle that holds the phone or cellular device and connects to the booster. Phone-specific cradle kits are available for many popular phones and there is a universal cradle kit that can be used for all cellphones and mobile hotspot devices.

An outside antenna is connected to the booster in the same manner as the wireless version. The cradle is then connected to the phone side of the booster and the phone/hotspot device is placed in the cradle. The cradle is designed to plug into a 12-volt DC accessory port (cigar lighter), providing charging capability for the phone/device. Power for the booster comes from the same sources as its wireless counterpart.

We tested the BST220-23 with a cellphone on the 800-MHz band. Signal without the booster was recorded at minus 88 dB. Connected to the booster, gain improved to minus 61 dB. Using the connected amplifier in remote regions will greatly improve signal strength because it's not subject to free air losses, but of course, the wireless capability is lost. A Bluetooth headset, wired ear buds or the speaker will have to be used when making calls while the phone is in the cradle.

The least expensive option is the BST220-15, a 15-dB gain booster that is designed for use with any data device that has an antenna port built in (laptop data cards and cellular modems). The booster is connected with a cable that plugs directly into the cellular device's antenna port. The external antenna connection is the same as the other boosters described earlier. We did not test this booster.

Let's face it, there are two types of users of cellular services: those who are addicted to their smartphones, tablets and computers, and those who must stay connected by necessity. There's nothing more frustrating than traveling in areas with marginal signals, and for a small investment you can keep most of those happy signal bars on the screen. SmoothTalker's wireless BRM220-50 booster kits start at \$399.99; the coupling version BST220-23 kits start at \$259.99; and the direct connect BST220-15 kits start at \$199.99.

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AN EXTERNAL ADAPTER WITH A HIGH-GAIN ANTENNA CAN SIGNIFICANTLY **IMPROVE WIRELESS NETWORKING PERFORMANCE IN A MOTORHOME**

by DENNIS C. BREWER

RVers depend on the Internet for staying connected, particularly when traveling for long periods of time. RV parks frequently provide guests free Wi-Fi. Wi-Fi access is ubiquitous and users expect Wi-Fi to be as good on the road as it is at home, though expectations are not always achieved. Public Wi-Fi systems' performance differs from one to another based on design and implementation aspects that impact the quality of the service. Another problem involves the RV itself, which is called the "Faraday cage effect." The Faraday effect absorbs Wi-Fi signals and reduces them to a near-0 signal strength by turning the radio signals into electrical impulses that flow through the framing metal of the RV creating a "cage" interior void of strong Wi-Fi signals. A microwave oven, as an example, is a Faraday cage keeping microwave signals inside. RVs have metal framing, metallic siding, foil-backed insulation, and wires that combine with wall density to make getting Wi-Fi signals both in and out of the RV difficult. The effects block signals in both directions that the Wi-Fi network's two-way connectivity depends upon, causing dropped connections and slow performance.

Devices you use inside, such as computers, laptops and pads, are not outputting strong enough Wi-Fi signals to overcome the Faraday effects on the signals trying to get to a distant access point. This barrier causes difficulty for the device's radio to maintain a connection with the nearest antenna. This is frustrating for end-users because a connection is seen as "available" from the computer's network list, but the user can't maintain persistent connections. This network's performance factor also negatively impacts



Powerlink Outdoor Plus high-gain Wi-Fi adapter.

another aspect of the quality of service over Wi-Fi; that of data throughput. Inability to maintain a persistent connection causes a second problem negatively impacting data throughput. Communications protocols that make Wi-Fi work are designed to rebroadcast the data when any of the data packets do not reach their destination device. Constant resending of lost data packets impacts the available throughput for your device and all of the neighbors' devices that share an access point. The RV park's backbone Internet connection speed also limits the amount of bandwidth available to guests' computer devices. Low bandwidth to the Internet makes it difficult to enjoy streaming video such as Netflix or a DISH Anywhere account. The required throughput speed for DISH Anywhere should be in excess of 1.55 Mbps and for Netflix about 3.0 Mbps for downloading DVD-quality video.

TESTING DATA THROUGHPUT

To determine if data-demanding applications will work well in your motorhome, use your computer or mobile Wi-Fi device to test the Wi-Fi throughput. A testing site is available at www.bandwidthplace.com that displays well on smaller devices and will test download and upload data speeds. The results from speed tests will

results below 1.0 Mbps will present challenges when uploading photos and video to Facebook or Instagram when you have visited an enjoyable place and want to share the experience with others.

The good news is, there are inexpensive products to improve the performance of a Wi-Fi connection. Let's take a look at some products for improving the performance of Wi-Fi access points to use while enjoying campground and RV park visits.

IMPROVING WI-FI COMPUTER TO ACCESS POINT CONNECTIVITY

Wi-Fi access points create a small connectivity "cell" that typically measures in feet not miles. Connectivity radiuses for Wi-Fi typically vary from a 100-foot radius to a maximum of 400 feet with no obstacles in the way. Wi-Fi was designed to provide connectivity inside buildings to cover a home, office space, or auditorium. When connecting to the Internet via an RV park's Wi-Fi access points with a computer device, there are a few built-in obstacles to overcome. Access points transmit power in less than 1 watt (1,000 milliwatts; abbreviated mW), which is not much; and more routinely transmit only about 200 mW of effective isotropic radiated power (EIRP). The access card in a laptop, computer, or pad is typically transmitting out power levels between 10 and 100 mW, also not very much. Long distances from the access point's antenna reduce the strength of the signal. Dense foliage neg-

atively impacts available signal strength. These low power levels combined with the environment, distance and Faraday cage effect all work against getting good-quality Wi-Fi signals inside a motorhome. The output power of computer devices is limited by FCC regulations so turning up the output power is not permissible.

Fortunately, it is easy to make the most out of Wi-Fi access points. Using external-to-the-computer client adapters that combine high-gain Wi-Fi antennas can increase the Wi-Fi connectivity distance out to as much as 6,561 feet. These products are inexpensive and will work very well to yield the best Wi-Fi service possible from the access points you will encounter during your travels.

EXTERNAL ADAPTERS WITH HIGH-GAIN ANTENNAS

High-performance Wi-Fi USB-connected adapters come in two versions: indoor-use and outdoor-use models. An indoor-use model that can be used as an alternative to a built-in Wi-Fi access card in a computer or laptop is the Powerlink Model PL-14N.

This adapter improves Wi-Fi performance by moving the adapter out of the computer and by adding in two antennas that increase EIRP strength by a factor of 6, from the included 7-dBi-gain antennas. The cable length allows moving the antenna/adapter to a window area also greatly reducing the Faraday effect. With this adapter instead of the built-in Wi-Fi



Example of Wi-Fi speed test results.

look similar to the screen shot below, and will display speeds in upload and download mode. To use a speed test site after connecting via Wi-Fi, enter the URL in the browser and click on the test button within the screen and wait for the test to complete. Running a speed test will help avoid the frustration of finding out that sufficient bandwidth is not available for more demanding Web-based applications. Any download test result less than 1.5 to 3.0 Mbps will make video streaming perform marginally or not at all. Upload



The Powerlink Model PL-14N adapter and cable connected to a laptop.

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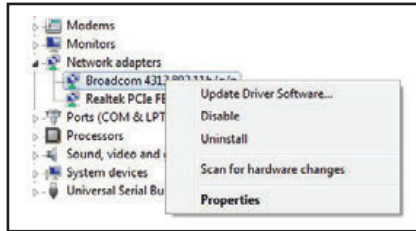
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card in a laptop, the distance from an access point may extend out to as much as 4,921 feet. Not bad for a list price of only \$29.95. It also works with all the common access points that use the 802.11B, G, or N standards. The PL-14N, designed for indoor use, is fairly easy to install to any computer running on Windows XP, Vista, 7 or 8; Mac OS X; or Linux Kernel v2.6.6 and later computers.

HOW TO INSTALL AN EXTERNAL WI-FI ADAPTER ON A WINDOWS COMPUTER

To install the adapter on a Windows computer first disable the Internal Wi-Fi card by right clicking on the computer icon, then select "Device Manager." After the list renders, find and click to expand the line for "Network Adapters," then right-click on the one listing annotated 802.11; this will bring up the menu that will include "Disable." Click on "Disable" and the internal card will no longer work until you repeat these steps later to re-enable it. By disabling the internal card or unplugging the Wi-Fi adapter if you use one



Last step to disable computer's internal Wi-Fi adapter on a Windows computer.

that plugs into the USB port, the install of the PL-14N or any other brand of high-power adapter will go smoother. Then assemble the adapter by screwing on the antennas and connect the cable to it. Next, plug the adapter's cord into an available USB port on your computer device. Load the provided disk into your computer's DVD/CD-ROM drive; it should run automatically. If it does not, go to that drive and click on "Autorun" to load the drivers and utilities. Typically, you will have to accept the license agreement by checking a box, then select "Next," then "Install," and finally "Finish" after the loading is complete. Simply accepting the defaults

when presented with choices will usually lead to a successful install of the device drivers and utilities. If running a Mac, the setup process is very similar.

Once installed and operational, aim the dipole antenna (ears) toward the access point and you will see signal-strength bars in the lower right-hand side of the laptop screen change. After the adapter install, it is OK to re-enable the built-in card; you can then choose from the Windows "Network and Sharing Center" to use either one so you won't have to carry an extra set of "ears" to Starbucks when you go for a caramel latté.

For those requiring a longer-distance solution for Wi-Fi connectivity, Powerlink also makes an outdoor/indoor model, the Outdoor Plus, with a list price of \$55.99. This model is weatherized for outdoor use and comes with a 15-foot USB cord, at the distance limit for USB 2.0 specifications. To use this model outside of the motorhome, you will need to make or find a hole large enough for the connector to fit through, such as a rubber joint area on

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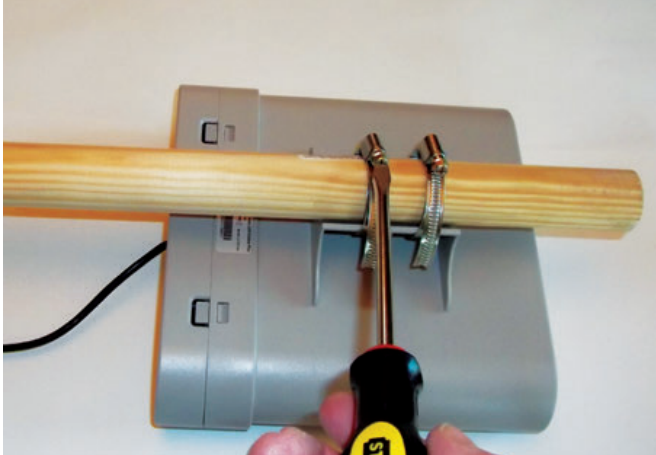
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Clamp the Powerlink Outdoor Plus to the stand pole.



Secure the pole in the correct direction using C clamps.

a slide. Just remember to remove the cord before pulling in the slide. Because of the cable limit of the USB 2.0 standards, extending the cable is not workable. It is also OK to just place this unit inside in the dash area of the motorhome.

The photo above, left, shows connecting the Outdoor Plus to a wood closet pole (less than \$10) with the supplied clamps. I use two C clamps, as shown in the photo above, right, to clamp the pole to the motorhome's ladder when parked. You could also use a metal pole or a 10-foot aluminum fence post and fabricate

a stand for it or use a heavy-duty holiday tree stand. Before clamping down, be sure the Wi-Fi signal bar indicators are peaked so the high-gain antenna is pointing exactly at the RV park's access point. High-gain antenna is synonymous with highly directional, so aiming is important. Asking for the park's map and location of the access point(s) during check-in

helps with quickly orienting the adapter's 14-dBi-gain antenna. The driver install process is similar to the indoor unit. The performance of the Outdoor Plus model is excellent when connected to a Windows 7.0 HP laptop.

Using external adapters with high-gain antennas will significantly improve Wi-Fi performance in your motorhome. ♦



Dennis C. Brewer and wife, Penny, are motorhome holidaymakers, with four years full time and three years snowbirding back and forth across the 45th parallel. Dennis is also a technology author and consultant whose two most recent books include: *Build Your Own Free-to-Air (FTA) Satellite TV System*, McGraw-Hill/TAB Electronics; and *Home Automation Made Easy: Do It Yourself Know How Using UPB, Insteon, X10 and Z-Wave*, Que Publishing.



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JAYCO REDHAWK 31XL

BUNK IT UP, PACK 'EM IN

An affordable Class C that's long on standard amenities and sleeping positions



The RV industry is rife with buzzwords and phrases, from “affordable luxury” to “bang for your buck” on up to “family-friendly.” Most dealers jump at the chance to utter even one of those catchphrases at a potential buyer, so one can only imagine the euphoria salespeople must feel when a motorhome like the Jayco Redhawk 31XL comes along.

The Redhawk essentially combines all of the above into a smooth-driving, nicely appointed Class C package. Jayco has recognized the need for an affordable coach that includes many of the amenities of more expensive models without sacrificing too much. And, the company has done so in a style that befits families with children of all ages.

At first glance, the exterior of the Redhawk doesn't necessarily stand out from the crowd, but a little more scrutiny reveals some pleasant surprises. The front fiberglass cap, part of the “mandatory” Customer Value Package option (\$4,691) and the radius-cornered entrance door are fine touches, plus the standard frameless windows add a touch of elegance. The seamless one-piece rubber roof will no doubt help with leak protection in the long run.

The Redhawk is built on the Ford E-450 chassis, and the Triton 6.8-liter V-10 gas engine is rated at 305 HP and 420 LB-FT of torque. The five-speed TorqShift Series transmission tackles the terrain with aplomb, while the Hellwig helper springs and rubber isolation body mounts help make for an enjoyable, shudder-free ride.

But the Redhawk's place in the spotlight lies inside the coach, which has been outfitted with a nice amount of walk-around space and up to eight sleeping positions.

Stepping up into the entry, the Redhawk's interior appears more upscale than its price point would indicate. The Ultraleather sofa and dinette, decorative slideout fascia boards and glazed cabinetry with brushed-nickel hardware would be right at home in a more expensive motorhome. The vinyl flooring is surprisingly tile-like; I had to run my hands over it to be sure. The cabinets are plentiful and the drawers all feature ball-bearing guides, which is always appreciated. One simple feature I especially liked is the cabinet containing the monitor panels: Corkboard has been inset in the door, as have three key hooks, which made for a very handy spot to hold keys, wallets, etc., in addition to a message center and/or picture holder.





SPECIFICATIONS

CHASSIS: FORD E-450
ENGINE: 6.8-L TRITON V-10
FUEL: 55 GAL
EXT LENGTH: 32' 5"
EXT WIDTH: 8' 4"
INT HEIGHT: 7'
EXT HEIGHT: 11' 6"

WHEELBASE: 223"
FRESHWATER CAP: 32 GAL
BLACK-WATER CAP: 32 GAL
GRAY-WATER CAP: 40 GAL
LP-GAS CAP: 13.2 GAL
GVWR: 14,500 LBS
BASE MSRP: \$85,654

JAYCO

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The living area consists of a two-person, belted J-steel sofa bed and a compact four-person dinette (also belted). Both the sofa and part of the galley are housed in a 98-inch streetside slide.

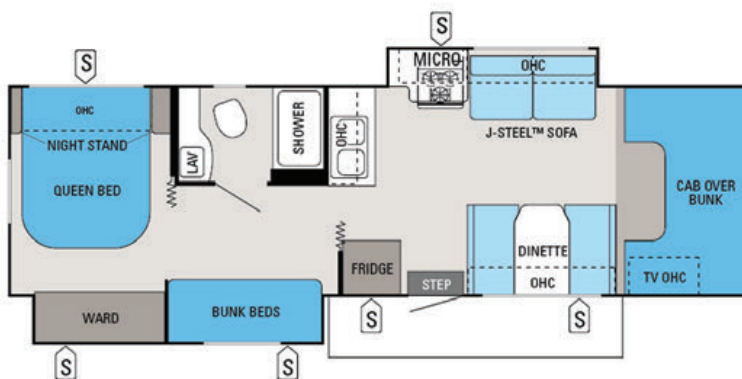
Interior entertainment is provided by a 32-inch LED TV, which is offered as part of that Customer Value Package. However, the location of the TV — combined with a less-than-desirable swing mount — made for some interesting TV-yoga to view from the inside position on the dinette. First order of business would be a larger (longer) swing-arm mount that allowed for some swivel as well.

The cabover sleeping area was comfy enough and rated for 750 pounds, which is way more capacity than an area so tricky to access without a ladder needs. This area has teenager/young adult written all over it — provided said youth is OK with the lack of a curtain, and therefore privacy, afforded by the perch.

The galley features the standard three-burner range, oven and microwave, but food-prep space is near non-existent. With sleeping accommodations for so many people, I expected more usable space but, luckily, our simple RV menu is usually heavy on outdoor grilling anyway. With the lack of counter space in this floorplan, expect yours to be, too. I'm also not a fan of the plastic sink and faucet in the galley, but they do work as advertised.

The 8-cubic-foot double-door refrigerator/freezer is just the right size for extended weekend stays, and should have no trouble handling groceries for large families. Non-perishables can be stored in a handy pantry located just past the kitchen in the hall area.

Also located in the hall area is the bunk house, which



brings the motorhome up a serious notch in terms of livability. Each 72-inch-long bunk features a light for reading, and integrated curtains mean the little ones will have the privacy that the cabover sleepers lack. Plus, the location of the pantry makes midnight snacks a breeze! The whole area can be cordoned off from the living area up front and the master in the rear via accordion-type doors.



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The streetside bathroom is just spacious enough to get things done. The foot-flush toilet is positioned at an angle for additional space, and though there is no medicine cabinet, an open-shelf arrangement behind the potty is a good place for toiletries. The shower curtain is vinyl with a rigid-type frame, which helps keep it away from soapy skin.

The master bedroom is dominated by a wonderfully roomy wardrobe/drawer piece, which can easily hold all the vacation clothes with room to spare. The unit is part of the massive 138-inch curbside slideout, which begins at the bunk area and ends near the rear of the motorhome. The upper cabinet is wired for a TV should you need more viewing options, though its height means you would need to purchase a quality, wide-viewing-angle TV.

The queen bed was rather comfy, enough so that I can easily imagine sleeping in it for more than a few nights without any side effects. At each side of the bed, Jayco has put a night "surface" (I refuse to call them nightstands due to their abbreviated size) that becomes incredibly useful as an electronics charging station, with an outlet immediately beneath each one.

Overall, it's clear that Jayco has drawn heavily on its near half-century of experience in anticipating which appointments buyers at this price point want and incorporated them as standard (the included Onan 4,000-watt genset is a prime example). Rounding out that "mandatory option" (another industry buzzword) Customer Value Package are a 400-watt power inverter, back-up camera and monitor, power awning, black-tank flush and holding-tank heating pads. It's true that some concessions must be made to fit it all in (I'm looking at the sinks, fixtures and the countertops, specifically), but a large family should rarely be found wanting when spending time in the Redhawk 31XL.

Our thanks to Crestview RV (512-282-3516, www.crestviewrv.com) in Buda, Texas, for its help with this review. ♦



Kristopher Bunker, the former editor of *Trailer Life* magazine, has been RVing for more than a decade and is currently a freelance writer and stay-at-home dad.

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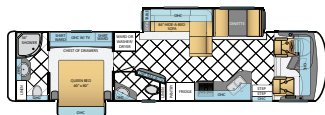
Newmar Canyon Star 3610



MSRP \$159,837

Your Price
\$129,670
Savings \$30,167

Ford F-53 Chassis, 5.5K watt Onan generator, Flexsteel furniture, stainless steel accents.



Newmar Ventana 3433



MSRP \$215,693

Your Price
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Savings \$45,698

400HP ISL Cummins Diesel, Comfort Drive steering, 8K Watt Onan generator.



*All Units Are 2013 Unless Otherwise Noted.

Newmar Dutch Star 4344



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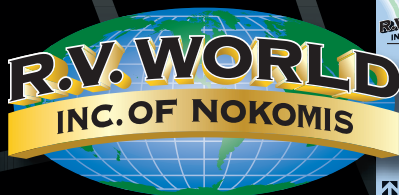
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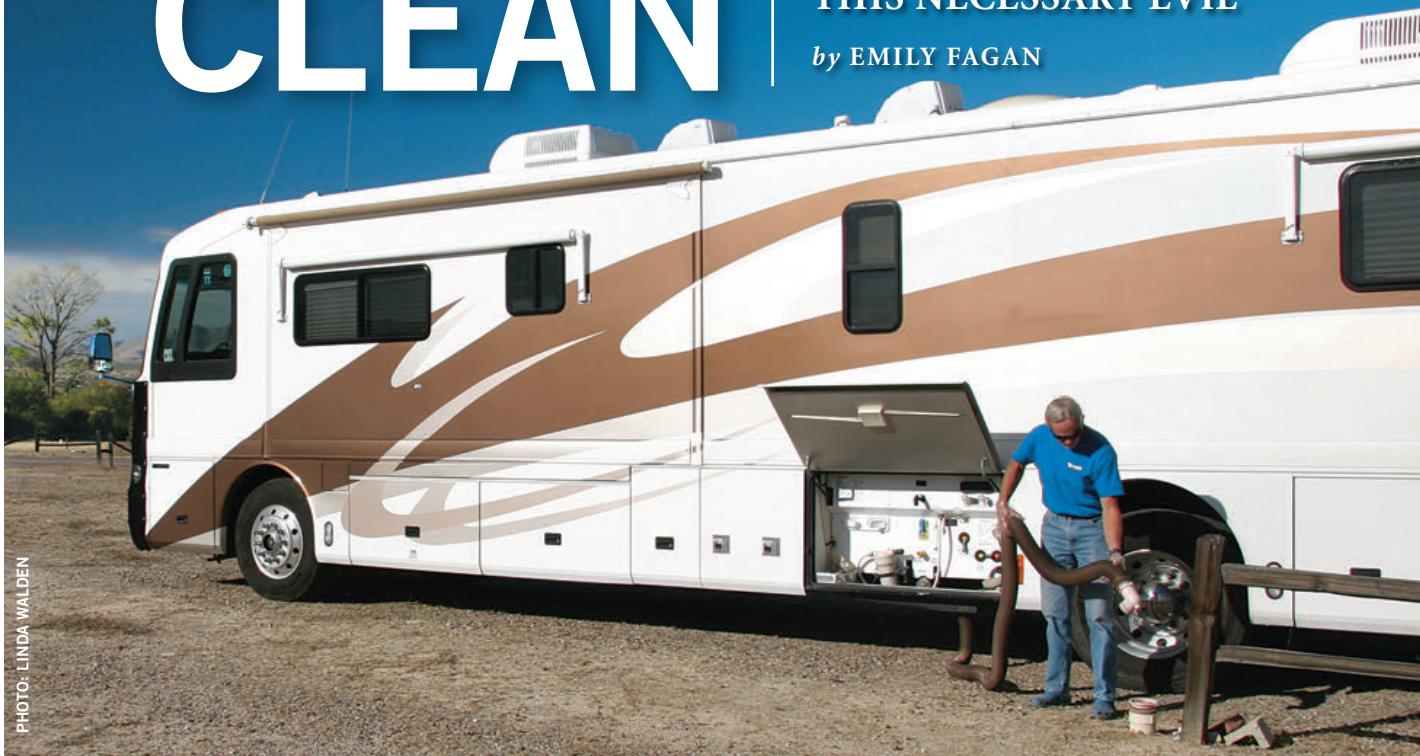
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by EMILY FAGAN

PHOTO: LINDA WALDEN



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

WASTEWATER TANKS

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



PHOTOS: MARK AND EMILY FAGAN

How's this for a scenic dump station? This one at Deer Creek State Park in Utah has the prettiest view we've seen!

that keeping the gray valve closed until the tank is almost full allows for better evacuation. This debate will probably go on forever.

When the black tank is full, open the valve to empty the tank, and then close it again. This technique ensures that there is always plenty of liquid in the black tank so the solids

don't build up and aggravate the risk of clogging. Never leave the black-tank valve open while hooked up.

If you're dry camping and don't have sewer hookups, you will need to dump the tanks at an RV dump station after you leave. RV dumps can be found at Forest Service campgrounds, state and regional campgrounds, Na-

tional Park campgrounds, rest areas on the interstates and at many truck stops and gas stations. You can check out site locations at www.sanidumps.com.

The words “holding tank” make it sound like these tanks are big cube-shaped boxes. However, many are wide, flat and not very tall. Each tank may span the width of the motorhome and sit between two joists under the flooring. This shape has several implications. If the coach is off level away from the RV dump station, as is often the case, it will be difficult for the tank to drain. Putting a few leveling boards under the tires on the passenger side to tip the rig toward the RV dump station helps a lot.

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

WHAT CAN GO INTO A WASTEWATER TANK?

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

the source of a lot of other gooey food-service-related stuff. At home, it's easy to run the water a little longer and scrape old food remnants into the disposal or down the drain. In an RV, it's best to wipe the dishes and pots and pans before washing in the sink. I know this means using paper towels or a used dinner napkin, which is not so green, but those little broccoli bits soon become a smelly sludge in the gray tank. Also, refrain from pouring oil from foods down the drain. We put an RV-specific cleaner/conditioner in our RV's gray tank every other time we dump and have never had an odor problem.

Obviously, feminine products can't go into an RV black tank, but toilet paper is another consideration. It's best to use single-ply paper for easy breakdown in an RV holding tank, and specialty toilet paper sold in RV supply stores is designed to break down easily. If the tank does get a clog, the age-old remedy is to put a bag of ice cubes down the toilet and drive around to jiggle the clog loose. An easier alternative is to fill the tank with water, add a quart of an enzyme/bacteria-based holding-tank product and let it stand for 24 hours before dumping.

RV DUMP STATION PROCEDURES

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

We attach a clear plastic elbow to the sewer hose so we can observe the contents being flushed. If you have a black-tank



Always wear rubber gloves when handling dump hoses and emptying holding tanks.



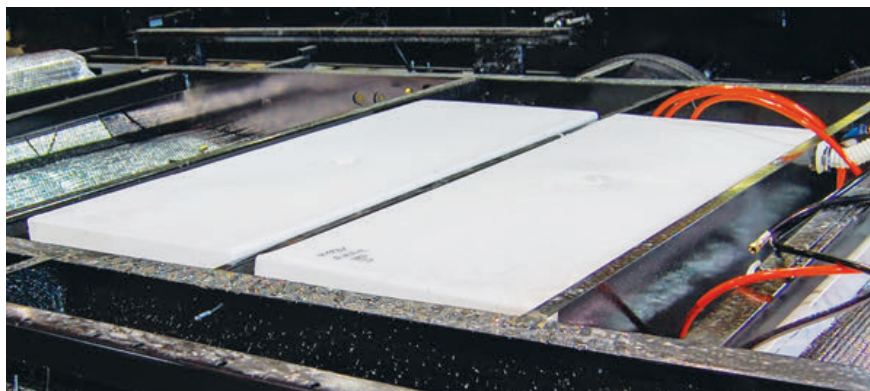
Sewer hose is attached to the motorhome in preparation for emptying the tanks at a dump station.



A clear plastic elbow is attached to the pipe to which a sewer hose can be connected so the user can see what is being flushed.

PHOTO: JENN GEHR

PHOTO: JENN GEHR

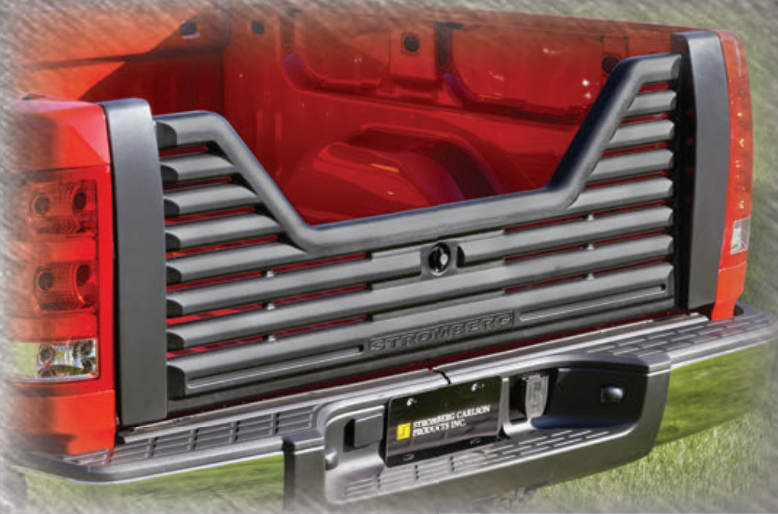


Typical installation of holding tanks in the chassis of an RV.



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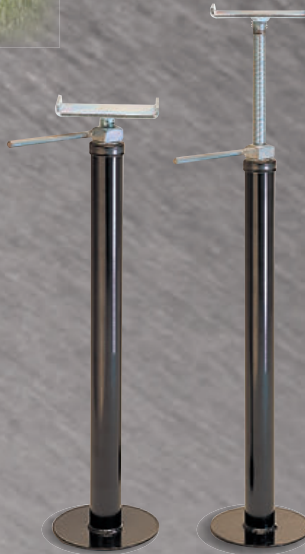
19"L x 14"W;
folds to 2 3/4" H

▲ Aluminum Folding Step



▲ Black Bunk
Ladder

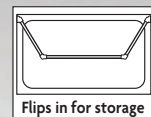
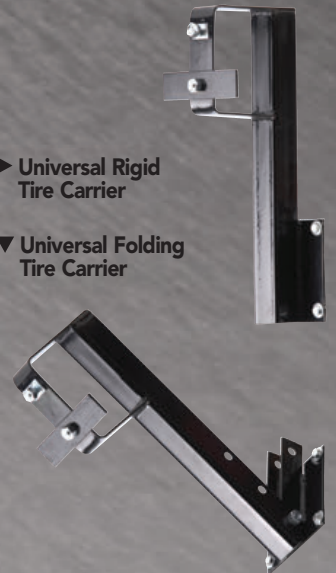
◀ Outdoor
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Ladder



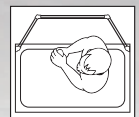
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freshwater flush system, keep it running the whole time it's being emptied to flush the sides and floor of the tank as much as possible. Flush systems aren't perfect, however, and after draining the black tank, there may still be solids stuck to the bottom of the tank, especially below the toilet. Nevertheless, consider installing a black-tank flush system if your rig doesn't have one of these devices.

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

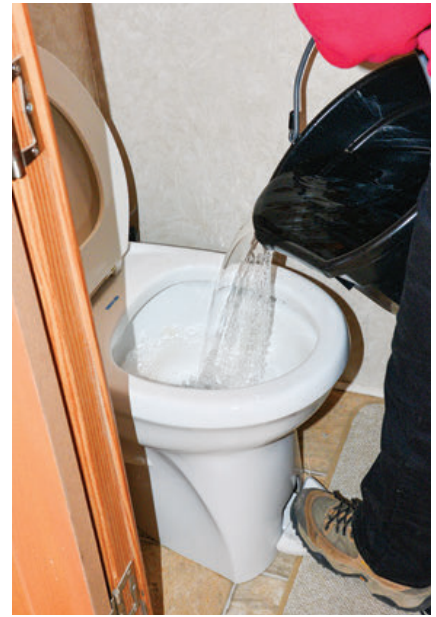
Open the gray-tank valve next (make sure the black valve is closed). The soapy water from the gray tank washes out the inside of the sewer hose. Once the gray tank is empty, rinse the sewer hose and fittings with freshwater before putting it away. If you're doing this at a campsite, spray the freshwater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

OTHER MAINTENANCE PROCEDURES

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



To ensure that all solids below the toilet are dislodged, direct fast-running water into the black tank via the toilet.



If the use of a hose is not practical, pour two buckets of water down the toilet, holding the flush valve open.



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

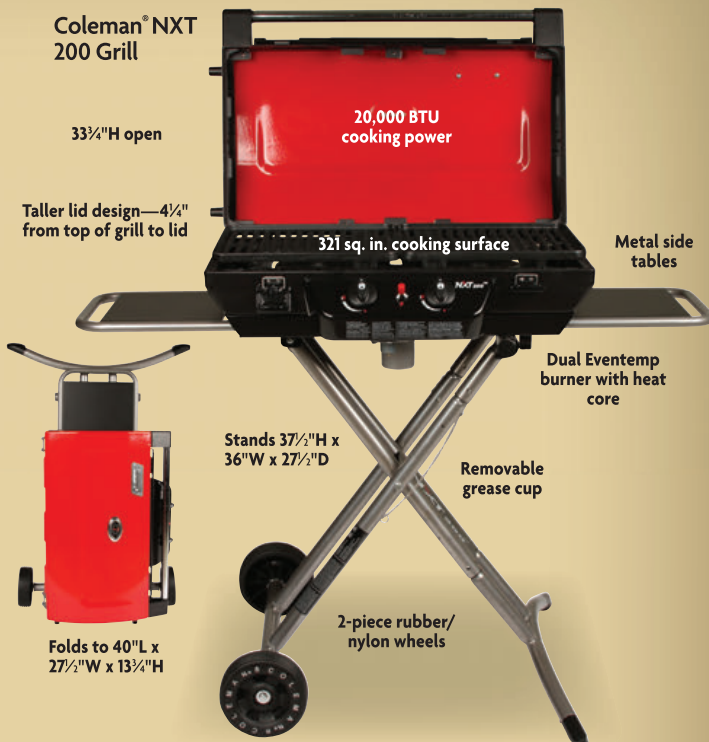


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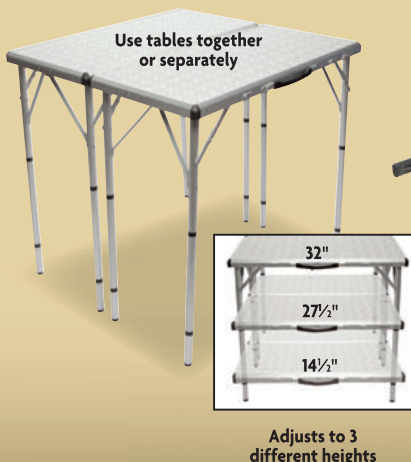
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pure silicone spray product. If the dump-valve handles are attached to cables, periodically lubricate the cables with silicone spray to keep them sliding smoothly inside the housing.

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

Up on the roof, check the plumbing vents every few months. These usually have a mushroom-style cover. Just make sure they are clear of debris and that no birds or bugs have set up housekeeping inside.

Periodically check the fittings in the sewer pipes below the sink and shower drains. These can wiggle loose while un-

derway, so make sure they are tight. If any plumbing pipes develop a crack and begin to leak, JB Weld is a great two-part mix product (similar to a two-part epoxy but with a seal filler and a hardener) to fix the crack. We repaired a leaky weld on a hot-water tank with JB Weld and the repair has worked flawlessly for years.

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

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



Periodically clean and lubricate the holding-tank valve handles and cables to keep them operating smoothly.



Use a coat hanger or other thin metal object with a smooth end to clean the inside groove of the toilet valve seal.

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 **EQUAL HOUSING LENDER**



An old toothbrush is a great tool for scrubbing the vanity sink stopper.

Sometimes the groove that the toilet seal fits into develops a buildup of mineral deposits (in areas where there is hard water) or becomes clogged with paper and other solids that get lodged inside. Use a coat hanger or other thin metal object (file off any rough edges) to clean out the groove and then lubricate it with plumber's silicone grease. If the toilet is not holding water after flushing, the seal will likely need to be replaced if cleaning doesn't fix the problem.



Tape an old toothbrush to a long stick (we use a tent stake) to scrub deep down inside the vanity sink drain.

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

and/or a holding-tank cleaning product.

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

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



Emily Fagan and her husband, Mark, have chronicled their full-time travels online since 2007, sharing lively stories and beautiful photography at <http://roadslesstraveled.us>



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TANKS A LOT



BLACK AND WHITE FACTS ABOUT BLACK AND GRAY TANK CARE

by BILL AND JENN GEHR

Underneath the polished exterior of a modern-day motorhome is a not-so-pleasant, but crucially important, system: the wastewater holding tanks and network of pipes, fittings and valves. Fully understanding how these systems operate, the necessary clues that indicate a potential problem and exactly what to do when things go awry, are key elements to happy travel.

Typically RVs have one “black” tank for solid and liquid waste and one to two “gray-water” tanks that hold shower, bath and kitchen sink water. Fortunately, getting rid of wastewater and keeping the tanks clean is not very complicated.

It is important to start with a high-quality sewer hose — for example, the Valterra Dominator or the Camco Rhino. Both hoses utilize well-made, preattached swivel fittings that help prevent common equipment failures that lead to unneces-

sary accidents — and messes — when dumping the holding tanks. Their unique design allows the hoses to hold their shape until stretched to the maximum length and shape you need to reach the dumpsite.

These hoses come equipped with a 90-degree adapter that will fit just about any campground dump station. Five- and 10-foot hose extensions are available for both models and are well worth having; moving your motorhome because the standard hose is a foot short is inconvenient.

In addition to wearing disposable gloves when handling a sewer hose and dumping the waste tanks, use of a hand sanitizer or an antibacterial soap after the process is highly recommended. Add a holding-tank chemical after the contents are emptied and the tanks have been flushed.

Formaldehyde-based chemicals assist in eliminating odors, and enzyme-type

treatments use bacteria to break down the waste. Both types of chemical will help break down solids. Enzyme-type chemicals may not be suitable for short camping trips since the enzymes take some time to do their job completely.

Use toilet paper conservatively. RV toilets “quick flush” and don’t use water from a reservoir like a residential toilet. It’s a delicate balance between conserving paper and using enough water to prevent clogging. Always keep baby wipes and personal, hygienic objects out of the holding tank.

Properly flushing the black tank will extend the life of the dump valve and ensure that the tank probes register as accu-



High-quality sewer hoses with permanently attached fittings help eliminate spills.



The variety of versatile sewer hose fittings on the market today will take the guesswork out of dumping motorhome tanks.

rately as possible. Flushing the black tank will not only prevent odor and buildup problems down the road, but helps keep the dump valve working properly. Holding-tank flushing devices can be permanently installed in the side or end of most black tanks and are highly recommended. Without a thorough, regular flush, unwanted residue will build up over a period of time and create dumping problems.

As highlighted in the main text, gray-water tank care is important when the coach is in use, but also when it isn't. Use Thetford's Storage Deodorant while storing your motorhome for long periods of time — this product removes odors, lubricates seals and is compatible for use with winterizing procedures.

When possible, empty the tanks before traveling. Full tanks, for example, are



Never use a freshwater supply hose to flush holding tanks. An old garden hose or a designated flush hose should be used for safety reasons.



Holding-tank chemicals are formulated to help ensure optimum performance when cleaning and maintaining gray and black tanks.



extra heavy and can cause the tanks to dislodge from their brackets.

Many types of emergency repairs can be done during a long-term vacation or weekend outing. Most RV holding tanks are made of polyethylene. Cracks from stress, damage from road hazards and/or cracking from old age can be repaired with specialized patch kits. Stickenbond (Eternabond No. 60009) or Bri-rus No. IP48 make excellent instant repair kits.

Be aware that materials in these repair kits do not adhere to water or wet holding-tank surfaces. Drying the damaged area with paper towels doesn't always stop the dripping. Even if the tank is empty before making repairs (which it should be), it may be necessary to drive one side of the rig up on blocks to allow the water to collect in the other side of the tank as low spots in holding tanks are quite common.

Using a hairdryer prior to using the patch kit helps, but be sure to keep from heating the tank to the melting point. Clean the surface with alcohol or acetone, or in an emergency, an acetone-based nail polish remover. After the surface has been



A number of devices are available to help flush black tank when dumping. Clockwise from left: RV Quickie Flush mounts in tank and Flexible Tank Wand fills from toilet. Permanent Tornado Rotary Tank Rinsers moves water in tank forcefully. Dual Flush device attaches to dump valve and offers a secondary closure. RV Hydro Flush also mounts to dump valve; both products use garden hose to force clean water into tank.



prepped, the patch can be applied. Once the patch touches the surface you may not be able to remove it, so be sure it's being installed in the correct place.

Keep in mind that these patches are only temporary; permanent repairs on the damaged areas of polyethylene holding tanks are nearly impossible to hold for long periods of time. Consider replacing the tank between trips.

ABS holding tanks can be simply repaired with ABS pipe cement available at any building supply store. Prep the surface with alcohol or acetone and apply multiple coats of the cement. Let each coat dry before attempting to apply another. If the damage is more than just a simple crack, fiberglass mat can be used to bridge the gap. If that's the case, apply a single coat of ABS cement and install the glass mat before it dries. With the glass mat in place, several more layers of ABS cement should be applied.

Replacing waste valves (3-inch for black tanks and 1½-inch or 3-inch for gray tanks) can be fairly easy. All waste valves are held in place with four bolts. Disassembly requires the removal of the bolts, the valve and the seal on each side. All waste valves bolt to the same flange, whether they are electrically actuated, cable-actuated or use an extension rod.

When replacing the valve, install the seal on the small lip of each flange. Sometimes a little bit of contact cement will help keep the seals in place. Do not install

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Electric upgrades, such as this one from Drain Master, eliminate problems associated with cable-operated waste valves.



Replacement waste valves come with seals and bolts. When buying a replacement valve, check the size beforehand.



The complete waste valve is disconnected from termination pipe by removing four bolts. Do not over tighten on reassembly.

the seals in the valve itself; the seals will not seat properly causing a small leak. Install the four bolts and tighten following the specs for each individual valve. Do not over-tighten or the valve may distort and fail to seal completely.

Upon completion, test for water leaks with a few gallons of water and regular food dye. Use a different color for each tank and let the colored solution sit for at least 24 hours. If there is a leak, the specific color water dripping from the ter-

mination valve will pinpoint the culprit.

Cable-actuated waste valves often have problems with the cables themselves. If the cable pulls free from the valve when dumping, this usually means the cable has come loose at the valve. Accessing the valve may be difficult, depending on the under-cover material and how it's fastened. Once the valve is exposed, the cable can be reattached by tightening the Allen set screw.

Cable valves are often installed incorrectly and the cables will bind. These



Seals that came with the valve should be removed and installed on flanges before bolting to pipe.

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A cracked fitting or holding tank can ruin a vacation in a hurry, so it's a good idea to carry some type of holding-tank patch kit.

valves require a 24-inch minimum arc in the cable. If the cable feels like it's binding, simply reroute the cable. This is a good time to also remove the valve body for cleaning and/or lubrication.

Electrically actuated valves can be a vast improvement over cable-actuated valves and have gained popularity in the last several years. Electric valves can easily be installed in place of any type of manual RV dump valve. The only drawback is they need to be mounted almost completely in the vertical position, and quite often, there is not enough clearance

to be able to accomplish this.

Macerator waste pumps have become more popular in the last several years as well. When permanently installed, they are a neat, clean and quick way to evacuate waste tanks. Macerators can pump waste through 100 feet of 1-inch-diameter hose at about 13 gallons per minute. Macerator pumps can be used at home to pump sewage into a clean-out port of any sewer system when a dump station is not available.

Holding-tank heating pads are available for hearty RVers who like to camp in freezing cold weather. Heating pads offer dual-voltage operating systems, 12-volt DC or 120-volt AC, and are thermostatically controlled. These heating pads are designed to stop the contents in a holding tank from freezing and keep the dump valves from icing up. When the dump valves freeze they will not function, and obviously, this can create a serious problem if the holding tanks are full and/or you're trying to dump prior to leaving a campground. In extreme conditions, the frozen contents can actually crack the



Food coloring can be used to determine if a holding tank is leaking.

holding tank or one of the tank fittings. And when thawed, well, a picture is worth a thousand words.

If you are new to RV life, the dumping and cleaning process can be a bit daunting as accidents are always unpleasant. A little knowledge and a few tips will go a long way toward trouble-free wastewater and plumbing system operation. ♦



Bill and Jenn Gehr, along with their two Boston bulldogs, are full-time RV adventurers who enjoy sharing their technical knowledge with fellow RVers.



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When we consider all the comforts of home when we're on the road, we often think about things like a cozy living space, well-equipped kitchen and a roomy bath area. However, there is another unsung hero of motorhome living that often receives very little limelight: that of the humble leveling system. Tucked away in the shadowy recesses underneath the coach, leveling systems help create a foundation that closely approximates a stationary home. Having the jacks deployed takes the burden off the suspension and tires, which in turn reduces bounce and movement in the living areas. In more extreme situations, such as primitive camping, leveling might even be necessary in order for an LP-gas-powered refrigerator to function properly.

Many motorhomes come standard from the

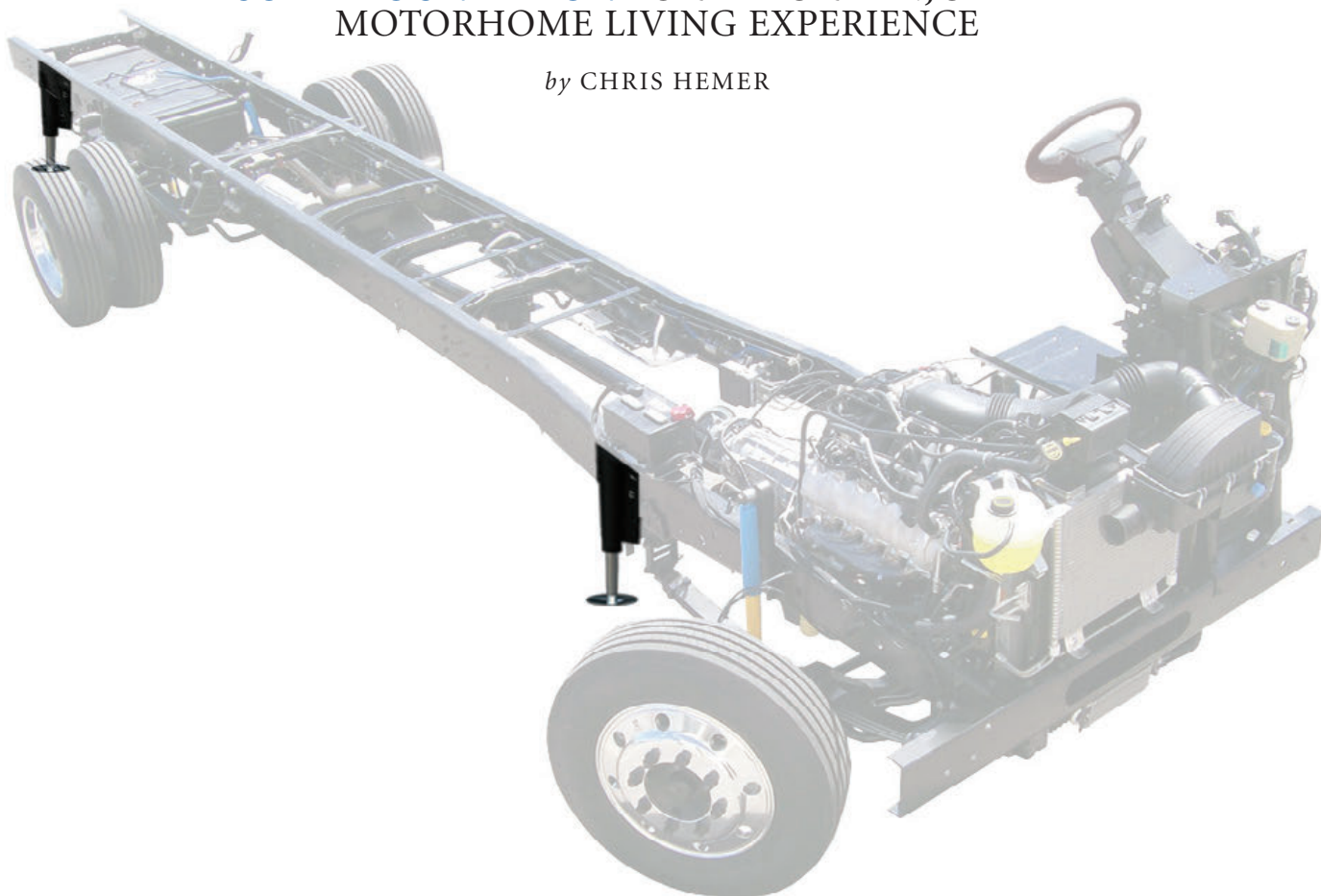
factory with leveling jacks, but if your coach came without jacks, or the current system you have leaves something to be desired, there are a variety of aftermarket solutions available to you, ranging from manual electric systems to fully automatic hydraulic systems. Which you choose depends a lot on the size of the motorhome, its weight, and of course, your budget — but there are other things to take into consideration as well.

Electric leveling systems consist of a gear-driven jack and an electric motor at each leveling point. Installation is pretty straightforward, as the jacks are simply mounted to a suitable lifting point, a power source is attached and you're off to the races. As a result, electric systems are far less expensive to purchase and install than their hydraulic counterparts, which is why they are very

ON THE LEVEL

**LEVELING SYSTEMS PROVIDE A
SOLID FOUNDATION FOR A MORE ENJOYABLE
MOTORHOME LIVING EXPERIENCE**

by CHRIS HEMER



PHOTOS: COURTESY THE MANUFACTURERS

popular. On the down side, electric jacks are noisier (if that matters to you) and typically aren't as adept at heavy lifting as hydraulic systems are.

In a hydraulic system, each jack is a hydraulic cylinder that is fed pressurized oil by one or more hydraulic pumps. These systems are very quiet and powerful, but in addition to electrical considerations, there's all the hydraulic plumbing to con-

tend with — and that can raise installation costs considerably.

While a competent DIY mechanic could theoretically install some systems, hydraulic and/or self- or automatic-leveling systems will likely require a professional's help. To give you an idea of what's out there, we've compiled this handy guide to help keep you and your family on an even keel this coming travel season.

Keep in mind that many of these companies offer similar products and we can't feature all of them in the space we have here — so be sure to visit each company's website for its full range of offerings.

Leveling products may not be as glamorous as a flat-screen TV or electric fireplace, but they can go a long way toward making your motorhome a more comfortable place to spend time.

BIGFOOT/QUADRA MANUFACTURING

It's fairly common to find automatic leveling systems on diesel motorhomes and even on newer, luxury gas models. But if you've got an older gas coach that you'd like to upgrade to full automatic hydraulic leveling, Quadra Manufacturing can help. Shown here is the company's Bigfoot Series fully automatic leveling system for gas Class A motorhomes with features like a manual mode that allows the user to run each jack individually, an "all-up" light that indicates all jacks have been retracted and an emergency retract button. The system includes everything needed for installation, including hydraulic pumps, cylinders, hoses, wiring harnesses, controls and hardware.

Quadra Manufacturing offers leveling systems for diesel pushers, Class 8 (commercial chassis) motorhomes, Chevy/Ford Class C's and even Sprinter-based B and C motorhomes.

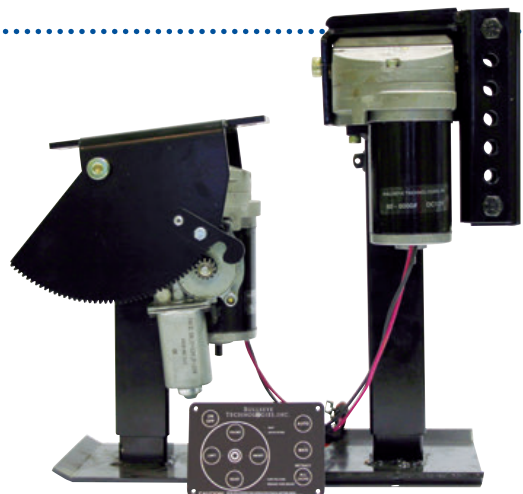
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Bullseye Technologies prides itself in its heavy-duty automatic electro-mechanical (non-hydraulic) leveling systems that can handle coaches weighing up to 60,000 pounds. Bullseye offers models for all types of gas or diesel motorhomes, including Sprinter chassis and specialty vehicles. The Bullseye system is available with straight leveling legs for most applications, as well as rotating legs for applications with low ground clearance — both offer the same lifting and support features. A standard Bullseye system includes four leveling legs, controller, touchpad and wiring harnesses, and is designed to level a coach in about one minute with a touch of a button, according to the company.

Bullseye Technologies Inc., 574-753-0102
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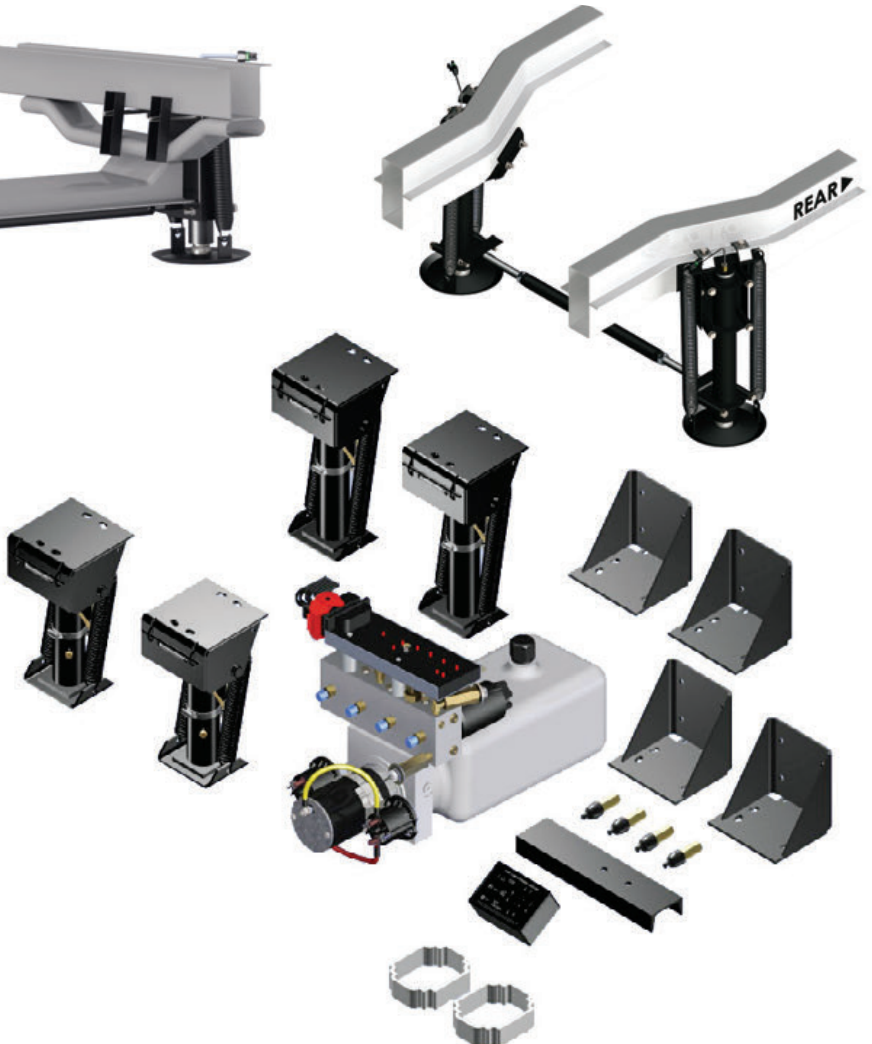
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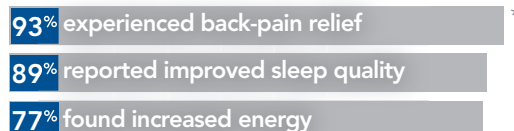
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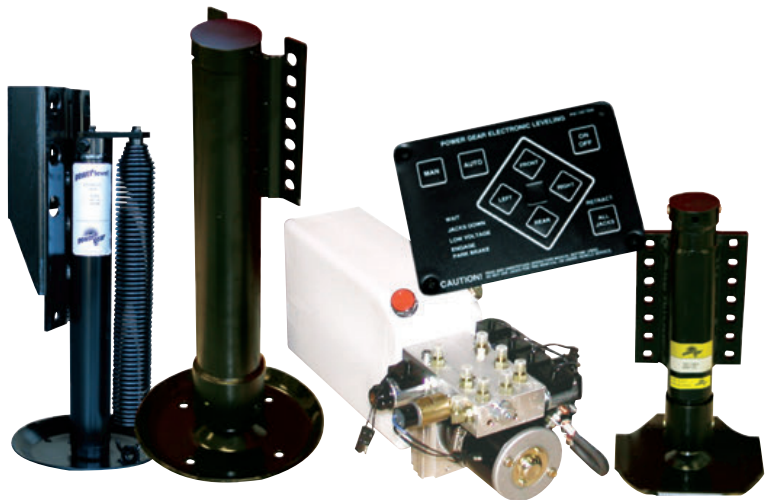
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Lippert Components Inc.
574-535-1125
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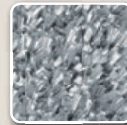


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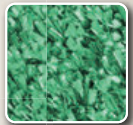
Harvest Gold



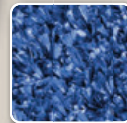
Stone Gray



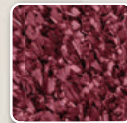
Brown



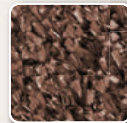
Green



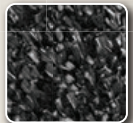
Imperial Blue



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Black

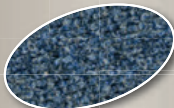
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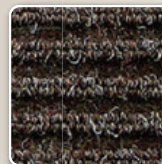


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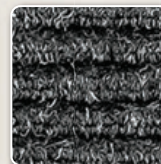


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RS #	ADVERTISERS	PAGE #			
101	3X Chemistry	39	161	RV World of Nokomis	102
102	5 Star Tuning	41	121	RVT.com	20
	Arterra Distribution	110	126	Roadmaster, Inc.	100
105	Blue Ox	91	127	Roadtrek Motorhomes Inc.	9
114	Brake Buddy by Hopkins	21	131	SMI Manufacturing	52
106	Cal-Am Properties	139	129	Safe-T-Plus	42
	Camping World	87-89	130	Sea Eagle	28
	Carpenter	97		Select Comfort	123
	Classifieds	135-137	119	Shurflo	100
	Coach House Inc.	12	132	Source Engineering	35
	Coast Distribution	26	133	Steinbring Motorcoach	55
	Coleman	107		Stromburg	105
162	DISH Network	57	134	Summit Products	44
107	Danko Manufacturing, Inc.	30		Technology Research	108
108	Dave & LJ RV Interiors	13		Teknor	78
	Dometic	46,55,63,83,95,124	136	Thetford Corporation	10-11
	Dometic	66-70		Thetford Corporation	92,121
109	Dupont	35	135	Thor Industries	22
	ETL Oxygenetics	96		TrailerLife TV	128
	Fantastic Vent	56	138	Vogt RV Center	43
110	Fast Master Products	13		Weber	114
104	Fleetwood	61		Westland Sales	64
111	Foretravel	2		Winegard	117
	Freightliner	7	139	Winnebago Industries	19
	Furrion	77		Xylem	65,118
112	Geico	31		Yara, Odorlos	131
	Good Sam Extended Service	50	FREE TRAVEL INFORMATION		
	Good Sam RV Loans	109			
	Good Sam Roadside Assistance	75	140	Alaska and Canada's Yukon	128
	Good Sam Travel Assist	53	141	Alaska Marine Highway System	128
	Goodyear	113	142	Arkansas State Parks	128
	Harbor Freight Tools	47	144	DeGray Resort State Park, Arkansas	128
103	Holiday Rambler	25	145	Florida Keys	128
113	Holland Motor Homes	40	146	Florida State Parks	128
	ITC	62	153	Glacier National Park, Montana	128
115	Innovations Housing	13	143	Hot Springs National Park, Arkansas	128
117	Kibbi Inc.	54	149	Idaho RV Campgrounds	128
118	King Controls	36	148	Idaho Travel Council	128
137	Leisure Travel Vans	29	147	Lake Harris RV Resort, Florida	128
120	Miller Insurance	41	151	Lake Of The Ozarks, Missouri ...	128
	Mobile/Lippert	116	158	North To Alaska	128
122	Newell Coach Corporation	140	154	Ohio State Parks	128
123	Newmar Corporation	5	150	Visit Missouri	128
124	Nexus RV	27	152	Visit Montana	128
116	Nomad Glass	41	156	Wyoming Tourism	128
	Norcold	76	157	Yellowhead Highway, Canada	128
	Prest-o-fit	45,125	155	Yellowstone County, Wyoming ...	128
125	Progressive Insurance	14			
	Protect All	84			
	RDK Nature Power	79			
	RV Designer	115			
	RV Marketplace	132-133			
160	RV One Superstores Inc.	101			
128	RV Roofing Solutions	38			

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



WATER BLOTTER ▲

The countertop around the kitchen faucet in my galley constantly gets wet, and the water runs down the surface and affects other items sitting on the counter. I was tired of the mess, so I bought a cloth chamois. I made a template out of paper, traced the template on the underside of the chamois and then cut it to fit around the faucet. Now, the chamois absorbs most of the moisture, so I don't have to constantly wipe it up. The chamois can easily be removed when it needs to be cleaned.

LINDA HOLLINGSWORTH | RONKONKOMA, N.Y.

A BETTER MOUSETRAP ▼



I'm always looking for ways to keep mice away. I've found that bait stations work the best, but can lead to several problems, including other pets getting into the poison. And setting the trap inside the RV only invited the critters inside.

I bought a Sternalite plastic container from Wal-Mart and drilled a 1½-inch hole into each side using a hole saw. I put the poison in a tray inside the container and then put the entire unit underneath the RV. This not only means pets can't get to the poison, but also allows me to monitor whether the bait is being taken and to refill it when necessary.

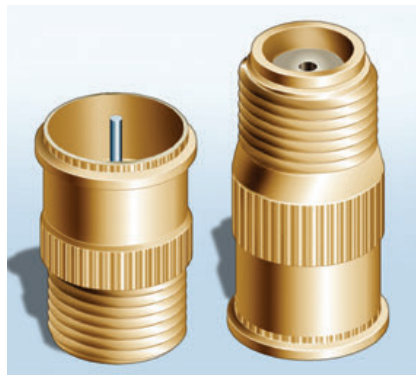
GEORGE BARTHELMES | WELLBORN, FLA.

EASIER CABLE CONNECTORS ►

As I've gotten older, it's more difficult for me to line up and screw in the coaxial cable from the campground into the connection on my RV ... not to mention the sometimes-awkward locations of the cable connections at the campgrounds. Throw in darkness and/or a little rain, and the problem is compounded.

A simple solution is to install two screw-on F connectors, one on each end of the cable. The male end screws on to the coaxial cable and the female end pushes on to the RV and campground connections. Now the connection can be made in less than a minute, with no degradation in picture quality. High-quality connectors are available at electronics stores.

NICK HOVSEPIAN | BANDON, ORE.



DON'T BUG ME

After trying a number of different products designed to keep away mosquitoes with varying degrees of success, a friend told me his trick. He simply plugs in an electric fan near his sitting area. I tried it and it works! I use a 12-inch fan and place it about 5 feet from where I sit, and the mosquitoes are literally blown away.

**LANCE ROBERTSON
OXNARD, CALIF. ♦**

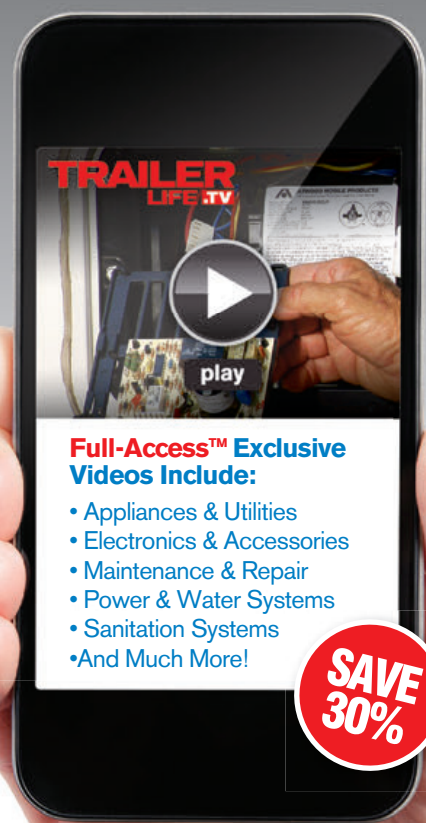
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MUSIC BY BLUETOOTH

Miccus Home RTX transmitter and receiver is a big hit with those wanting to control tunes from a wireless device

Listening to music is a priority in

our RV household. Much of our music collection has been stored on iPods since Apple introduced the very first one. Like most electronic geeks, we've followed proper consumer protocol and upgraded devices as new ones hit the market; currently we're using an iPod Touch. While music can also be stored on laptops, tablets and smartphones, we prefer the iPod Touch since it's convenient to keep in our pocket and the music doesn't mingle with work-related tools.

For years we've plugged our older iPods into the stereo using the standard audio cable with 1/8-inch plugs on each end. But to change music someone had to leave the chair or bedroom and physically push or swipe buttons. This was especially inconvenient when sitting outside listening to music through exterior-mounted speakers — something many manufacturers are offering as a standard or optional feature. Bluetooth technology has come to the rescue and we found the Miccus Home RTX Music Transmitter and Receiver to be a valuable addition to our stereo system.

Unlike most of the common Bluetooth devices on the market, where 20-30 feet is the maximum operational



Above: Ancillary components to power the Miccus receiver/transceiver and hook up to the stereo are included in the kit. Below: Unit is placed inside a cabinet next to the stereo and connected via a 1/8-inch auxiliary port.



range, the Miccus unit is said to operate up to distances of 150 feet. The literature is a little confusing because the specifications show the maximum receiving range at 45 feet, which contradicts the adjacent "sell copy." It's really a moot point since that's more than enough capability in a campground environment.

The device uses a 3 3/8-inch dipole antenna, which is undoubtedly the key to the extended range; most others on the

market use a tiny internal antenna. We were originally attracted to the antenna feature because logically the receiver should do a better job of communicating with the iPod when sitting outside and trying to send signals through walls and

CONTINUED ON PAGE 137

Connections in back of base unit are clearly marked; antenna screws in to center terminal and rotates freely. Base unit is small enough to fit in a hand.



Condensation and Charging Problems

My 2005 Holiday Rambler Vacationer has a Vortec V-8 and two Dometic DuoTherm heat pumps. One problem I have is when the air-conditioning function is running, I get condensation on the plastic housing on the inside of the motorhome and it drips on the floor. My other issue is with the chassis batteries; they don't charge when plugged into AC power. I normally plug in a Battery Tender to keep the batteries charged. Is there a way to have my inverter charge the chassis batteries at the same time it keeps the house batteries charged?

JACK ARRISON | FAYETTEVILLE, PA.

Moisture from the evaporator should be routed into a V-channel that may have become blocked from dirt and debris. Try cleaning that first. It's also possible that, over time, the weight of the air conditioner has caused the roof at the opening to sag a bit. Moisture can then collect in this area, and if the gasket is not seated correctly or worn out, water will make its way into the coach. Normally, there's discoloration around the air conditioner ceiling assembly, and of course, water on the floor as you've experienced. If repair is necessary, make sure you use a black neoprene foam gasket; it's a few more dollars but much better than the white universal gaskets that are on the market. Also, be sure to check the evaporator, as it could also be plugged with dirt.

Regarding your charging problem, many motorhomes don't have a way of charging the engine-starting battery other than from the engine's alternator, which only charges when the engine is running. That's because the starting batteries are normally isolated from the coach batteries to prevent them from going flat when dry camping. You can rewire the system so all the batteries are charged through the inverter/charger, but you'll need to use a switch

to disconnect the starting batteries when camping without hookups, unless you want to run the generator for a specific time or choose to install adequate solar panels.

Better yet, you can use a Sure Power Battery Separator. It allows all the batteries to charge at the same time and disconnects the starting batteries when voltage reaches the minimum threshold needed to start the engine.

Another option for those who don't have the ability to use a maintenance charger like the one you have is a product called TRIK-L-START. It allows the starting batteries to be trickle-charged (maintained) by pulling current from the coach batteries. Another product by the same company — AMP-L-START — provides a higher charging rate. LSL Products, 877-257-4655, www.lslproducts.net

OWNER'S MANUAL WANTED

I just purchased a 1987 Travelmaster 24-foot Class C. Travelmaster is no longer in business. Is there somewhere I can obtain a copy of the owner's manual? It would be nice to have the

specifications of the vehicle, like the capacities of each of the holding tanks. **SAM CRABTREE | ANTIOCH, CALIF.**

This is a perennial favorite request. Finding manuals for models from companies that are out of business is difficult. You could Google classified ads of people selling similar coaches, ask them to copy their manuals and offer some sort of payment.

Without the availability of specifications, here's a simple way to determine tank capacity: Fully drain the tank and measure the amount of water it takes to fill it. Time how long it takes to fill a 5-gallon bucket with a garden hose. Divide by five and you have the number of seconds it takes per gallon. Time how long it takes to fill the tank, divide that number by how long it took to fill 1 gallon, and you've got your tank capacity.

If you can access the tanks and they are not odd shapes, you can multiply length times width times height in inches. Then divide that number by 231 and you'll have the gallon capacity.

If you want an appliance manual, make a list of all your appliances with model numbers and Google them one at a time, then you should be able to download manuals from the Internet.

FUEL-FILLING FIASCO

I hope you can help us with a problem we have with our 2008 Winnebago 34-foot Voyage Class A, which was discontinued in 2008. Until last month it has been fine, but on our trip home from Florida, we were not able to put the gas-pump fuel handle into our filler neck. It seems that with the new vapor-lock handle that has a hump on it, it bumps up against our side wall and will not allow me to put the nozzle far enough into the filler neck that it sets down in. We could not get gas in the Carolinas or Virginia fuel stations off Interstate 95. We were riding on fumes until we found an old station that did not have the new handles. We contacted Winnebago, but it could not help. Please help us so we can resume RVing!

LINDA TEEL | BURLINGTON, N.J.

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I checked with a technical contact at Winnebago and was told that the company has not received inquiries regarding hard filling or "can't-fill" problems with fuel tanks on this model coach. In New Jersey, where you live, the law requires that all gasoline be dispensed by an attendant, and I'm thinking that your lack of familiarity with handling gasoline pumps may be a contributing factor in this. The newer vapor-recovery hoses typically have a large bellows on the end that is supposed to seal off the tank opening. The bellows must be pulled back all the way or the pump won't work. Sometimes the shape of the fuel filler makes it difficult or impossible to press the bellows back fully.

You might be able to fabricate a different filler neck with help from Filler Neck Supply, 855-845-1936, www.fillernecksupply.com. Another way to go is to use a special funnel. There's one type designed for the job that is readily available from Ford and other suppliers; I've seen many on eBay: Ford No. 8U5Z17B068B Accessory Fuel Filler Funnel.

FIBERGLASS ROOF COATING

I have a 2008 Forest River Georgetown model 373 on a Ford chassis. Recently I have noticed that the fiberglass roof is starting to show cracks along the edges where it is connected to the trim. Camping World in Virginia recently repaired one section that was not looking good. I was afraid that I may have a leak, so Camping World used the self-leveling caulk to repair the area of concern. They also said that I had a trim issue where the fiberglass roof and the trim are joined. I notified Forest River of this. I cover the coach every year in late October and uncover it in late March. I see that Dicor has a product for fiberglass roofs. What is your opinion of this product? Should I apply it to the roof?

LARRY BEYLOR | VIA EMAIL

If applied correctly, a sealer will usually do the job, but it can be messy and requires annual inspection and possible reapplication. In many cases, when the roof is generally in good shape but there are areas where there may be a breach, consider using Eternabond tape (www.eternabond.com). This is a very strong tape sealer and will usually last the life of the roof.

Clean up the areas where the transition seams (in your case as described above) are in question and simply apply the tape. It's not a difficult process, but the tape is super sticky, meaning you won't get a second chance to position it once it's in place. Take your time.

WATER HEATER PROBLEM

I have an Atwood GC10A-4E water heater combination electric and gas powered. It seems to heat the water adequately, but my concern is that once the water has been heated to the correct temperature the gas burner will go into an on-and-off routine (in other words, it runs for two seconds and then off for two seconds, etc.). When I turn off the gas switch and turn on the electric only, the water heater is constantly making a clicking sound. I have tried contacting Atwood with this same question but got no response. Is this a problem, and if so what is the remedy?

GREG HARTSELL | VIA EMAIL

It seems like something in the control circuit is malfunctioning. The problem may be caused by the thermostat and/or ECO that may be mounted improperly, or corrosion might be creating a poor contact with the tank. Check for power at the circuit board to see if it goes on and off. If the problem still occurs, but there is power to the board, the board may be faulty.

HOT-OIL SMELL COMMENT

Reading the "Hot-Oil Smell" letter in the May issue made me think of my first trip with my Tiffin Allegro Red with the Cummins diesel using diesel exhaust fluid (DEF). After the first 300-mile trip, I noticed the hot-oil smell in my dolly-towed Nissan Altima. I was very concerned with the odor I smelled. I raised the car and did a thorough inspection, finding no problems. The car drove fine and the odor went away. The next trip resulted in the same odor.

I think the odor comes from the DEF and the diesel exhaust. I found your suggestion of placing the HVAC system in the recirculate position before shutting off the towed vehicle motor to be most helpful. I still get a little odor, but I think it comes from the smell of the DEF and exhaust depositing on the radiator and under-hood

areas of the car. Closing the vent eliminated 95 percent of the odor and the remainder goes away in the first 10 minutes of operating of the car.

STEVE HORAN | GRAYSON, GA.

Unused DEF may have a slightly pungent odor similar to that of ammonia. However, I have not heard of any complaints that it adds odor to the exhaust stream, as it's consumed in the emission control system. Make sure the ignition key is in the proper position so the ventilation controls are in-operative each time you tow.

The source of the odor is more likely from the engine; either crankcase ventilation fumes, diesel fumes, or the smell from an oil leak getting onto hot parts. Since this problem can have a number of causes, it's essential to check it out promptly and thoroughly, as an oil leak could cause a major mechanical failure as well as a fire.

HOT RUNNING HOLIDAY RAMBLER TIP

I had a similar problem as Darryl Clevenger ("Hot Running Holiday Rambler," May) with engine overheating on our 2007 Cummins engine, and the problem was the Horton fan clutch. I monitor the engine temperature carefully. Our fan clutch locks up at 210 degrees and you can hear it. I replaced the clutch (\$900) and solved the problem (normal running temp is 194 degrees). Horton has come out with a fix to its fan clutch that puts a printed circuit board between the engine wiring and replaces the fan reader (usually more than \$300). You also need to replace the fan bolts with black bolts so that the fan reader can better detect the bolts.

ED BURROWS | AGOURA HILLS, CALIF.

In the May issue I noted that a non-working fan was a likely cause. These parts are expensive, and therefore it's important to properly diagnose the problem before changing anything. Horton maintains a call center; the number is 800-621-1320.

ODOMETER NOT WORKING

I have a 1995 Fleetwood Pace Arrow Coronado with a Chevrolet 454 engine. My problem is the odometer has switched to reading NO PRGM and does not display mileage. I'm at a loss as to why this would

happen. The speedometer works fine, just the odometer is not working. Could it be a fuse I'm not aware of? If so, where is it located? Any help in this matter would be appreciated not only for knowing when to have oil/lube changes, but mpg figures.

MICHAEL J. ERBRECHT | NEENAH, WISC.

Since the instrumentation indicates speed correctly, the speedometer assembly is getting the proper road speed signal. Therefore, the problem lies inside the gauge unit. It needs to come out for repair. You can Google "speedometer repair" to locate a local shop that will remove it for repair. If you have no luck, check out Southern Electronics Inc., 800-446-2880, www.instrumentclusters.com. It can repair these units, which is less costly than replacing the gauge. The odometer reading will not have to be corrected.

MARKS ON TILE

We own a 2012 Tiffin Phaeton 42LH motorhome, which we really enjoy. We have high-gloss ceramic tile throughout the coach. The problem that I am having is the marks left on the tiles from the slideouts. Is there anything that can be used to cover up these marks? I realize that eventually some of these tiles will have to be replaced. We did have the slideouts checked, however, they still leave marks.

LINDA ESOLA | VALPARAISO, IND.

A screw or molding may have come loose from the slideout. Check for something that's out of place between the slideout and floor. It's also possible that a piece of debris (small pebble tracked in from outside, etc.) may be lodged between the slideout and floor. Have your dealer check alignment of the slideout mechanism and make adjustments if necessary.

Once you get the slideout mechanism adjusted properly, try removing the marks with tile cleaner and elbow grease. You can also try using fine wet and dry sandpaper and water to remove the marks. It's available from auto body supply shops and hardware stores. Start with a coarser grit such as 120, and work your way to finer grits such as 400 or finer. Work on a small area that's out of sight first to make sure the process is working without adverse results.

LEANING SUN VOYAGER TIP

This is in regard to the "Leaning Sun Voyager" letter in May. I would like to pass along my adventures with my 2000 Fleetwood Southwind in reference to leaning.

I bought my motorhome used, and I do much of my own work. One day, I noticed the coach was leaning to the left. I got my ruler out and it appeared to be 2 inches lower on the left than the right. I found out from talking to the friendly folks at Fleetwood technical that there can be as much as a 1-inch variance side to side and be in factory tolerance. I took my coach to Josam Products, which is a worldwide truck frame company here in Orlando, Fla., and asked them to align it and check the frame alignment. They could find no reason for the droop either, and told me the frame was as straight as a string.

I put air shocks on the front to try and fix it, but I knew there was something going on because the shocks took 50 PSI on the right and almost 100 PSI on the left to get it close to level (100 PSI is maximum in the shocks).

A mechanic friend of mine, who also has had several motorhomes, told me the front end seemed very loose. He said the steering column jumped around too much. Then, while I was changing spark plugs, my friend showed up and suggested we take a ride while the doghouse was off. We drove around, hitting bumps and he saw that the coach jumped away from the chassis. We both crawled under and found that the pads (steel plates) that attach the floor to the F53 Ford chassis were broken at the weld, which with a cursory inspection could not be seen. I brought it to a welder and we jacked the chassis up to level and he re-welded the mounting pads.

We have put more than 10,000 miles on the motorhome since then and it's still within ¼-inch of level.

**RON AND KATHY GRAEF
KISSIMMEE, FLA.**

Thanks for writing; I'm sure there are other motorhomes out there with similar problems, which can be readily remedied for a reasonable cost. ♦

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other obstructions. Our stationary home
device starts to lose connectivity when
reaching the range limits, which would
not suffice when sitting outside around
a campfire, for example.

As a receiver, the Miccus Home RTX
worked like a champ. We were parked
in a very large site and communication
between the iPod and stereo was perfect,
even at the outer perimeters of the site.
It was nice to be able to change music
and adjust volume without leaving the
comfort of our favorite patio chair.

Included in the package is an AC/
USB adapter with mini cable, an RCA-
to-1/8-inch (3.5mm) cable and an RCA-
to-RCA cable — everything needed for
hookup to just about any stereo. In our
case, the Miccus device was placed in a
cabinet next to the stereo and plugged
in to the auxiliary port using the 1/8-inch
plug end of the cable. The other end of
the cable with the RCA plugs went into
the RX Audio Out portion of the device;
better stereos will use RCA plugs on
both ends.

The Miccus Home RTX can be paired
to any device that has Bluetooth wireless
capability and this can be done in sec-
onds. Reconnection should be seamless
as long as the devices are within range,
although it might be necessary to reselect
the appropriate device in the Bluetooth
settings, depending on the source.

Sound quality was uncompromised
when using the iPod to transmit music —
or about as good as it can get using the
wall-mounted stereo in the rig we were
testing at the time. Motorhomes fitted
with higher-end electronics and speak-
ers will certainly benefit from the quality
of the Miccus Home RTX. The transmit
mode can be used to send audio from
the stereo to wireless headphones or
Bluetooth-compatible speakers, although
that was not our intended purpose of
the product. If desired, two units can
be used for ultimate versatility.

The Miccus Home RTX has an
MSRP of \$69.99 but we found it online
for \$55. For us, that's a small price to
pay to add convenience and bragging
rights when it comes to playing music
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Danger: Man Working

PLAYING WITH THE ULTIMATE POWER TOOLS IN LAS VEGAS, NEVADA

by ALAN RIDER



Back in the day, when we wanted to share something we thought was really cool, we would often preface it by saying, “Hey, dig this!” Well, on a recent visit to Las Vegas, I discovered a place where those words are much more than just an expression.

The attraction I’m talking about, rather aptly named Dig This (888-344-8447, www.digthisvegas.com), is a heavy-equipment playground designed to allow novices to take control of massive earthmovers. The kinds of machines most of us have only seen from a distance on construction sites.

This adult sandbox is the brainchild of Ed Mumm, who got the idea more than a decade ago when he rented heavy equipment to do some work around his home in Steamboat Springs, Colo. Turned out, Ed had so much fun digging holes and pushing dirt around his property that he thought other folks might enjoy it too.

Having worked out the kinks of the Dig This experience on 20 acres of leased land near his home, Mumm moved the operation to Las Vegas in the spring of 2011. It’s since become one of the city’s most unique experiences, which is no small accomplishment in a place with a worldwide reputation for making all manner of fantasies come true.

Once we’d completed our paperwork and chosen between a Caterpillar D5G bulldozer and a 315CL hydraulic excavator, our small group got an overview of safety procedures and a primer on the control layouts of our respective machines. From there, it was out to the dirt lot next door where the bright-yellow beasts were lined up waiting for us.

After climbing into the excavator’s air-conditioned cab, I donned the two-way radio headset that would allow me to communicate with our instructor, Walt, a veteran heavy-equipment operator blessed with endless patience and a keen sense of humor. Once he had reviewed which of the levers and joysticks did what, Walt stepped back and eased us into simple warm-up exercises, including spinning the cab through its 360 degrees of travel and flexing the excavator’s huge arm and hand-like bucket.

It was at this point the dirt literally began to fly, as I set



PHOTO: COURTESY DIG THIS



about digging a deep trench. As someone who can be directionally challenged at times, we all had a good laugh when Walt told me, “OK now, swing around and dump the

dirt to the right of the hole,” followed immediately by a chuckling correction, “No, your *other* right!”

Next came the heavy-equipment version of walking and chewing gum at the same time. Using the bucket with a pincer-like claw attachment, I picked up 2,000-pound earthmover tires one by one, slowly transported them to the other end of the work area and neatly stacked them up again.

Finally, as the ultimate test of my finesse at the controls, it was time for a quick game of heavy-equipment basketball. After less than an hour in the cab, I can proudly say I was able to use the giant bucket to deftly snatch each of the half-dozen balls off the top of an orange traffic cone and deposit them inside another large tire that served as a basket.

After parking and shutting down my machine, it was hard not to feel like a big kid who had just gotten to play with the coolest new toy on the block. In other words, it was the kind of unforgettable experience I’m convinced can only be found out here along The Road Ahead. ♦

Alan Rider has been wandering the backroads of America for more than four decades. Though he’s never been big on traditional souvenirs, he’s passionate about collecting memories of the remarkable people and unforgettable places he encounters along the way.

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Fig. 1 Saturn



Fig. 3 Asteroid Gaspra



Fig. 5 Mercury

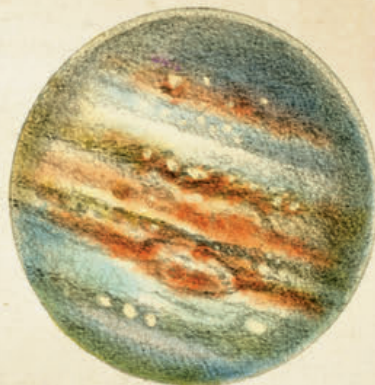


Fig. 7 Jupiter

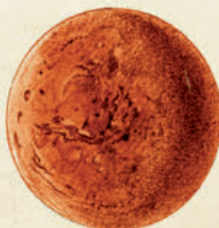


Fig. 6 Mars

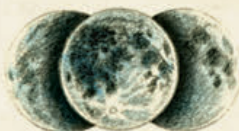


Fig. 4 Phases of the Moon



Fig. 2 Neptune

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