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July 2016

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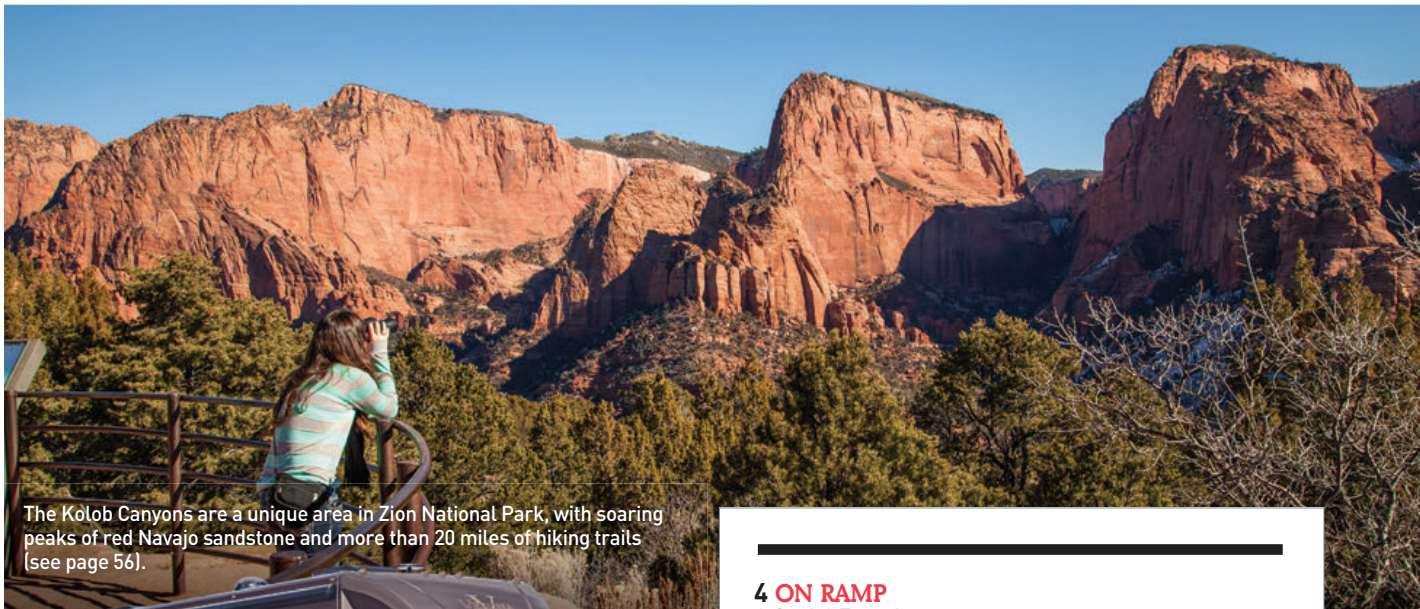
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Photo: Utah Office of Tourism, Matt Morgan



The Kolob Canyons are a unique area in Zion National Park, with soaring peaks of red Navajo sandstone and more than 20 miles of hiking trails (see page 56).



The Renegade Verona VBH is a family-friendly Class C with dual bunks, a sofa bed and a convertible dinette. Pg. 71

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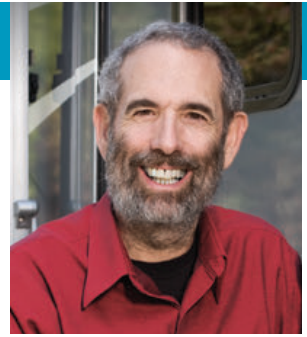
The first installment of our series on motorhomes that stand the test of time showcases a 2003 Beaver Santiam

## ON THE COVER

A drive in the 2017 Leisure Travel Vans Wonder (see test on page 88) through the scenic Rose Valley area of the Los Padres National Forest in Southern California. Photo by Scott Hirko.







By Bob Livingston

## A Social Experience

**H**obnobbing with other enthusiasts in an RV park during special programming presents enormous opportunities to find out what makes motorhome owners tick. People from all walks of life have interesting stories to tell. Most are about travels to favorite destinations, but many focus on the motorhome, family situations and a number of people even share medical issues and recent lifecycle events. It's always inspiring to hear about beating a life-threatening illness or about going it alone after sadly losing a spouse.

When getting to know people in an RV park, expect the unexpected. While it's fun to play the "I wonder" game when meeting new people, I've learned that there are no cookie-cutter stories, and frankly, most of the people we met at a recent RV park gathering kept my wife, Lynne, and I engaged for hours.

Take for example the couple who have been full-timing for 12 years in a Class C motorhome. No doubt, after reading the article on family-friendly Class C's on page 71, you'll see that many of these motorhomes have come a long way in livability, but nevertheless, that's compact living at best. We refrained from the classic comments like, "You live in a Class C and still like each other?" Our inquiries revealed that these new acquaintances, like most, have an obvious zest for life and are really happy. Being unleashed from

regular jobs and a house to maintain, offset by the freedom to explore and experience new adventures, certainly eliminates stress and any signs of older age.

We were intrigued by a lady who has full-timed for 27 years before losing her husband, and the couple who decided to try out the lifestyle for "only a year" and never looked back. Universally, though, everyone we talked to cited the freedom to travel and the ability to experience new places and socialize with other people as top priorities. And the notion that all these people are older and financially set is not completely accurate.

The acceptance of the home office as a viable alternative to a conventional workplace is changing things up. Couples can prosper while on the road and even those with children are finding that exploring new places and

things is a wonderful supplement to traditional schooling. Empty nesters who don't have the funds to stay on the road without tapping into their backup accounts are finding seasonal jobs to defray some of the costs. While some of these jobs end on a less than stellar note, the majority of the positions contribute nicely to life experiences. It seems that working in a lighthouse is one of the more popular jobs, but there are many others in beautiful places that are equally as rewarding.

Boondocking is, of course, another way to stay on the road with lower expenditures, and owners who have mastered the practice of living without hookups are really free-spirited. While there are those who have never strayed from their hippie roots, the people who embrace a primitive RV lifestyle and are financially well-off are the most interesting. We're constantly running into people who want nothing to do with an umbilical cord and are almost slap-happy about living in undeveloped areas.

Whether you're a planner and follow the advice presented on page 33, or just like to roam, spending time with other motorhome owners is like completing a college course in sociology. **M**

### Contributors | July



**Kristopher Bunker**, the former editor of *Trailer Life* magazine, is an avid camper and has been RVing for more than a decade. He is currently a freelance writer living in the central Texas area.



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**Is it more important to buy from a local RV dealer for the sake of convenience, or from one with a better reputation that you feel more comfortable with that is located farther away? And, what has your experience been when working with your RV dealer when a problem arises far from the dealer's location?**

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

### Second Time's the Charm

We don't have a local RV dealer so we purchased our first Class A (new) from a nationally known dealer about 90 miles away. It was a very disappointing experience as there turned out to be numerous issues with the motorhome. The dealer wanted nothing to do with us after we drove away. In fact, they made things worse when we took it back for warranty work.

This time, we purchased our new Class A from a dealer in Minnesota (we live in Georgia), sight unseen. All contact was via telephone, computer, etc. This experience could not have been more positive and made us believers again! Their customer service is fantastic and they allowed us to camp at their dealership until any kinks were worked out and our

questions were answered. They even sent us a gift!

We have found a very reputable RV service center approximately 40 miles away. They do good work, but we have not had to take our new motorhome in for any warranty work so far.

Bottom line: It's not always best to buy local if they don't have a good reputation or do good work. Many people, like us, don't have local dealers so look for the best people possible. We learned our lesson!

**Lee and Marcia Hurd | Athens, Georgia**

### Just Buy What You Want

I'm not so sure that a dealer won't want to service your coach if you didn't buy it there. In the area I live in, most dealerships' sales, parts and service departments are really

three different operations. The service department is happy to work on your rig no matter where you bought it! When I buy my next coach in a few years, I will buy the exact coach that I want, from whichever dealer has it in stock. Finding the coach is challenging enough. Don't worry about which dealer you buy it from.

Although the times I have needed help on the road have been minimal, the local dealers have been very helpful. Again, I think they are just happy that you come to them instead of their competitor.

**Robert Freggiaro | Stockton, California**

### Don't Settle

I was a newbie when I bought my Class A motorhome and the only local dealer had a less-than-stellar

## Featured Letter

### Reputable Service is Essential

Reputation is everything. Your new motorhome is only as good as the dealer servicing it. Unfortunately, from what I have seen with my friends and neighbors who have recently bought new RVs over the past few years, current RV quality control stinks. You will be bringing your new pride and joy back to the dealer several times before all the bugs are worked out. A local dealer that is responsive is obviously the best choice, but if your local dealer has a reputation for poor after-sale service, look elsewhere. One local dealer here needed the Texas DMV to direct them to either fix the problems or refund all monies paid



before they would respond. This process took the owner almost a year to get everything fixed properly, with the RV unusable most of that year.

**Tony Baune | Canyon Lake, Texas**





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reputation. I ended up buying from a dealer located 50 miles away because I thought buying from a national chain would give me an advantage if I needed repairs. Boy, was I wrong. The dealer was superb in getting me the motorhome that fit my requirements at a price point I could afford. However, once the deal was done, I got less-than-stellar support when I needed work done. Even when on the road, I've

found that repair facilities give no preferential treatment to customers who purchased their RVs at that location (or from another facility owned by the parent company), though I'm sure there are some exceptions out there.

Fortunately for me, I discovered a great RV repair facility just a few miles away from my home. They are not in the business of selling RVs, just in repairs, and they do a great

job at a very reasonable price. They will even drive to the RV lot to pick up my motorhome and then drive it back when repairs are done.

My advice is not to "settle," but to buy the RV you want, regardless of how far you have to go to buy it. Hopefully you will be spending a lot more time in your motorhome than at the repair facility, and you would probably regret buying your second option.

**Ed Miller | Niceville, Florida**

**Find the Right Service Center**

Should you buy locally? In December 2012 I bought a Jayco Seneca Super C from a dealer in Detroit, Michigan, nearly six hours from my home. I really had no choice since it was one of the last two units of that model that I could find in the country, and the only one in the style I wanted.

I had a few warranty issues early on and the nearest Jayco dealer, an hour away, told me they didn't like to do warranty work because it didn't pay enough and suggested I take the motorhome back to where I bought it. I received the same response from other dealers as well.

The issues I had were minor — a broken entry handle and electronic door lock, a faulty camera and a few other things. I explained to Jayco that its own dealers refused to work on my motorhome and driving to Detroit for the repairs was unacceptable. The company agreed to send me the parts and let me do the repairs on my own.

When my warranty was nearly up, I had issues with torn awnings over the slideouts. Neither Jayco nor Carefree of Colorado, the awning manufacturer, wanted to take the responsibility for the problem. I contacted Rick's RV Center in Joliet, Illinois (90 minutes away), and its service department convinced Jayco that it was a warranty issue and got the techs to replace the awnings. They also scheduled my appointment so the repairs were done in a week.

I don't know if buying locally is the issue, since you may not find your dream motorhome on the local lot. The key is finding the right service center that will work with you no matter what

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**Randy Springer | McHenry, Illinois**

### Service is at the Dealer's Discretion

In response to the question about choosing a dealer and subsequent service, I don't think I am alone when I say the RV industry needs to get its act together. As far as service, you want to go to a dealer with the best service department. That's not an easy task in New England, where it seems the seasonal nature of the business is not conducive to cultivating experienced service technicians. Unfortunately, if you are shopping for a new motorhome, the dealer with the best service department may not have the best price.

We purchased a new 2015 Thor Class A motorhome in April 2014. In shopping for the coach we found prices in New England to be much higher than the rest of the country. We ended up buying the motorhome from a dealer in the Southwest. The price for the identical coach was \$38,000 less than prices we were quoted in our area. It was worth our while to fly to the dealer and pick up our new motorhome from them.

Like most new motorhomes, we had warranty items that needed attention when we got the coach home (another big problem with Q.C. of manufacturers). We called the one facility in Connecticut that is an authorized dealer and was told by the tech that they would not service the coach because we did not purchase it there. He said the manufacturer's brochure states that this is standard policy.

When I checked, I found that Thor and Forest River brochures do state that service is up to the local dealer's discretion. I find it ironic that the manufacturers promote their extensive service network of dealers when they are selling the coach (as though this should give you peace of mind if you have difficulties when traveling). What good is a service network of dealers across the country if the dealers only service units they sold?

Manufacturers need to mandate

that authorized dealers and service centers perform warranty and repair services regardless of whether you purchased the coach from them. I put a lot of the responsibility on the shoulders of the manufacturer.

By the way, we traded that coach in for a Fleetwood, and, so far, have not encountered the same problem with the motorhome or its dealers.

**Bruce Fitzgerald | Woodbury, Connecticut**

### Shop Where the Price is Right

Buy what you want from the dealer that gives you the best price and worry about repairs later. When we bought, we were living in a larger city with several dealers offering the brand and model we wanted. We ended up purchasing from a dealer in another state and having warranty work done at a dealer close to home. The service department was happy to have our



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business. Within a year of purchase, we started full-timing and had service work done by a variety of service departments; never did we hear a complaint that we didn't purchase from them. I believe this to be a general rule of thumb when purchasing any vehicle; the sales department and service department are two separate entities, they can be totally opposite in their customer service.

**Ken Harris | Fruita, Colorado**

### Hire Great People

I definitely recommend choosing reputation over convenience when seeking service. I have a few local companies that I use for urgent work, but after having a few bad experiences locally on more significant repairs, I began taking our motorhome to a recommended RV shop in Holland, Michigan, which is more than 300 miles from where we live. Before making the trip, I provide Scott Vroon, the service manager at Holland Motor Homes, a list of improvements that we want made, routine maintenance items and any repairs that need to be made. The list makes managing the work easier, and makes the trip more efficient. Scott also sends me pictures as the work progresses. I have been doing this every winter for four years and have been very happy with the results. Motorhomes are complicated machines, and an untrained mechanic can do a lot of damage. Hiring great people ensures quality repairs and minimizes rework.

**Andrew White | Columbus, Ohio**

### The Warranty is the Issue

This issue has puzzled me within the RV industry. I have read that dealers will not complete warranty work on a motorhome if it wasn't purchased from them. I don't understand why manufacturers allow this. If I buy a Ford from dealer A and it needs warranty repairs, dealer B would work on it without an issue regardless of where I purchased it. They get paid by the manufacturer to complete the repairs and if they do the job right, they might be worthy of gaining your future business.

I think that the manufacturer's warranty is the only issue here. If it were a used coach you were buying, you should be able to take it anywhere for repair. If I buy a used coach from a private owner, am I required to go to the original dealership where it was first sold? I should hope not. RV manufacturers should require their dealer network to service any of their customers, regardless of where the coach was purchased. It's good customer service and common sense.

**Jeff Spadjnske | Tolland, Connecticut**

### A Really Long Drive

This is in regard to the question asked about what do RVers do about repairs when away from home. My wife and I were visiting our daughter in The Colony, Texas, just northwest of Dallas, when the generator went out on our motorhome. We contacted the manufacturer, since it was still under warranty, and they gave us the name of a dealer near to where we were. We called to see if we could bring it in to be checked out. The first question he asked me was not how can I help, but did you buy it from us? I told him we live 1,200 miles away and we did not buy our motorhome from him. His answer was, we can't help you. When I contacted the manufacturer again, they told me that all of their dealers are independent, and have the right to refuse service. We had to cut our vacation short so we could come home and go to the dealer where we bought the motorhome to get it fixed.

**William Claspell | Via email**

### Get Your Bounce On

Regarding the "Bugging Out" article (April) about removing insects from the front of your coach, I use Bounce dryer sheets (because that's what my wife has for the laundry), but I'm reasonably sure any dryer sheet would work. Just wet the area to be cleaned, wet the dryer sheet and simply wipe off the bugs! Yes, it's really that simple! You should briefly wash and/or rinse the area when you finish with a cleaner or soapy water, but even with that extra step, it's by far the quickest, cheapest



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**John Hutchins | Via email**

### What's Your Wi-Fi?

My wife and I are going full-timing within the next year and I would like to know what other full-timers are doing for Wi-Fi. I have heard of the Verizon jetpack mobile hotspot, but I would like to know about some of the other choices that are available.

**Jeff Brooks | Alexandria, Minnesota** 

### Question of the Month

What devices and services do you use to stay connected while traveling in your motorhome?

#### Send your comments to:

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## A Real Jurassic Park

Dinosaur National Monument spans more than 200,000 acres along the Colorado/Utah border and contains more than 800 paleontological sites

By Morey Edelman

In 1909, Earl Douglass, a paleontologist, discovered and started excavating bones of late-Jurassic dinosaurs in Utah. This quarry has supplied many complete fossils for the Carnegie Museum in Pittsburgh, along with many other museums. Today, the quarry is protected with an enclosed building, and you can see more than 1,500 fossils in the cliff face as they were discovered in the Morrison Formation. These dinosaur fossils are 150 million years old! Bones from a stegosaurus, an allosaurus, and a camarasaurus are just a few of the ones discovered at

Dinosaur National Monument.

From the park's visitor center, there is a free shuttle that runs up to the quarry, and park rangers are available to explain the discoveries. There are even some ranger walks when leaving the quarry, where you can view and touch the fossils on the downhill trail back to the visitor center.

In addition to the quarry and the excellent displays, the park also encompasses part of the Green River, which offers Class II and Class III rapids. Green River Campground, in the monument, accommodates motorhomes. Sites are shaded with cottonwood trees. There are no hookups.

For more information, phone 435-781-7700 or go to [www.nps.gov/dino](http://www.nps.gov/dino).

From far left: The skeleton of a young camarasaurus — one of the most common long-necked dinosaurs of the Jurassic period — is on display inside the monument's Quarry Exhibit Hall. There are more than 1,500 dinosaur fossils exposed on the cliff face inside the hall.



By Bobbie Hasselbring

# Cajun: It's Hot!

If you've traveled in Louisiana, you've undoubtedly heard of, and perhaps sampled, Cajun food — spicy dishes like jambalaya, étouffée, gumbo and boiled crawfish. Cajun food has a rich history that makes it interesting and delicious to explore.

Cajun cuisine is a style of cooking named for French-speaking Acadian farmers and fishermen from the Acadia region (Maine in the U.S. and Nova Scotia, Cape Breton, New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island in Canada). In the 1700s, both the French and British fought over Acadia. The British won and, in one of the largest and saddest mass deportations in history, they banished nearly 10,000 Acadians from their homeland. Some Acadians scattered throughout Canada, others went to Europe, and some made it as far as Louisiana, where they became known as Cajuns.

Displaced Louisiana Cajuns were poor and many lived in the swampy areas of the Louisiana bayou. They largely lived off what they could catch or gather — shrimp, frogs, fish, oysters, crab, game birds, wild pigs, berries and greens. They grew corn and rice, plus onions, bell peppers and celery (the "holy trinity" of Cajun cuisine). They made dishes tasty with seasonings like bay leaf, oregano, garlic, cayenne and chili pepper, and saffras leaves, a spice



From top: Boiled crawfish are eaten with the hands and are a messy — and delicious — affair. Cajuns love their festivals, and Shreveport's Mudbug Madness is one of the biggest and best.

used by the area's native Choctaw Indians.

Cajuns love their food and celebrate with festivals throughout the year. These are often local affairs featuring homegrown cooks whipping up authentic Cajun dishes with local bands playing equally hot Cajun music. Check out the Cajun Food & Music Festival July 15-16, and Calca-Chew Food Fest Sept. 25 in Lake Charles, Louisiana; and Festivals Acadiens et Créoles Oct. 11-16 in Lafayette, Louisiana.

**Got a favorite Cajun food recipe or eatery you'd like to share?**

Email [bobbie@realfoodtraveler.com](mailto:bobbie@realfoodtraveler.com) with "Cajun" in the subject line.

## LILA'S CRAWFISH ÉTOUFFÉE

This recipe, courtesy of Lila's Creole Cuisine Catering, is served at the annual Mudbug Festival in Shreveport, Louisiana.

- 2 pounds peeled crawfish tails
- 2 sticks (16 tablespoons) butter or margarine
- 2 cups chopped onions
- 1 cup chopped green bell peppers
- ¾ cup chopped celery
- 2 tablespoons cornstarch
- 1 10-ounce can diced tomatoes (Rotel or other brand)

- 1 cup water
- Salt to taste
- ½ teaspoon black pepper to taste (you can also use Tony Chachere's Creole Seasoning in place of salt and pepper)
- ½ teaspoon cayenne pepper (less if you like it less spicy)
- ⅓ cup chopped green onions
- ¼ cup chopped fresh parsley

► Melt the butter or margarine in a large saucepan over medium heat. Add onions, bell peppers, celery and green onions, and sauté, stirring until the vegetables are soft, 5 to 8 minutes. Add the tomatoes and cook, stirring occasionally, about 3 minutes. Season with salt, black pepper and cayenne.

Dissolve the cornstarch in the water and add to the vegetable mixture. Simmer, stirring occasionally, until the mixture thickens (add more cornstarch for a thicker base mixture), 3 to 5 minutes. Then, turn off the burner and add the crawfish tails and parsley flakes to the mixture. Serve immediately over steamed rice.





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## Tandem Towing

Absent a toy-hauling motorhome, owners looking to bring along a dinghy vehicle and a toy such as a golf cart, motorcycle or four-wheeler often have a difficult decision to make: Which do I really need for my next adventure? If your answer is both, the Swivelwheel-58DW Tandem Tow Dolly deserves a look. The 58DW allows the user to tow a dinghy vehicle of up to 6,000 pounds behind the loaded platform, which can accommodate up to 1,200 evenly distributed pounds. The Tandem Tow Dolly utilizes a dual-receiver rotational mount; two additional receiver tubes are shipped along with each system for mounting to the motorhome. A number of options, from a ramp to motorcycle wheel chocks, are available for the platform. The Swivelwheel-58DW Tandem Tow Dolly comes with easy-to-understand instructions, and can be flipped up and stored against a wall in your garage or storage facility when not in use. MSRP: \$3,995.

**Fast Master Products Inc., 866-794-8357, [www.cruiserlift.com](http://www.cruiserlift.com)**

## EZ DIY

Changing your motorhome's transmission fluid yourself is an easy way to save money, not to mention a surefire way to make certain it was done to your liking. The EZ Oil Drain Valve replaces the Allison transmission plug, making fluid changes, samples and flushes easier — and cleaner — than ever.



The EZ Valve is nickel-plated for additional protection, and features a brass ball-valve mechanism to prevent leaks, a tight O-ring seal, a reinforced plastic handle cover for easy open/close and a hose connection. Simply lift the lever of the ball valve and give it a quarter turn to open; return the lever to its original position to lock it closed. EZ Valve is available in a variety of sizes for numerous applications; Allison transmissions typically use 3/4-inch 16 UNF threads (EZ-204). MSRP: \$32.95.

**OilDrainValve.net, 844-533-1159, [www.oildrainvalve.net](http://www.oildrainvalve.net)**



## Fraternal Twins

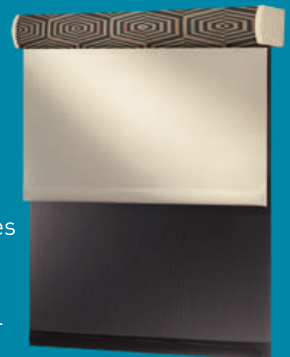
As the saying goes, "There can only be one first." But, in this case, there are actually two: Thor's Compass and Gemini Recreational Utility Vehicles were the first Ford Transit-equipped motorhomes in North America, offering enthusiasts a powerful, smooth-driving Class C diesel with a surprising amount of interior living space. The Transit's 3.2-liter I-5 Power Stroke turbodiesel engine is rated at 185 horsepower and 350 LB-FT of torque, which makes everyday driving and climbing steep grades easier. Both the Compass and the Gemini are 23-foot-6-inch Class C motorhomes that include features such as a skylight in the cabover, a leatherette 42-by-64-inch jackknife sofa, 5.5-cubic-foot refrigerator and a flip-up rear queen bed. Removable tables for the living area and the bedroom add to the vehicles' versatility. Options include an exterior 32-inch LED TV, heating pads for the holding tanks and an upgraded A/C unit. MSRPs: \$101,775.

**Thor Motor Coach, 800-860-5658, [www.thormotorcoach.com](http://www.thormotorcoach.com)**

## From Concept to Cloth

If you've ever tried replacing the valances in your motorhome once that particular pattern has been discontinued, you know it can be a difficult proposition. The Impulse Roller Shade System, United Shade's all-in one roller shade and valance window covering, now includes digitally printed valance fabrics, which takes away all the hassles of sorting through hundreds of swatches, finding a match online or even scouring a salvage facility. With digital printing, United Shade can offer virtually any color, pattern or simulated texture for the integrated valance on the Impulse Roller Shade. Customers can show the company an image of most anything they can think of, and the company says it will match it. United Shade (an affiliate of Dacor Corp.) also says it can even print 3-D effects on a 2-D fabric. MSRP: N/A at press time.

**United Shade, 877-262-0954, [www.unitedshade.com](http://www.unitedshade.com)**







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Branson, Missouri

## Camping Near Branson

Table Rock Lake is a large, man-made lake formed by the Table Rock Dam in the White River. It is another point of interest for visitors to nearby Branson, Missouri, which has family-oriented Broadway-style shows, restaurants and other attractions. Table Rock State Park is located on the east side of the lake and is adjacent to Table Rock Dam.

The 356-acre park is only 9 miles west of Branson, making it an ideal destination for RVers wanting to take advantage of the attractions and entertainment in the area. Two park campgrounds are located along the shoreline of the lake, which makes for easy access to water activities.

The park has a marina with boat- and personal-watercraft rentals, catamaran sailboat excursions, scuba diving, kayaking and fishing guides.

**For more information**, call 417-334-4704 or visit <https://mostateparks.com/park/table-rock-state-park> — *James Richardson*



Photo: James Richardson

Mitchell, South Dakota

## The World's Only Corn Palace — A Recipe for Fun

Think of the Russian-style onion domes in "Doctor Zhivago," and move the scene to Mitchell, South Dakota. Add Moorish minarets and unique corn murals to get the World's Only Corn Palace, which draws more than 500,000 visitors a year. Originally built in 1892 as a way to showcase the area's healthy agricultural climate, the Corn Palace has been rebuilt three times. In 2015, it underwent a major \$4 million renovation. The remodel features twisted steel domes that are lit at night, larger exterior murals, a walk-out balcony, grand entry and lobby.

The murals are re-created annually with corn, other grains and native grasses. The process starts in May, when workers tear down the ryegrass and sour dock that surround the murals. The murals are stripped at the end of August. New ones are completed by October. The 2016 theme is Rock of Ages, paying tribute to various musical genres. Scenes with musical icons like Elvis Presley and Willie Nelson were created by nailing ears of corn to giant paint-by-number-like sheets. More than 275,000 ears of locally grown corn in 13 different colors are used. The Corn Palace also hosts special events, such as festivals, industrial exhibits, dances and stage shows.

**For more information**, call 800-289-7469 or go to [www.cornpalace.com](http://www.cornpalace.com) — *Mary Zalmanek* 



Photo: Mitchell Convention and Visitors Bureau





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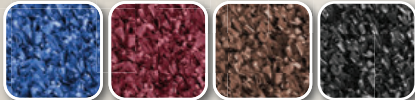
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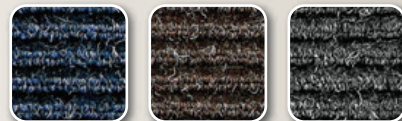
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A gallery at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Museum depicts Lincoln's cabinet discussing the Emancipation Proclamation.

## The Land of Lincoln

Springfield's most famous citizen left an indelible mark on this Illinois town

By Arline Chandler

**A**braham Lincoln famously stated, "Fourscore and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this continent, a new nation, conceived in liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal."

Lincoln, the 16th president of the United States, likely never envisioned the enormous impact he would have on America's future. He grew up in the backwoods of Kentucky and Indiana and tried out a number of jobs before educating himself in law. Most certainly, he could not have imagined a state-of-the-art museum in Springfield, Illinois, dedicated to his life and the legacy he created when the subject of slavery tore the nation apart.

As a lanky, awkward 17-year-old, Lincoln had his first look at slavery when he floated a flatboat down the Mississippi River and saw a slave auction block on the streets of New Orleans. That scene is re-created today in the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Museum, introducing wax figures so lifelike that muscles and veins bulge on the man's bare torso. A family is being sold apart; husband and wife to never see each other again. A young boy clutches his mother's

skirt, tears in his eyes.

The auction block is one of many re-created scenes, numerous high-tech exhibits, interactive displays and multimedia programs in the museum. In the opening gallery, a reproduction of the White House as it looked in 1861 stands opposite a replica of Lincoln's Indiana log cabin, encircled by tall trees with thick foliage. A stream and woods with natural vegetation form the background. Birds sing.

In stark contrast, the White House Blue Room display shows Mrs. Lincoln in a ballgown, her dressmaker adjusting the hemline covering a fashionable hoop. Mary Todd Lincoln stood just over 5 feet tall, a noticeable contrast to her husband's 6-foot-4-inch height. She started wearing a crown of flowers to appear taller as she took his arm. Circling Mary's figure, her social rivals pose in equally elegant reproduction ball gowns. Mrs. Lincoln's original ballgown resides in the Smithsonian Institution.

Lifelike replicas of the presidential family receive guests in front of the White House, inviting photos with the famous historical figures. Throughout the museum's galleries, background music plays — low-key, yet underscoring the

SPRINGFIELD, ILLINOIS

### Getting There

Springfield, the capital of Illinois and the seat of Sangamon County government, is located at the intersection of interstates 55 and 72. Chicago lies 200 miles northeast of Springfield, St. Louis and Indianapolis lie 100 miles southwest and 195 miles due east, respectively.

## GETAWAY

SPRINGFIELD, ILLINOIS

mood of a particular exhibit with melodies of “Battle Hymn of the Republic,” “When Johnny Comes Marching Home” and “Swing Low, Sweet Chariot.”

Two theaters inside the museum entertain and educate with holographic and special effects, creating dramatic and magical presentations. “Ghosts of the Library” is set in a reproduction of the Lincoln Presidential Library, home to the world’s largest collection of Lincoln-related documents, artifacts and books. An actor uses Holavision, a technology that features a live onstage actor who appears to control the ghosts of Mr. and Mrs. Lincoln and contemporaries as they appear and fade in misty images drifting through the “library.” The host explains that objects and papers connect us to people and events and tell us who we are as a country.

Presented at the Union Theater, “Lincoln’s Eyes” immerses the audience in the personal and political dramas



An interpreter demonstrates fireplace cooking at Lincoln’s New Salem State Historic Site, a reconstruction of the former village of New Salem.



### LINCOLN TOMB

Springfield’s Oak Ridge Cemetery is the final resting place for Abraham Lincoln, his wife and three of their four sons. The 117-foot-tall obelisk rising from an ornate base with 37 hewn stones to represent raised shields with the names of the states at the time the tomb was built, symbolize an unbroken chain. Four bronze statues anchoring corners of the base represent the military services during the Civil War. A full-length statue of Lincoln stands above the entrance to the tomb.

Inside the rotunda, a replica of the Daniel Chester French statue at the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C., oversees the entrance. The tomb evokes quiet whispers and soft footsteps following a narrow corridor to the burial room. An impressive block of reddish marble, inscribed with Lincoln’s name and years that he lived, marks his burial spot. Above the nine flags in a semicircle, words allegedly spoken by Secretary of War Edwin Stanton are inscribed, “Now he belongs to the ages.”



### THE LINCOLN HOME NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE

The Lincolns’ 12-room home in Springfield, Illinois, is the centerpiece of a neighborhood of restored 19th-century homes, sidewalks, gaslights and wooden walkways. Inside the Greek Revival house, visitors glimpse the Lincoln family prior to their move to the White House.

A National Park Service guide relates that Lincoln’s legendary tall frame did not fit the chairs in their home. He often lounged on the floor in their sitting and dining rooms, reading and studying. Some pieces in the home are original, such as the wood stove where Mary Todd Lincoln cooked for the family. The downstairs carpet and wallpaper are reproduced. Upstairs, where Mr. and Mrs. Lincoln occupied separate bedrooms, the wallpaper is a reproduction of the original pattern. Mr. Lincoln’s four-poster bed was sold to renters and never recovered. A period bed replaces the original. Tours of the house are free, but tickets obtained at the visitor center are required.



### LINCOLN’S NEW SALEM

Located 20 miles northwest of Springfield, Lincoln’s New Salem State Historic Site is reconstructed with 24 buildings, many rebuilt on original foundations. The village is close to what Lincoln saw when he discovered New Salem while floating a barge down to the Mississippi River. Townspeople recalled he wandered into the village like a piece of driftwood — with no skills or direction. However, between 1831 and 1837, he worked as a store clerk, postmaster and a surveyor. All the while, he studied law on his own. In 1837, he moved to Springfield to practice law.

The 635-acre historic park has a museum and visitors center. In the village, costumed interpreters demonstrate pioneer skills such as fireplace cooking, making lye soap and blacksmithing. A lunch counter offers sandwiches, soups and baked goods. The campground has 100 sites with electricity, and showers and water are available. A dump station is on-site. The campground accommodates rigs up to 40 feet in length.



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## GETAWAY

SPRINGFIELD, ILLINOIS

and key issues of Lincoln's presidency, especially slavery. On layered digital projection screens wrapping the audience on three sides, changing sets fly in and out. Battle blasts and lightning bolts crash; theater seats shake and whiffs of gunpowder drift overhead.

In another exhibit, history blends with technology when the late Tim Russert narrates the 1860 political campaign. Four candidates, each with his particular platform, highlight campaign commercials — in modern-day style.

At Lincoln's first inaugural address, he spoke to both North and South: "We are not enemies, but friends. We must not be enemies." Initially, the new president fought for preservation of the Union, not to end slavery. However, powerful forces of war transformed his view. At Gettysburg, Lincoln asked Americans to win the war and end slavery. Thus, Lincoln wrote the Emancipation Proclamation.

Reminders of the Civil War course through the museum. Enlistment posters for the Union Army tout various regiments. Some posters offer a \$50 bounty to enlist. "The Civil War in Four Minutes" features a gold map on a screen, evolving into red for seceding states and blue for Union states. Boundaries between blue and red expand and recede, depending on which army wins a particular battle. Cracks in the map widen until all points turn blue. At the bottom, a square moves the dates and tallies the casualties for North and South. Final tally: North: 702,000, South: 621,000.



Inside the walls of this granite monument in Oak Ridge Cemetery is the final resting place for President Lincoln, his wife and three of their four sons. Oak Ridge is the second most-visited cemetery in the nation, following Arlington National Cemetery in Virginia.

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From above: The Henry Onstot Residence is one of 12 log homes in Lincoln's New Salem. Lifelike figures of the Lincoln family greet visitors in the plaza — the hub of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum.



Photo: Courtesy Springfield CVB

The War Gallery shows pictures of soldiers and families impacted by the war. A semicircle mural of Gettysburg during battle portrays fallen soldiers. Cannons, one with a splintered wheel, dot the scene. A wagon pulled by a horse, its head drooping, marks the horizon. In one corner, Lincoln delivers the Gettysburg Address to a listening crowd — some standing under black umbrellas.

While in office, hatred, rejection, even buffoonery, continuously assaulted Lincoln. The Whispering Gallery, a hallway of framed black-and-white derogatory cartoon posters reveals the extent of degradation and insults that bombarded the president. Framed posters hang slanted as though an evil wind blows down the corridor. Voices read the captions in growls, snarls and sarcasm.

A scene of the Ford Theater places the president and Mrs. Lincoln in an authentically designed box seat. Dialogue from the play, "Our American Cousin," murmurs in the background. John Wilkes Booth sneaks up a set of stairs, preparing to fire the fatal shot. Finally, a large room displays a full-scale re-creation of his coffin lying in state in Springfield's Old State Capitol. Flowers surround the richly draped canopy

and the song "Amazing Grace" softly emphasizes the reverent tone.

With the shot of a single assassin's bullet, Abraham Lincoln transformed from a despised and disparaged president to a revered and respected national figure. Citizens lined rail tracks to openly grieve and honor Lincoln as his funeral train, the longest and most elaborate funeral procession in American history, carried his body back to Springfield — the town he loved and called his home for most of his adult life. **M**

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## FOR MORE INFORMATION

**Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum**  
800-610-2094, [www.illinois.gov/alplm](http://www.illinois.gov/alplm)

**Lincoln's New Salem**  
217-632-4000, [www.lincolnsnewsalem.com](http://www.lincolnsnewsalem.com)

**Springfield Convention & Visitors Bureau**  
800-545-7300, [www.visitspringfieldillinois.com](http://www.visitspringfieldillinois.com)





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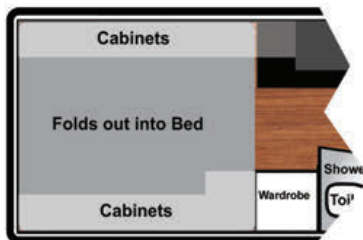
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## SUMMER SAVINGS AT CAMPING WORLD

**I Love the '90s:** Camping World shoppers can revisit the last millennium's final decade during the I Love the '90s event, June 23 through 26. The first 50 customers each day will receive a gift, and everyone can fill up on free lunches, Friday, June 24, and Saturday, June 25, from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. Look for special savings on Doorbusters, along with other sale items and unadvertised discounts.

**50th Birthday Party:** Camping World's and Good Sam's yearlong birthday celebration culminates in a party so big it spans two weekends, July 15 through 16, and 22 through 23, at all Camping World SuperCenters. In addition to extra savings on Doorbusters, each day the first 50 customers will receive a gift, and cake will be served from 1 to 3 p.m. to mark the twin birthdays.

**Bonus Bags:** Camping World customers who spend \$50 or more during any one visit this summer will receive a reusable shopping bag, while supplies last. Bag designs will feature a 1990s theme from June 20 through July 10 and showcase Camping World's and Good Sam's joint 50th birthdays from July 11 through 31.



**Extra Savings:** Good Sam members get exclusive online access to hundreds of dollars' worth of Camping World coupons at [www.goodsamclub.com/coupons](http://www.goodsamclub.com/coupons). That's in addition to RV-accessory savings and installation specials throughout the year and 25 percent off LP-gas on Tuesdays and Wednesdays.




## Budget Booster

Good Sam members who use the Good Sam Camping World Visa® credit card can now earn rewards faster with three points per \$1 spent on gas and diesel purchases. With the exclusive Rec Rewards program, cardholders earn points with every purchase:

- 5 points for every \$1 spent at Camping World and on Good Sam products and services
- 3 points for every \$1 spent on fuel and at privately owned campgrounds in the United States and Canada
- 1 point for every \$1 spent everywhere else Visa is accepted.

► Members can apply online at [www.goodsamcampingworldvisa.com](http://www.goodsamcampingworldvisa.com), by phone at 844-271-2591 (TDD/TTY: 888-819-1918) or in person at any Camping World SuperCenter.

This offer is subject to credit approval. The Rec Rewards program is provided by Comenity Capital Bank, and its terms may discontinue or change at any time. For full Rewards terms and conditions, please visit [www.comenity.net/goodsamcampingworld](http://www.comenity.net/goodsamcampingworld). The Good Sam Camping World Visa and Visa Signature cards are issued by Comenity Capital Bank, pursuant to license from Visa U.S.A. Inc.

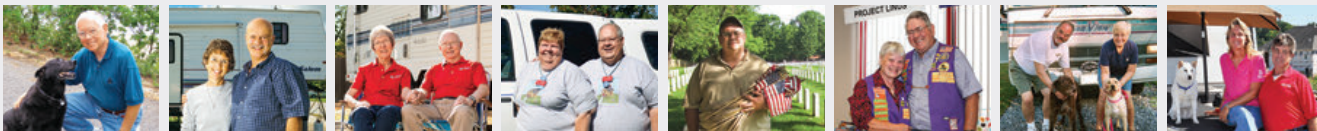
 To find all 120 Camping World SuperCenters, driving directions, hours and available services, go to [www.campingworld.com/stores](http://www.campingworld.com/stores).

## Good Sam RVer of the Year: Who Will Wear the 2016 Halo?

In online voting last fall, Life members Bill and France Moriarty captured the Good Sam Club's RVer of the Year title for 2015. The perennial volunteers not only won \$500 in Camping World merchandise certificates, their chosen charity, Habitat for Humanity Care-A-Vanners, received a \$3,000 donation from the Good Sam Club. As the 2015 winners, the Moriartys joined an elite group of do-gooders

dating back to 2008 when Richard Daniels won the inaugural award for founding a network of homeless-animal shelters.

► To nominate a public-spirited Good Sam Club member or couple for the 2016 RVer of the Year award before the July 15 deadline, go to [www.goodsamclub.com/rveroftheyear](http://www.goodsamclub.com/rveroftheyear). You can even nominate yourself and promote your favorite cause.



**RVers of the Year, past and present:** Richard Daniels (2008), Sue and Monty Scales (2009), Marilyn and Don Buller (2010), Joyce and John Williams (2011), Fred Moore (2012), Joan and Frank Anderson (2013), Ken and Diane Wagner (2014), and France and Bill Moriarty (2015).



# GOING PLACES WITH GOOD SAM



## REGIONAL EVENTS

Don't miss the chance to connect with fellow Good Sam Club members at the following RV-friendly gatherings.

### Jenny Brook Bluegrass Festival June 23 through 26

Tunbridge World's Fairgrounds  
Tunbridge, Vermont

### Country Fest/Mark Chestnut June 24 and 25

Red Barn Convention Center  
Winchester, Ohio

### Rocks, Ribs and Ridges Festival June 25 and 26

Sussex County Fairgrounds  
Augusta, New Jersey



**Oregon Jamboree**  
July 29 through 31  
Sweet Home, Oregon

### Country Fest/Moe Bandy August 5 and 6

Red Barn Convention Center  
Winchester, Ohio

### Fall Festival at the Beach September 8 through 15

Johnny's Lakeside RV Resort  
Foley, Alabama

### Great Prosser Balloon Rally September 23 through 25

Wine Country RV Resort  
Prosser, Washington

### Norsk Høstfest September 28 through October 1

North Dakota State Fairgrounds  
Minot, North Dakota

### Great Prosser Balloon Rally: Soaring over central Washington.

**Country Fest/  
Bellamy Brothers**  
October 7 and 8

Red Barn Convention Center  
Winchester, Ohio

### Sun Valley Jazz and Music Festival October 19 through 23

Sun Valley and Ketchum, Idaho

### Beer and Wine at the Vines November 4 through 6

Vines RV Resort  
Paso Robles, California

► Find the full schedule of Good Sam events, including State/Provincial Rallies, at [www.goodsamclub.com/events](http://www.goodsamclub.com/events).

## RV TOURS

Seasoned travel planners at Fantasy RV Tours sweat the details so Good Sam Club members can experience must-see destinations.

**Calgary Stampede: World-class cowboys and midway thrills.**

**Calgary Stampede Rodeo Rally  
July 13 through 18**

**Autumn in New England Tour  
September 20 through October 17**

**Albuquerque Balloon  
Fiesta Rally  
October 7 through 10**

**New Orleans Culinary  
Christmas Rally  
December 6 through 12**

► For more information about members-only guided RV tours or to make a reservation, visit [www.fantasyrvtours.com/goodsam](http://www.fantasyrvtours.com/goodsam) or call Fantasy RV Tours at 800-453-9511.

# Two Ways to Save at Pilot Flying J

1 Swiping the Good Sam Club Swipe & Save membership card at the Pilot and Flying J fuel pumps gets members instant savings on gasoline and diesel.

2 Applying for the Pilot Flying J RV Plus charge card can save members even more on gasoline and diesel fuel, LP-gas and dump-station fees.



## Swipe & Save Membership Card

### Savings for All Membership Levels

Gas (U.S.)	3¢ per gallon
Diesel (U.S.)	3¢ per gallon
Gas/Diesel (Canada)	1¢ per liter
LP-Gas	5¢ per gallon
Dump-Station Fees	\$2.50

## Pilot Flying J RV Plus Charge Card

Good Sam Member Savings	Deluxe Member Savings	Life Member Savings	Elite Member Savings
4¢ per gallon	5¢ per gallon	6¢ per gallon	7¢ per gallon
6¢ per gallon	7¢ per gallon	8¢ per gallon	9¢ per gallon
1¢ per liter	1¢ per liter	2¢ per liter	2¢ per liter
10¢ per gallon	10¢ per gallon	10¢ per gallon	10¢ per gallon
\$5	\$5	\$5	\$5

► Good Sam members can apply for the RV Plus charge card at [www.goodsamclub.com/pfj](http://www.goodsamclub.com/pfj) or by calling RV Plus customer service at 855-478-7587. The website also links to a guide to the more than 650 Pilot and Flying J travel centers and travel plazas throughout North America with information on restaurants, RV lanes, RV parking, LP-gas and dump stations.



☞ **BEAM US UP, SCOTTY** The Good Sam Club and Camping World weren't the only stellar debuts of 1966. Captain Kirk and the rest of the *Enterprise* crew boldly went where no man had gone before when *Star Trek* launched on NBC that fall. Judging from the franchise's longevity, Spock's Vulcan salute "Live long and prosper" had the desired effect.



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# ROAD TRIP!



➔ Apps, websites and tips to make planning a multideestination itinerary easier

**P**lanning a long, multideestination camping trip can be a very time-consuming project, but the reward is a long, multideestination camping trip! The most important rule — whether you're planning a short or a long trip — is to start the process early. Many of the more popular state and national parks are full almost every weekend during the summer. Unless you want to roll the dice and arrive in the middle of the week to get one of the few first-come, first-served sites, you're going to need to make reservations.

When I was a child, back in the '70s, there were no camping reservations. My dad would pack us into the car at 3 a.m. so we could get to our favorite campground in Wisconsin just as the sun was rising, only to find we weren't the first family in line. For the next two hours we would hear grumblings about how we would have been first if someone would have gotten up earlier, or not taken so much time in the bathroom or not needed something to eat. But after we got in and set up camp, all was forgotten. Now that reservations can be made via the internet, and on websites like [www.reserveamerica.com](http://www.reserveamerica.com), there's no need to leave in the middle of the night to get a good site.

## Preplanning

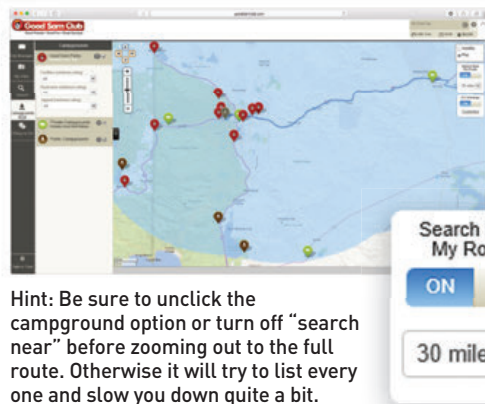
When planning an epic trip, I use the standard reservation websites that we all have to go through, though there are several tools that can help you make better campsite choices. Many people have told me how hard it can be to find just the right spot for an enjoyable trip, but with a little additional work, you can greatly improve your chances.

We bought a motorhome because I prefer not to stay in hotels, so when we have an event to attend we try to plan a camping trip around it. Last year, for example, my wife had a conference to attend in Reno, Nevada. While investigating the route, we came up with a few things we wanted to see along the way: a balloon festival, the Grand Canyon, giant redwoods, dinosaurs and a whole bunch more. But how do you plan for all of that?

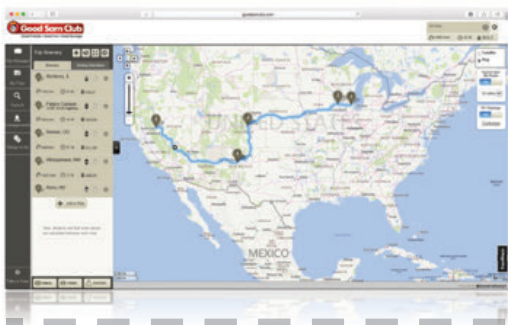
Start by pulling out a calendar and determining which days you need to be where. We were attending a wedding in Galena, Illinois, on September 26, a conference in Reno on October 13 and needed to be home by October 19. Traveling from Galena on September 27 gave us 16 days to get to Reno. In between we wanted to visit friends in Denver, Colorado, and Albuquerque, New Mexico, but the rest of the time was ours. I put those four items into the trip planner to see the nearly 2,500-mile route we would take and started from there.

## The Route

My favorite tool for planning any camping trip is the Good Sam Trip Planner ([www.goodsam.com](http://www.goodsam.com); choose "Trip Planner" from the "Plan a



Hint: Be sure to unclick the campground option or turn off "search near" before zooming out to the full route. Otherwise it will try to list every one and slow you down quite a bit.



Left: Here's the basic route that I started with to plan our epic trip.

Trip” menu). To use it, you must be a member of the Good Sam Club, but for me, the trip planner alone is worth the \$25 annual membership. Plus, the club’s other benefits easily offset the annual cost.

I’ve used Street Atlas, MapQuest and many other mapping programs, but found them either difficult to use or over-featured for what I needed. The Good Sam Trip Planner is geared toward camping, which makes it the perfect tool to start.

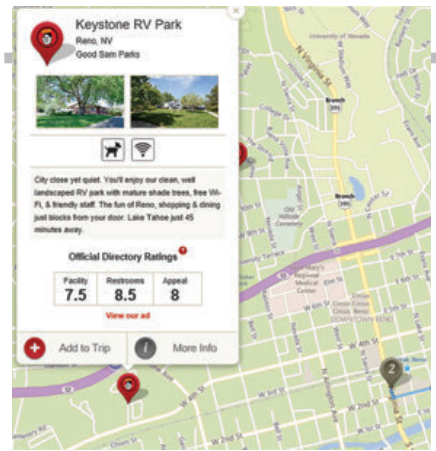
### RV Parks

Once I had the basic layout of the trip, I needed to figure out where we would be staying. We had previously stayed at the Palace Campgrounds in Galena, so that was the first spot I added. It’s a private RV park and though you can reserve a site online, you will still need to call in with a credit card to make a deposit.

Next on the list was to find a place in Reno, since I knew the dates we had to be there. On the right side of the screen in the Good Sam Trip Planner is a box where you can turn on a “search near my route” option and select campgrounds or other attractions within a certain distance of your route. Pins show what options are in your area. The trip planner lists Good Sam Parks, and most public and private campgrounds.

First, I checked out the RV parks listed in Reno near the conference hall. I use Google Maps (www.maps.google.com) to get a good view from above because it has high-quality images. With Google Maps you can also use the “street view” in the lower right corner of the screen by dragging the little yellow man to the street you want to see. Roads that you can get a view of will turn blue to let you know what street views are available. While there are plenty of good places to stay in Reno, I wanted to stay outside of town where I could ride my bike, hike and do other outdoor activities.

About 20 minutes south of Reno I found Davis Creek Park near Washoe Lake. Clicking the “more info” button on the trip planner provides basic information about the campground, including site numbers and sizes, available hookups and usually its website. In this case, I had to search for the website myself. The Good Sam info listed the maximum length at 30 feet and the park’s website boasted 19 sites for longer RVs, but no specific length. I needed a spot for a 37-foot motorhome, so I called the park. The ranger assured me he had a few sites I could fit in. I checked Yelp (www.yelp.com) to get reviews of the park and since they were all favorable, I added the stop to our itinerary. The park does not take reservations, but with several backup options in the area I wasn’t worried about fitting into a spot. (On the day we arrived, the ranger met me at the entrance to make sure we fit and



Get information on a park in the Trip Planner (top), then get a virtual look on Google Maps.

everything worked out fine.) Now that I had the anchor points of my trip lined up, it was time to add the fun stuff.

The friends who were meeting in Albuquerque were coming up from El Paso, Texas, October 3, and as it turned out the world’s most popular hot-air balloon festival was that weekend and everything was already booked. Using the trip planner and Google Maps again, I found a spot that I liked about 45 minutes from Albuquerque at Sky City RV Park in Acoma, New Mexico. That was the last stop I needed to lock in by the calendar; the rest would be based on what we wanted to see and how long we wanted to drive.

Left: A sample of the detailed campground information available on the Trip Planner.

**Davis Creek Park**  
23 Davis Creek RD  
Washoe Valley, NV 89714  
(775) 849-9834

Show this location

Living Details		Reviews
Last Year's Rate:	\$20	
Season:	Open All Year	
Elevation:	5,100 ft (1564.48 m)	
<b>Facility</b>	Type (Public Park)	Partial Hookup Access
<b>Policies</b>	Fee Volume	Day Max Stay (7)
	No Reservations	Test Camping Allowed
<b>Sites</b>	Spaces Available (\$2)	Width (12)
	Max Length (30)	No Hookups (\$2)
	Full-RV Size (12 x 36)	Back-In (12 x 36)
	Fee Range	Partial Sites (\$2)
		Full-RV (18)
		Site Length (20)
<b>Recreational Facilities</b>	Pool	Swimming
	Reservations	Body Of Water (Davis Creek Pond)
<b>Other Amenities &amp; Services</b>		

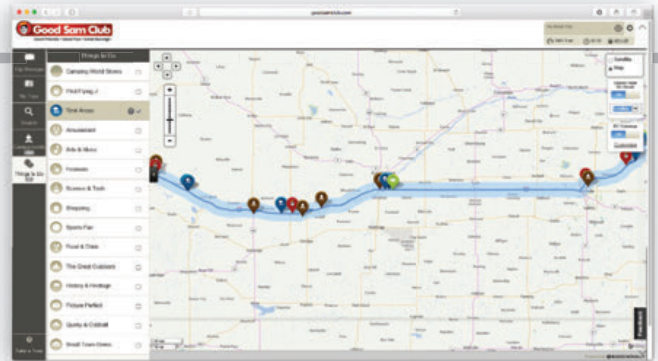


The Good Sam Trip Planner is geared toward camping, which makes it the perfect tool to start.



We planned to start the western portion of our trip in Denver, which meant we would blast through the 14½ hours (plus stops) from Galena and would need an overnight stop somewhere along the route. With this type of situation, I'll check the map and make a list of options, but I won't reserve anything in advance. I know that there are plenty of campgrounds and rest areas within 5 miles of the highway about halfway to Denver and we can decide where to stop when we get tired. The farther I can get west, the better. While driving, my wife will use one of the many apps available on our iPhone, such as Good Sam Camping or Oh, Ranger! to locate on-the-fly stops for sections like this.

I went through each one of the attractions that we wanted to see and continued filling in stops in the same manner: checking Good Sam, or other sites, for campgrounds, looking at them on Google Maps and checking Yelp reviews. By the time I was done, I had nearly a dozen campgrounds picked out and my calendar of dates set.

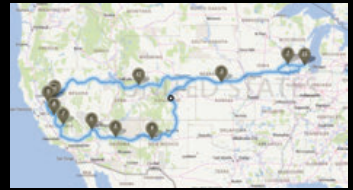


It's easy to find RV parks in between stops with Good Sam Trip Planner.

I now had stops in Denver, Las Vegas, Lake Tahoe, Sequoia National Park, and Yosemite National Park and at Dinosaur National Monument on the way home. No matter which order you add them, the trip planner will arrange them for the best route. You can move them around later if you need to.

I wanted to spend some time camping "off the grid" in

From right: I use Google Maps to check out roads and entrances in advance before adding them to my itinerary. Here's my master calendar and a map of the final route.



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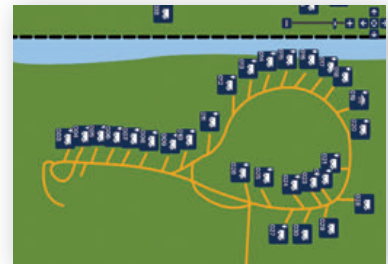
[www.instagone.com](http://www.instagone.com)

the mountains, but the kind of place I was looking for was not listed on the Good Sam Trip Planner. We had some free time between Denver and Albuquerque and I was looking for a place we could visit in our Jeep before driving the motorhome in. I searched the Forest Service website ([www.fs.fed.us](http://www.fs.fed.us)) for campgrounds in the Pike National Forest near Denver and found Lone Rock Campground in Deckers, Colorado. When I went

to [www.recreation.gov](http://www.recreation.gov), I found one site that would fit our motorhome, but it was off-season so I couldn't reserve it. I had to hope I would get there before someone else. I checked Google Maps from above and from the street to make sure I could get there and added it to our itinerary.

I spent a couple of hours each day on trip planning and it took me about two weeks to finalize the route. It's a lot of work to set up a trip like this, but

Right: This is a typical view of a campground on ReserveAmerica's site. The shot below it is the same campground on Google Maps. Campsitephotos.com (bottom) is an additional source.



## Covering Your Bases

When looking for a campsite on websites like ReserveAmerica ([www.reserveamerica.com](http://www.reserveamerica.com)), be sure to look at Google Maps as well. The site maps on ReserveAmerica and the park's actual website don't always match up. If you see a site you like, you may need to locate a landmark, such as a bathroom or intersection, and count back to get the right site, and you still may be off by one or two. You can also check [www.campsitephotos.com](http://www.campsitephotos.com) to see pictures of the campsites. The website lists a lot of public and private campgrounds.

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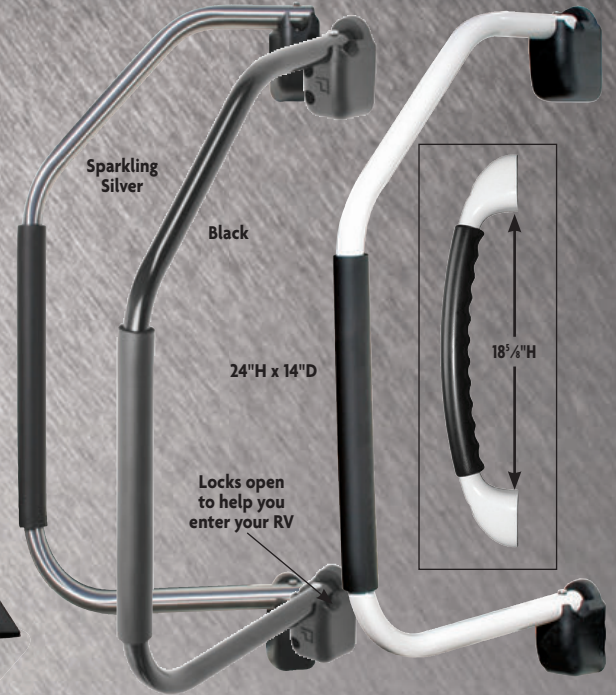
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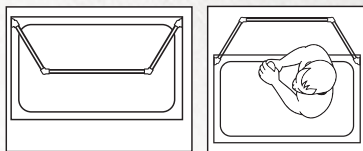
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## ROAD TRIP!

it’s well worth the investment of time. Plus, preplanning will familiarize you with the roads and the route.

Once we finally hit the road, I only put that day’s destination into the GPS. I avoided putting in the entire trip in case we needed a detour or to go off the route. Having a single destination makes recalculating the trip much faster.

That said, do not put all of your faith in a GPS. Driving a motorhome, you need to be careful what route you take and even though the GPS can take bridges and other hazards into consideration, it doesn’t always put you on the road you should be on. With your itinerary in hand and a good navigator at your side, you will be ready to hit the road for the long haul. **M**

### Top 10 sites for trip planning

**GOOD SAM**, [www.goodsam.com](http://www.goodsam.com)  
Using the Trip Planner tool, you can plan a camping trip by searching for campgrounds and other amenities along your route, get the distances traveled, calculate fuel costs and much more.

**GOOGLE MAPS**, [www.maps.google.com](http://www.maps.google.com)  
Get aerial and street views of campgrounds, pick out the best site and even get a preview of many of the roads that you’ll take. The search feature on this site can be very general, and typing “campgrounds” in the search bar will get you sporting goods stores, mobile-home parks, grocery stores, etc.

**RESERVEAMERICA**, [www.reserveamerica.com](http://www.reserveamerica.com)  
This site is essential for booking most of the state parks across the country and many other campgrounds as well.

**CAMPSITE PHOTOS**, [www.campsitephotos.com](http://www.campsitephotos.com)  
I use this whenever I can to help pick out a site. If the campground is in the system, it will show every site from the road. This will help you pick the best view and see if your slideouts will fit between the trees.

**RECREATION.GOV**, [www.recreation.gov](http://www.recreation.gov)  
Make reservations for sites at national parks, forests and landmarks, or book a tour.

**BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT**, [www.blm.gov](http://www.blm.gov)  
The Bureau of Land Management has approximately 250 million acres across the country for every type of outdoor activity. Many of these lands allow camping in the most primitive and beautiful settings. If you want to go boondocking, look here for prime spots.

**YELP**, [www.yelp.com](http://www.yelp.com)  
Besides reviews of campgrounds and RV parks, when you get to where you’re going you’ll want places to visit and eat. This will help you find the best spots.

**THE WEATHER CHANNEL**, [www.weather.com](http://www.weather.com)  
Here you can find the monthly average temperatures for your trip dates and see the current weather just before you leave.

**TRIP ADVISOR**, [www.tripadvisor.com](http://www.tripadvisor.com)  
Find ratings of campgrounds and RV parks to help determine what is best for your needs based on reviews from people just like you.

### Top 10 free apps for traveling

**YELP** (iPhone or Android)  
Great for finding nearby restaurants, shops or services.

**MYPILOT** (iPhone or Android)  
In the motorhome, I use Pilot and Flying J stations for my Good Sam fuel discount. This lists locations and prices and ratings for stations along your route.

**USA REST STOPS** (iPhone or Android)  
Sometimes you just need to stop. This gives locations, status and reviews of rest stops.

**THE WEATHER CHANNEL** (iPhone or Android)  
Keeps you up to date on the weather wherever you are.

**OH, RANGER!** (iPhone or Android)  
You can find the location of any type of outdoor activity you can imagine with reviews and contact info.

**GOOD SAM CAMPING** (iPhone or Android)  
Search more than 14,500 RV parks and campgrounds from the Good Sam RV Travel Guide & Campground Directory.

**XFINITY** (iPhone or Android)  
We have Xfinity internet service at home and this app will tell us if there is a hotspot for free Wi-Fi where we are camping. You’d be surprised how many there are.

**GEOCACHING** (iPhone or Android)  
If you haven’t experienced the global treasure hunt of geocaching, this app will guide you to hidden treasures all around the world.

**ISS SPOTTER** (iPhone)  
Once you get to the campground and settle in around the fire, check to see if the International Space Station (ISS) will be flying over. There are other apps for Android that will find it as well.

**STAR WALK** (iPhone or Android)  
Ever wonder what that bright light or constellation is in the sky? Just open the app and hold the phone between you and what you want to see; it will tell you what you’re looking at. It also lists satellites and the ISS plus much more.





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# JEWELS OF FLORIDA'S NORTHERN GULF COAST

A 200-mile road trip along U.S. Highway 98 from the Emerald Coast to the Forgotten Coast

**T**raveling on Interstate 10 from Arizona to Florida, following the heavy truck traffic to the point of white-line fever across the bottom of the country through New Mexico, Texas, Louisiana and Alabama, it was with blissful surprise that we walked in the door of the Florida Welcome Center on I-10, just outside of Pensacola, and found ourselves instantly transported to a tropical beach vacation. We were handed cold glasses of delicious (and free!) fresh-squeezed Florida orange juice, and all around us a smiling throng of tourists was busy taking selfies with the wonderfully corny but entertaining beach props that filled the room.

When it comes to white-sand-beach vacations full of sparkling turquoise water, bikini suntans and umbrella drinks, Florida knows how to deliver, and the folks at the Welcome Centers make sure that everyone driving into the state gets swept up in the sun-drenched vacation spirit as soon as they arrive.

Fortunately, the beach is actually really close to this Welcome Center on I-10, and before long we found ourselves strolling on the soft,

sugary sand of the Emerald Coast. The beach was bright white in the sun, and the water was a delicious shade of aquamarine. Families were playing volleyball, kids were making sand castles and the smell of coconut suntan lotion was in the air.

The town of Pensacola Beach is a classic beach town, with seafood restaurants galore and sunburnt people in bathing suits walking barefoot across the main drag. High season here is the summertime, when the ocean water

is toasty warm, daytime temps are hot enough to make you want to swim and the kids are out of school. Families make their escape from the daily grind to spend some vacation time splashing in the water and basking in the sun.

As we walked around town, the mood was vibrant and social, but as soon as we left the bright colors of the surf shops behind to make our way east down Route 399, we discovered that the glistening sandy beach goes on for miles and the people fade away. It is easy to stake out a spot to lie in the sun or enjoy a picnic far away from the crowds. Anywhere you put your beach blanket, the inviting jade-colored water is just steps away, and the waves send sparkling diamonds into the air as they crash upon the shore.

A thin strip of land separates the glittering waves of the ocean and the flat, calm Intracoastal Waterway. On the bay side of the road, a paved bike path traverses endless sand dunes for 10 miles from Pensacola Beach to the small town of Navarre. As we took our bikes along this idyllic path, the last buildings we passed were the towers of Portofino Island Resort where the outdoor parties were in full swing.

The warm, aquamarine water and soft, sugary white sands of the Emerald Coast welcome beachgoers in the summertime.

Photos: Emily and Mark Fagan







Yet as soon as the music from the resort faded behind us, we found ourselves thrust into the Emerald Coast as nature created it eons ago. Beach sand lay in drifts and dunes all around us, and surf pounded on the vast empty shore. Other than the narrow ribbon of the bike path alongside the road separating the open ocean from the tranquil bay, there was little evidence of humanity. We had arrived at the Gulf Islands National Seashore.

Nature can be dreamy and gentle on this coast, and it is well worth driving along the Gulf Islands National Seashore at dawn or dusk to catch the pastel colors that sweep across the sand at sunrise and sunset. The placid bay is an ideal place for a leisurely kayak ride,

Apalachicola is a working town with deep historical roots. Home to a large shrimp and oyster fleet today, it was an important port for warehousing cotton and harvesting sea sponges in the past.

and on another occasion we enjoyed paddling around the marshy inlets, still within earshot of the ocean's waves on the other side of the road.

But nature can be ferocious here too. Straying into the sand dunes away from the road, we found big sections of twisted pavement that were reminders of a time when pieces of the road were ripped apart and hurled hundreds of feet inland by the back-to-back rages of hurricanes Ivan and Dennis in 2004 and 2005, respectively.

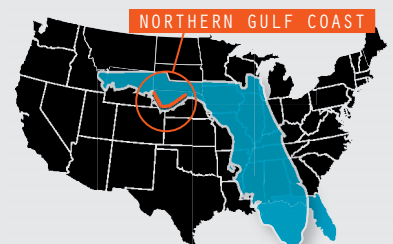
Back at Pensacola Beach, we were surprised on two occasions to see some of nature's more savage creatures too. One evening a group of fishermen suddenly leaped into action right next to us, and as a group

of us watched them reel in their lines, everyone's jaws dropped when we realized they had caught a shark. The shark wasn't thrilled about being held down on the sand while the fishermen removed the hook from its mouth, but the excitement among the bystanders on the beach was palpable. After all, everyone had been swimming in those same waters just a moment before! We heaved a huge sigh of relief when the shark was finally released, and we watched him raggedly make his way back to deeper water.

On another day we came across two young bikini-clad girls taking their pet snakes for a stroll. At first we weren't sure exactly what they had wrapped around their necks, but as



The bay side of the Gulf Islands National Seashore is an ideal spot for kayaking.



## The Route

The coastal road, U.S. Highway 98, leads from Pensacola to Apalachicola and is suitable for RV travel. The highway passes through the best scenery of the Emerald Coast and Florida's Forgotten Coast.





Above from left: These fishermen got a big surprise, and so did the beachgoers, when they reeled in a shark. Apalachicola has a rich marine history of harvesting shrimp, oysters and sponges from the sea.

we came closer and stopped to gawk, they explained that one of them was wearing a python and the other a boa constrictor. I'm not sure I'd ever think of keeping a large snake for a pet, but I do know it would never dawn on me to take my pet python out for a walk on the beach!

On the map, the route from Pensacola Beach to Navarre looks

small, but when we left this area to head farther east, we had no trouble driving it in a big RV, and we found lots of large pullouts and rest areas on the Gulf Islands National Seashore, where we could stop to enjoy the beach. To get onto this barrier island we paid a toll on the bridge at Pensacola Beach, but the other end, in Navarre, was toll-free.

Leaving the bright white sands and vivid green water of the Emerald Coast behind, we traveled east to the small working town of Apalachicola. With early 19th-century roots in the timber industry, Apalachicola long ago made its mark as an important hub and shipping port for many industries. Harvesting oysters and sponges from the sea, and then warehousing cotton in more than 50 different buildings in town, Apalachicola landed on the map because

---

Snowbirds flock to southern Florida in the winter for the warmth, but the northern Gulf Coast is a great vacation spot in the summer.

it was ideally situated to ship goods by riverboat on the Apalachicola River. In 1907 the railroad arrived, and this enabled goods to be shipped both overland and by water.

Today, shrimping and oyster fishing are still important mainstays for the town's economy, and a fleet of shrimping boats dominates the harbor on the backside of town. We watched men working hard on their fishing boats, cleaning and repairing them and getting them ready for their next voyage.

Apalachicola is in the heart of Florida's "Forgotten Coast," and compared to the glitzy, surf shop-filled vacation towns of the Emerald Coast, it is a lot more gritty and down to earth. The old downtown area is a fun place to stroll between handsome historic buildings, and boasts many excellent oyster and seafood restaurants. We grabbed a delicious lunch at Hole in the Wall Seafood.

Popping our heads into a guitar store in town, we began chatting with the owner and discovered that her mother, Alice Jean, who was well into her 90s, was a founder of the On the Waterfront Art Gallery next door. Even more intriguing, she had been a Coca-Cola model from the late 1930s until the late 1950s, back in the days when the big Coke billboards and





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magazine ads were all hand-painted by artists. How lucky we were to be able to walk over to her gallery and have a chance to meet this unusual woman as she prepared to teach an art class.

Alice Jean had been a Rockette in those days too, dancing in the first performances held at Radio City Music Hall in New York City. Even now, in her 90s, she naturally radiated the charisma and flair of a celebrity who had spent years on the stage and in the limelight. Her eyes sparkled when I asked what it was like to be a model whose likeness was seen on billboards across six continents. It was a thrill, of course, and I realized she'd been asked that question repeatedly through the many decades of her life. On the walls were posters of a few of her ads. The images showed her as a fresh-faced young girl in a bathing suit on the beach, her expression beaming as she had a Coke and a smile!

We left her gallery and Apalachicola on an inspired high, and returned



The 10-mile paved bike path between Pensacola Beach and Navarre makes for a beautiful ride, with the protected bay waters on one side and the crashing surf and open ocean on the other side.

to the wilds of Florida's northern Gulf Coast as we visited two state parks that lie on either side of the town: T.H. Stone Memorial St. Joseph Peninsula State Park and Dr. Julian G. Bruce St. George Island State Park. Each of these parks is situated on a barrier island, offering sheltered waters on

one side and open ocean on the other. The white sand beach at St. Joseph Peninsula State Park has been rated one of the best in the nation. We spent hours walking by the water, fascinated by the seashells that were strewn across the sand, and delighting in the sensation of sand squishing between

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our toes. At night, in the campground, the roar of the waves lulled us to sleep.

St. George Island State Park also offers an array of exotic seashells on the beach and the sound of waves wafting into the RV at night, but for those who prefer not to get sandy feet, there are endless interweaving boardwalks suspended above the dunes and winding between the trees. Periodic park benches invited us to stop and reflect on the serenity of our peaceful surroundings. On the sheltered bay side, out in the marsh grasses, long-legged birds stood utterly motionless as they waited for the telltale flash of a fish darting about underwater. Then they would snap into action at lightning speed, nab their prey and down it in one gulp. What a surprise it was to turn our attention away from the birds for a moment and see an alligator eyeing them with interest.

A little farther east along the Gulf Coast we stopped in at Ochlockonee River State Park, where the walking

paths are thickly blanketed with pine needles. We noticed the salty smell of the ocean had been replaced with the pungent aroma of pine trees as we wandered through a stand of skinny, ramrod-straight "pecker" pines. Hearing a rustling at the base of one tree, we were utterly astonished when we spotted a white squirrel. These rare squirrels are indigenous to the area and are naturally snow white, not albino. One of them posed long enough for us to get a photo, and the squirrel seemed totally unafraid.

Florida's northern Gulf Coast is a treasure trove of variety, offering everything from quintessential Florida beach resort vacations, to sunsets on deserted shores where there is not a soul to be found, to easy hikes through pine woods, and fishing towns full of early American history.

If you are planning an RV road trip to Florida, take some time to savor the gems on the Emerald Coast, and don't forget to visit the Forgotten Coast! **M**

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**Navarre Beach Campground**

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**Ochlockonee River State Park**

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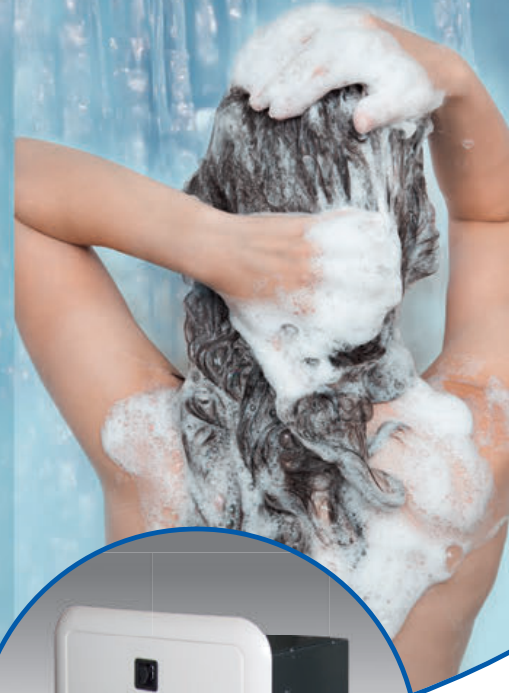


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# ART IN THE OZARKS

From fine arts in Bentonville, Arkansas, to performing arts in Branson, Missouri

**C**rystal Bridges Museum of American Art in Bentonville, Arkansas, has been on my must-see list since November 6, 2011. That's when I heard about it on "CBS News Sunday Morning," five days before it opened. My husband, Jim, and I agreed that next time an RV trip took us southeast of our home in Colorado, we would detour to northwest Arkansas to see this treasure of art, architecture and nature. Last summer, we made the trip.

The driving force behind Crystal Bridges is Alice Walton, daughter of Wal-Mart founder Sam Walton. The museum's permanent collection spans five centuries of American art, including Asher B. Durand's Colonial-era masterpiece, "Kindred

Spirits," and Norman Rockwell's iconic symbol of women working in factories during World War II, "Rosie the Riveter." An audio tour gave us the background on many of the artists and their works. My favorites were paintings by Maxfield Parrish and

Georgia O'Keeffe. Admission to the museum is free; however, we did spend money on souvenirs in the gift shop and a delicious lunch at Eleven, the restaurant named for the day it opened, 11/11/11. Five miles of hiking trails surround the museum. We walked on the Art Trail and the Crystal Bridges Trail, enjoying the sculptures along the beautifully landscaped path.

Bentonville has a charming downtown. Just across from the town square, the original Walton's 5&10 is now the Wal-Mart Museum. The museum has three parts: the 1950s store; exhibits that tell Wal-Mart's

Photo: courtesy Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art



Internationally renowned architect Moshe Safdie designed Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art in Bentonville, Arkansas.



Right: Maelstrom, a “whirling mass of painted aluminum” by Alice Aycock, sits near the entrance of Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art in Bentonville. The Botanical Garden of the Ozarks in Fayetteville has 12 themed gardens on 6 acres, and a 20-acre arboretum.



history, including a replica of Sam Walton’s office; and the Spark Cafe Soda Fountain that sells ice cream. On a hot day, a scoop of ice cream seemed like the perfect way to cool off. As we were leaving town, we drove by a Wal-Mart. We were so thankful for Crystal Bridges, it seemed only right that we spend some money there. Since then, every time I walk into a Wal-Mart I say a silent thank you to Alice Walton.

We stayed in nearby Cave Springs at The Creeks Golf and RV Resort. We made it back there in time to play nine holes. The 18-hole course was in good shape. The fairways were a bit narrow; at least that’s my excuse for all the times I landed in someone else’s fairway.

Since our membership at the Denver Botanical Gardens gives us access to more than 300 botanical gardens nationwide, we never pass up an opportunity to visit one. The next morning we drove to the Botanical Garden of the Ozarks in Fayetteville. It has 12 themed gardens on 6 acres, and a 20-acre arboretum. We especially enjoyed the color and design of the Sensory Garden, the Children’s Garden and the Japanese Garden. With preparations underway for a wedding later that day, it was easy to see why a local magazine voted it “Best Place to Get Married.”

We asked two college students we met at the garden what else they would recommend seeing in Fayetteville. Without hesitation, they responded in unison, “Terra Studios!” Even though it was out of our way, we programmed the GPS to take us there. It’s a whimsical art park billed as the “Home of the Bluebirds of Happiness.” In back of the gallery filled with pottery, jewelry and art glass, we watched a glassblower make those famous bluebirds. On the grounds, we encountered dragons, ceramic cars on a miniature highway, giant chess and checkers games, “trash can trolls” — you know it’s a special place when even the clever trash cans are worth photographing — and a bear at a tea party.

We had considered driving our motorhome to Eureka Springs, Arkansas, on our way to Branson, Missouri. After reading about the winding, mountainside roads, we decided to leave the motorhome behind and visit in our dinghy vehicle. Once we got there, we were happy with our decision. While there are several RV parks in and around Eureka Springs, we didn’t see many places to park a motorhome for a few hours.

Thorncrow Chapel sits just outside Eureka Springs on U.S. Highway 62. Voted one of the American Institute of Architects’ top buildings

of the 20th century, the glass-walled sanctuary is 48 feet tall. We stopped for a few minutes of quiet reflection in this chapel in the forest.

Downtown Eureka Springs is filled with restaurants and shops that invite browsing. In one shop, a potter was giving demonstrations. I’d been tempted by Jim Young’s pottery in the gift shop at Crystal Bridges. After meeting him, I couldn’t resist purchasing a beautiful bowl as a gift.

We trusted our GPS to get us from Cave Springs, Arkansas, to Branson, Missouri. It took us through the lush Mark Twain National Forest and Roaring River State Park on a steep, winding, two-lane paved road. I was glad I wasn’t driving, but Jim drove us there safely in our 26-foot motorhome with a dinghy vehicle. A better route may have been U.S. Highway 412.

America’s Best Campground north of Branson claims to be “city close — country quiet.” That sounded like a good combination to us. It served



Photos: Jim and Mary Zaimanek



### Bentonville to Branson

The most motorhome-friendly route from Bentonville to Branson is via Interstate 49 South to U.S. Highway 412 East. At the intersection of U.S. 412 and U.S. Highway 65, head north on U.S. 65.

“From the fine art in Bentonville to the performing arts in Branson, our trip to the Ozarks was an adventure beyond our expectations.”



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Photos: courtesy Titanic Museum Attraction



From far left: The Titanic's Grand Staircase is re-created at the Titanic Museum Attraction in Branson, Missouri. The museum itself is shaped like the ill-fated ship, complete with an iceberg alongside. Below: The Botanical Garden of the Ozarks showcases the area's natural beauty.

as our home base for five days as we explored Branson. As first-time visitors, choosing a few attractions from hundreds of choices seemed overwhelming. We perused the Branson Vacation Guide and asked for suggestions from the Convention and Visitors Bureau and people at the campground. We chose a wildlife sanctuary, a museum and two shows.

The National Tiger Sanctuary was at the top of our agenda. We were lucky enough to get a tour from the owner, Keith Kinkade. He showed us his customized 38-foot Thor Outlaw toy hauler with large tiger decals on the outside and a tiger cage for transporting his animals on the inside. Founded in 2000, the National Tiger Sanctuary moved to its 100-acre facility in Branson from St. Louis in 2011. They currently have 32 big cats. They also do wildlife rehab, caring for injured animals like foxes and skunks. Since

these animals will be released into the wild, they are not on display. Many of the big cats came from zoos or magic shows where they were confined to small indoor cages. Here they are free to roam in their 10,000-square-foot enclosures. The ratio of 2-3 staff to 1 cat permits a high level of care for the animals. While humans never enter the enclosures, each animal is spoon-fed a customized diet through a slot in the fences. The strength of these animals is evident in some of their "play toys" — a bowling ball bitten in two and a tire shredded to pieces. On our feeding tour, we watched staff member Mariah Morrison feeding 9 pounds of chicken and ground beef to Mariah the tiger. We ended our visit with a 4x4 nature expedition in an authentic Swiss Army vehicle, exploring the natural, undeveloped beauty of the Ozarks.

The Titanic Museum Attraction got our attention when we drove through

town. The building is shaped like the ill-fated ship itself, complete with an iceberg alongside. By telling their stories, the museum honors and respects those who lost their lives on the Titanic. When we entered the museum we were given boarding passes for actual Titanic passengers or crew on the ship's 1912 maiden voyage. We were immediately engrossed in learning more about Jim's first-class passenger, Maj. Archibald Butt, and my third-class passenger, Leah Aks, and the living conditions for each class. We paused to admire the eight musicians who played to calm passengers and eventually went down with the ship. Interactive exhibits gave us an idea of what it might have been like as we touched a real iceberg, tried to stand on sloping decks, and stuck

Below: The Creeks Golf and RV Resort in Cave Springs has an 18-hole course on-site.

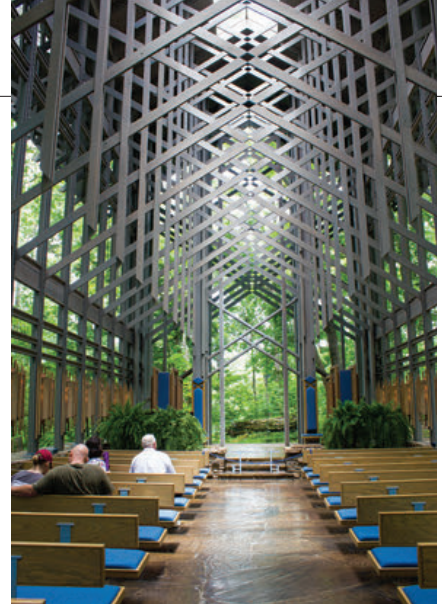
Photos: Jim and Mary Zaimanek





our fingers in 28-degree water. My hand was uncomfortable after a mere 30 seconds. As a memento, we had our pictures taken as if we were standing on the Grand Staircase and on the bow of the ship having a king-of-the-world experience a la Leo DiCaprio and Kate Winslet. In the Memorial Room, we searched the 2,208 names to learn if “we” — see how quickly we identified with the names on our boarding passes — were among the 712 survivors. I was happy to see that 19-year-old Leah and her infant son survived, but saddened that Maj. Butt did not.

Since we hadn’t seen a magic show in ages, we decide to see Rick Thomas, an illusionist. After headlining in Las Vegas for 15 years and performing in more than 50 countries, Thomas moved his show to the Andy Williams Performing Arts Center and Theatre in 2014. In addition to unbelievable magic — really, I couldn’t believe what I saw — the show contained an entertaining mix of dance, music and comedy.



Photos: Jim and Mary Zaimanek

Above: Thorncrowne Chapel near Eureka Springs has won numerous awards, including placing fourth on the American Institute of Architects’ list of top buildings of the 20th century.

He made birds appear, multiply and disappear. He cut a woman in half, and put her back together, of course. He levitated his dance partner, then made her disappear into thin air. I’m still wondering how he sealed an audience member’s watch inside a can in a locked box 30 feet or so from his

location on the stage.

The Duttons are a musical family that includes mom and dad, seven natural children, seven more adopted as teenagers, plus in-laws and a whole slew of grandchildren. They are also one of Branson’s most popular shows. Their musical talent won them a place



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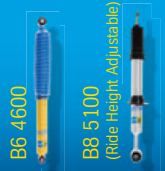
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Right: At the National Tiger Sanctuary, staff member Mariah Morrison feeds 9 pounds of chicken and ground beef to a tiger that is, co-incidentally, named Mariah. Terra Studios in Fayetteville is a whimsical art park filled with dragons, ceramic cars on a miniature highway, giant chess and checkers games, "trash can trolls," and a bear attending a tea party.



in the finals of NBC's "America's Got Talent" in 2007. They play a variety of instruments including violin, banjo, mandolin, guitar, bass, viola, keyboard and harmonica. For added interest, they played instruments behind their heads, and used their bows to play violins of the cast members next to them.

Rainy weather had confined us to indoor activities for most of our visit in Branson. With so much to see and do indoors, it's a great place to be forced inside. On our last day with only a light mist falling, we went to Table Rock State Park to ride bikes. The park sits aside the 43,100-acre Table Rock Lake, which has nearly 800 miles of shoreline. We rode the 2.2-mile paved

Table Rock Lakeshore Trail. By the time we finished the ride, the sun was shining. The ride was short, less than 5 miles even with several detours. We considered doing it twice, but decided to eat instead. The White River Valley Trail System offers mountain bikers and hikers almost 12 miles of challenging, rugged terrain, but it was closed due to recent rains.

From the fine art in Bentonville to the performing arts in Branson, our trip to the Ozarks was an adventure beyond our expectations. **M**

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479-750-2620, <http://bgozarks.org>

**The Creeks Golf and RV Resort**  
479-248-1000, [www.nwarvresort.com](http://www.nwarvresort.com)

**Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art**  
479-418-5700, <http://crystalbridges.org>

**National Tiger Sanctuary**  
417-587-3633,  
[www.nationaltigersanctuary.org](http://www.nationaltigersanctuary.org)

Photos: Jim and Mary Zaimanek



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# DIVINELY INSPIRED

## Southern Utah's Zion National Park may not be heaven, but you can see it from there

*Life is too short to spend your days sitting back and watching the world go by. Especially when you consider the wide variety of adventures to be had in the 400-plus units under the protection of the National Park Service (NPS). As the NPS celebrates its 100th birthday this summer, we'll be right here beside you as we continue our yearlong series full of unforgettable experiences — from mild to wild — that are unique to America's national parks. Places where we sincerely hope you'll Find Your Adventure.*

**I**t's been said that there is no heaven on earth, but there are pieces of it. Like Zion National Park. If that sounds like hyperbole, bear in mind this park's very name implies a heavenly refuge. And while you're unlikely to find any pearly gates or harp-strumming cherubim, there are definitely places where this 229-square-mile reserve does feel divinely inspired.

### Earthly Paradise

Located in southwestern Utah, Zion National Park lies at the intersection of three significant geographic regions: the Colorado Plateau, the Great Basin and the Mojave Desert. That makes it a crossroads for the wide variety of plant and animal life that call these distinct and diverse environments home.

The Zion landscape is also as rugged as they come, full of narrow slot canyons, massive buttes, 2,000-foot cliffs, rushing rivers and soaring natural arches. The red-and-tan-colored Navajo sandstone here makes for a vibrant backdrop, with shades of purple, orange, red and green emerging as the sun makes its way across the impossibly blue high-desert sky.

Human habitation of this area began roughly 10,000 years ago. From the year 500 to around 1300 (when

they disappeared), the Anasazi and Parowan Fremont people lived here. Mormon settlers, who gave this place its heavenly name, came along in the 1860s. In 1909, the area was named a national monument and it became Utah's first national park 10 years later.

### Solitude or Scenery

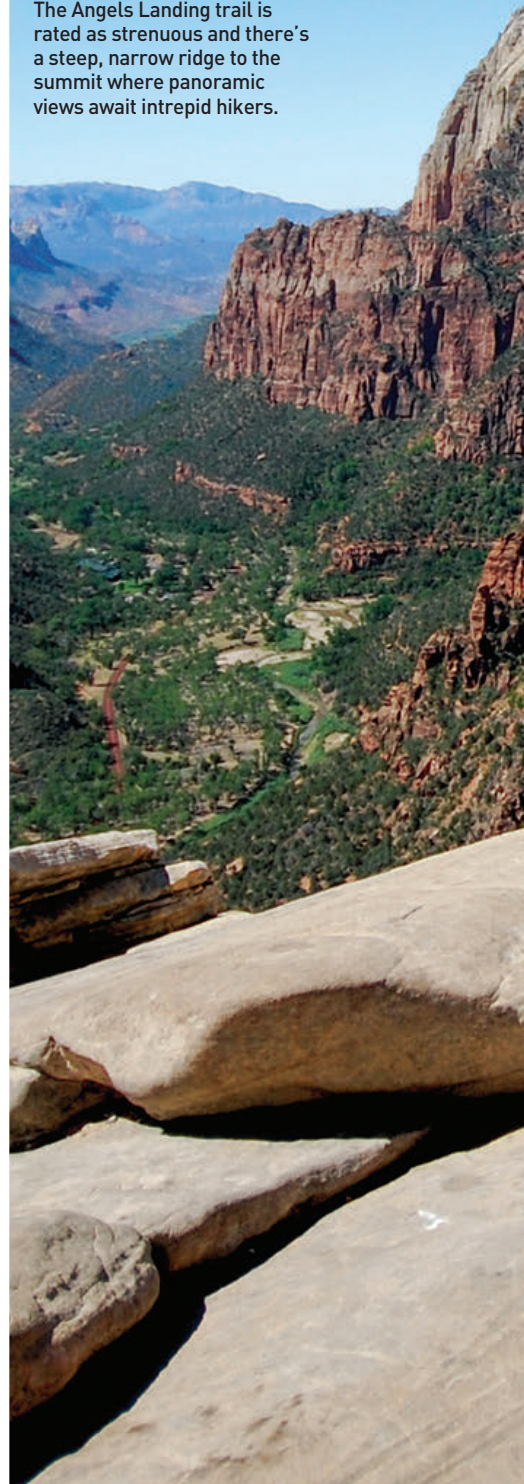
As with any expedition, it helps to get to know the lay of the land before starting out. In the case of Zion, that means understanding there are two main parts to the park, each of which has its distinct advantages.

The northwestern corner of Zion National Park, known as Kolob Canyons, is conveniently located at Exit 40 off



A hike through The Narrows — aptly named, as it's the narrowest section of Zion Canyon — requires walking through the Virgin River.

The Angels Landing trail is rated as strenuous and there's a steep, narrow ridge to the summit where panoramic views await intrepid hikers.





# INSPIRED



## Getting There

From Las Vegas, take I-15 north to Exit 16, state Route 9, and follow Route 9 east for 33 miles to La Verkin, then another 20 miles to the south entrance of the park. From Salt Lake City, take I-15 south to Exit 27, state Route 17, and follow it for 26 miles to state Route 9. Turn left and drive 20 miles to the south entrance of Zion. If approaching from the east, take U.S. Highway 89 to Route 9.



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Interstate 15. This 5-mile scenic drive is typically less crowded than the main section of the park and therefore is a good place for those seeking solitude.

The main part of the park is accessed from the south entrance in Springdale, Utah, via state Route 9, which leads to I-15 and the town of St. George. Though it's bound to be more crowded, it is also home to Zion's most spectacular scenery and should definitely not be missed.

This main section of the park can also be accessed via the east entrance, which leads you through the 1.1-mile-long Zion-Mount Carmel Tunnel and along a series of steep switchbacks. Be aware that motorhomes taller than 11 feet 3 inches and wider than 7 feet 9 inches will need a \$15 tunnel permit, and can only travel this section of roadway during limited hours. The

Kolob Arch, with a span of 287 feet and a thickness of 75 feet, is one of the world's largest natural arches.

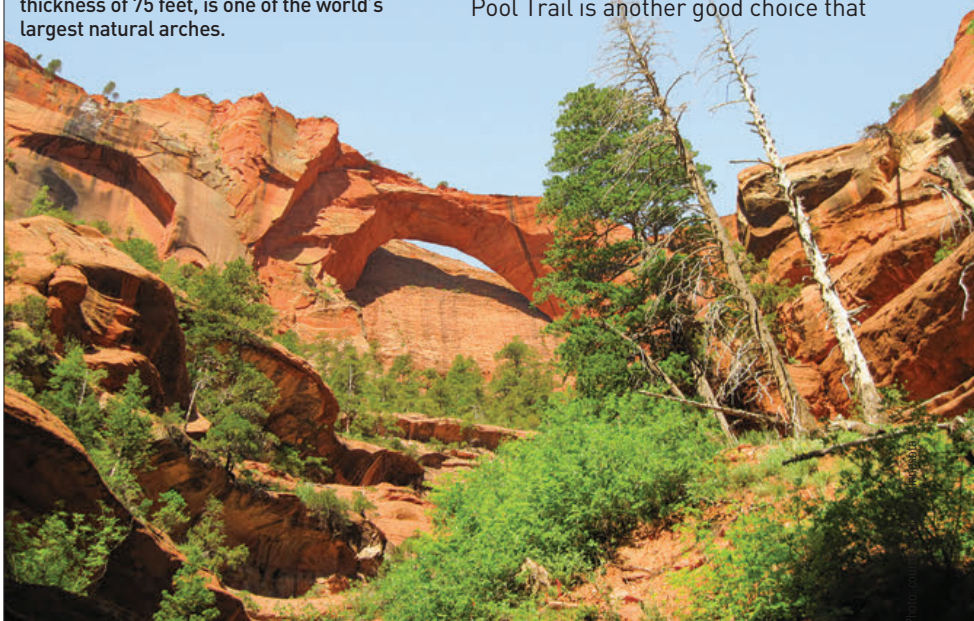
oversize permit fee covers the cost of rangers who temporarily suspend two-way traffic through the tunnel long enough for an RV to pass through. Vehicles taller than 13 feet 1 inch are prohibited.

## Walk On

As far as how to best see Zion National Park, the most time-honored method — putting one foot in front of the other — is still the best.

As for where to stretch those legs, the park has nearly two dozen hiking trails. These range from short, easy strolls along paved paths to challenging all-day hikes with large elevation gains and steep drop-offs.

If you're looking for something less strenuous, try the 2.2-mile round-trip paved trail known as Riverside Walk, which follows the Virgin River along the bottom of the canyon. The paved 1.2-mile round-trip Lower Emerald Pool Trail is another good choice that







Above photos: Utah Office of Tourism, Matt Morgan

leads to a picturesque waterfall.

On the opposite end of the spectrum, the 5.4-mile round-trip hike to the appropriately named Angels Landing is as famous for its stunning views as it is for its difficulty. Hardcore hikers may also want to try hoofing it 14 miles round-trip to the Kolob Arch, one of the largest freestanding natural arches in the U.S.

Finally, the subject of hiking in Zion National Park wouldn't be complete without a mention of The Narrows. This classic 8.4-mile round-trip hike will have you walking in the rocky bed of the Virgin River itself, which can be a great — if somewhat slippery — way to cool off on a hot summer's day. And don't worry if you're not up for the whole hike — doing just the first mile-long section at the end of Riverside Walk will lead you to the most spectacular and narrowest part of the river's deeply incised gorge.

### Going Up

If stretching your legs in the horizontal plane isn't exciting enough, we suggest



Photos: NPS, Randall Seely (left), NPS (right)

From far left: Kolob Canyons Viewpoint is located in the northern, quieter section of the park and can be accessed via a 5-mile scenic drive along Kolob Canyons Road. The Virgin River runs through Zion and is the primary agent of erosion that continues to carve and shape this landscape. Motorhomes taller than 11 feet 3 inches and wider than 7 feet 9 inches will need a \$15 permit to travel through the Zion-Mount Carmel Highway tunnel, and can only drive this section of roadway during limited hours. Vehicles taller than 13 feet 1 inch are not permitted in the tunnel.

you look to the valley's rock walls to plan a vertical escape.

With all the rock faces in this part of the country, it should come as no surprise that Zion National Park is at the epicenter of the sport of rock climbing. Area guides and climbing schools offer everything from half-day sessions to give you a taste of the sport to multiday programs designed to teach you advanced moves used in big wall climbs. All of which can be adapted to your interest and ability levels with safety being the No. 1 priority.

On a related note, Zion is an ideal place to explore the sport of canyoneering. If you've never heard of canyoneering, you can think of it as a combination of hiking and rock climbing with some occasional swimming thrown in as you make your way through remote red-rock slot canyons. While it's not for the faint of heart, with the help of experienced guides and instructors, the wide variety of available classes and tours will take you places few people ever get to go and help you do things that you never thought possible.

### Horsing Around

For folks who believe four legs are better than two, you'll find Zion National Park is a prime spot for horseback riding. Several local outfitters offer traditional trail rides through this beautiful red-rock country lasting from one hour to a half day. Chuck wagon dinners and overnight horseback tours are also offered.

Left: On a clear night, head outside and look up at the stars to see views that rival the famous Zion daytime scenery.



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One of the park's most famous views — the Temples and Towers of the Virgin.

Serious horse lovers will gravitate to the more in-depth program at Jacob's Ranch (435-635-1552, [www.ziontrailrides.com](http://www.ziontrailrides.com)) where their daylong intensive promises to teach you the secret language of horses. From there, you'll move on to an increasingly advanced rider training that will have you ready to gallop by the time you hit the trail.

### In the Dark

For all the natural beauty on display here, the one sight most visitors miss is the night sky.

Zion National Park's clear air and lack of light pollution combine to give visitors views of a starscape that's guaranteed to be far more vivid than what they can see at home. For a guided tour of the night sky, be sure to check at the visitor center to see if rangers will be offering any formal astronomy programs during your time here.

If not, well, don't let that stop you. Head out after dark and find a place removed from artificial light sources. Give your eyes at least 15 minutes to adjust to the darkness, then simply lay back and enjoy the celestial light show.

### Stellar Views

Ultimately reveling in the stars above you may be as close as you actually get to heaven. But look carefully and you'll find pieces of it wherever you turn in Zion National Park. **M**

### GETTING AROUND

From spring through fall, free shuttle buses provide access to the locations in the main part of the park. Shuttles run from early morning to late evening, as often as every seven minutes at peak times. A separate free shuttle service provides transportation within the town of Springdale.

Even with the free shuttles, traffic can be bad at the park entrances so plan on arriving early to avoid the crowds. Alternately, you can park in Springdale and take the town shuttle to the Zion visitor center.

Because of the shuttle system, be sure to bring everything you'll need to spend the day in the park with you, including water/snacks, walking shoes, sunscreen, a hat and sunglasses.

The scenic Zion-Mount Carmel Tunnel can accommodate larger RVs only with permits and at special times. Check with rangers at the visitor center to find out more.

### CAMPING

Zion's **South Campground** features 117 sites with no hookups, available on a first-come, first-served basis. A dump station and potable water are on-site. Sites are often claimed by midmorning so get an early start if you hope to snag one.

The park's **Watchman Campground** offers 95 RV sites with electric service, and accepts reservations (877-444-6777, [www.recreation.gov](http://www.recreation.gov)).

Many commercial RV parks can be found nearby, including Zion Canyon Campground and RV Resort (435-772-3237, [www.zioncamp.com](http://www.zioncamp.com)); Zion River Resort (888-822-8594, [www.zionriverresort.com](http://www.zionriverresort.com)); Zion RV & Campground (877-290-5756, [www.zionrv.com](http://www.zionrv.com)); and Zion West RV Park (435-627-9004, <http://zionwestrv.com>).

Photo: NPS



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# BAYOUS, BEACHES AND BOUDIN

A journey along southwest Louisiana's 180-mile-long Creole Nature Trail All-American Road includes vast stretches of marshland, four wildlife refuges and a chance to fish the waters in the Gulf of Mexico

**T**he air is cool and the sun isn't even up yet as we streak along the greenish waters of the Calcasieu River Ship Channel in Capt. Tom Adams' 24-foot Nautic Star. We've come to explore southwest Louisiana's Creole Nature Trail All-American Road. Not surprisingly, water — seemingly everywhere — is a big part of the experience.

Adams is a 30-plus-year, self-proclaimed "fishing nut" who leads would-be fishermen on the Gulf Coast waters. After picking up some live bait shrimp, we motor for 20 minutes, then angle into what looks like a sea of grass. Adams expertly navigates Oyster Bayou's backwater channel and kills the engine. Deep quiet envelopes us, disturbed only by the irritated squawk of a great blue heron.

"I like to get away from the crowds," Adams says as he baits a shrimp and casts the lure alongside a small island. He hands me the rod, saying, "Just give it a little jerk every 30 seconds or so."

It's not long before I feel a telltale tug. "Jerk it to set the hook," he calls out, grabbing a net. "You've got him."

I reel like crazy, trying to keep the tip up, and soon a 2-pound speckled

trout lands in the net. "That's a good pan-size," says Adams, smiling.

Before long, my traveling companion, photographer Anne Weaver, lands her first speckled trout and then another. But Adams isn't a patient fisherman and, after a half-dozen trout, we cruise back to the channel and sidle alongside a big pile of rocks, one of Adams' "secret" spots. Soon I catch a flounder and, for the next four hours, we haul in drum, redfish, sheepshead, and more flounder and speckled trout — 23 in all.

Between catches, we watch brown pelicans swoop into the water; mighty frigate birds tour the upper airspace; and bottlenose dolphins cut through the water, so close we hear them breathe. By noon, we're dockside, sunscorched, windblown and a little fish giddy.

Adams expertly cleans and fillets our catch and, when we mention we can't possibly cook and eat so many fish in our motorhome, he promptly invites us home for dinner. That evening, we revel in crispy sheepshead that Adams' wife, Joanne, has lightly battered and deep-fried as well as smoky, blackened redfish. These fresh and delicious flavors help us

Photos: Anne Weaver







Main photo: Fishing is a way of life in Louisiana and it seems nearly everyone owns a boat. From far left: The elevated swamp overlooks at Sam Houston Jones State Park almost guarantee you'll see alligators. The rookery on Grosse Savanne sanctuary is home to egrets, herons, cormorants, pelicans and other water birds.

understand why fishing here is not just a sport, but an obsession.

### Cruisin' the Trail

A+ Motel & RV Park on Highway 27 in Sulphur, Louisiana, is a great home base for our first leg of the Creole Nature Trail. Conveniently located on the trail, A+ Motel & RV Park earns its name with 134 full-hookup sites, neatly trimmed grounds with a stocked fishing pond, two laundry/shower houses, and two pools, including an adults-only pool with a covered patio and a 75-inch flat-screen TV. This Good Sam Park is someplace I could kick back and stay a while, but the Creole Nature Trail calls.

For breakfast, we stop at B & O

Kitchen & Grocery, an award-winning specialty meat company in Sulphur, for a true Cajun meal — boudin, rice and pork sausage, and cracklins (pork belly fried crisp). We eat our fill and buy some for the road. Then we drive 5 miles southwest to the Creole Nature Trail Adventure Point, a free, interactive exhibit/welcome center that offers a great introduction to Louisiana's wildlife, bayous and marshes, food and music. The center employs hands-on displays that engage the senses. There's even a high-tech zydeco and Cajun band that lets us "play along."

With guidance from the Adventure Point's bird expert and helpful maps and brochures, we drive south on Highway 27, a flat, well-maintained two-laner.

There are two exits onto the trail from Interstate 10; one near Sulphur, and, to the east, near Lake Charles. While both towns boast the usual stores, fuel stations and cultural attractions like museums, casino gaming and restaurants serving Cajun cuisine, we quickly drive into wild Louisiana wetlands. This is the Louisiana Outback, and we're grateful for our motorhome's full gas tank and cold water and drinks in the fridge.

The Creole Nature Trail, one of only 43 All-American Roads in the U.S., runs 180 miles through three National Wildlife Refuges. The main route is U-shaped with spur roads along the Gulf shoreline and angling into other reserves like Lacassine National Wildlife Refuge and the Peveto Woods Bird & Butterfly Sanctuary. With stops, the main route requires at least two days; to explore all the highlights,

three or four.

We head south, passing through small towns, then farms, and, just past Hackberry, the landscape becomes meandering waterways with islands of grass as far as the eye can see. The road courses along the west side of brackish Calcasieu Lake. At 8 miles wide and 18 miles long, the lake earns its "Big Lake" nickname. Along the roadway, brilliant orange, daisylike flowers flutter in the breeze.

Yesterday, the temperature hovered in the 90s with high humidity, but last night's cold front and thunderstorm have cooled the air. Our first stop is Sabine National Wildlife Refuge, at 125,000 acres, the largest along the trail. We pull into an area marked "Recreation" where a dozen locals fish for blue crabs. One of the crabbers we meet tells us he's been crabbing here for 30 years. When we ask about today's catch, he grins and shows off a 5-gallon bucket nearly full of powder-blue crabs.

Just a hop down the road, we stop at the Blue Goose Trail and wildlife overlook, a paved 1-mile walking trail



### The Route

The most popular entrance to the Creole Nature Trail begins on Highway 27, south of I-10 in Sulphur. The trail leads through 180 miles of bayous and marshlands, and along the Gulf of Mexico, before turning north.







and raised wildlife viewing platform. Atop the tower, the breeze through the grasses and bird tweets, cheeps, squawks, and trills are the only sounds. The Creole Nature Trail is filled with prairie grasslands and miles of freshwater, brackish and saltwater wetlands rich in marsh grasses, crustaceans and small fish, making it a key stopover for birds passing through the Central and Mississippi flyways. In fact, this area boasts more than 5 million migratory waterfowl and 400 species of birds, making it one of the top birding spots in the country.

While visitors will see birds and the occasional alligator along the road, the best way to explore the Creole Nature Trail is to hike refuge trails and walkways. We walk the Wetland Walkway, a raised, 1.5-mile-long boardwalk that wends through 6-foot-tall grasses to a two-story ob-

serva-tion tower with a sweeping view. When we spot a couple hopelessly waving against feisty mosquitoes and deer flies, we share our bug spray. The sun, now fully emerged from the clouds, makes me glad I also brought along sunscreen and a broad-brimmed hat. We spot great egrets, blue herons, red-winged blackbirds and common yellow throats, and, while there are Alligator Alley warning signs, no gators.

Our final stop for the day is Holly Beach, a community of beachfront homes leveled in 2005 by Hurricane Rita. Like a phoenix, the colorful stilted beach cabins have been rebuilt, and this “Cajun Riviera” is once again popular for sunbathing, swimming and shelling. We notice a number of RVs are boondocking and we’re tempted by the white sandy beach, but we’ve got reservations at Sam Houston Jones State Park.

Above from far left: The accessible, elevated boardwalk at Pintail Drive gives birders close-up views. Shrimp boats in Louisiana begin their work early. The area’s blue crabs are famously delicious, and you don’t even need a license to catch them — just some string and a little bait, and before long you’ll be cooking up a fresh, tasty meal.

### Alligators and Baby Birds

Located just north of Lake Charles on the Calcasieu River, Sam Houston Jones State Park encompasses 1,087 acres filled with lagoons, cypress swamps, and pine and hardwood forest. In addition to more than 200 species of birds, the park offers RVers 39 partial-hookup and 20 pull-through sites, most with full hookups, all with barbecues and picnic tables beneath shady trees. There are bathrooms and shower houses, kids’ play structures, three hiking trails and boat launches. The park boasts raised ob-

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Birders explore the Wetland Walkway in Sabine National Wildlife Refuge.





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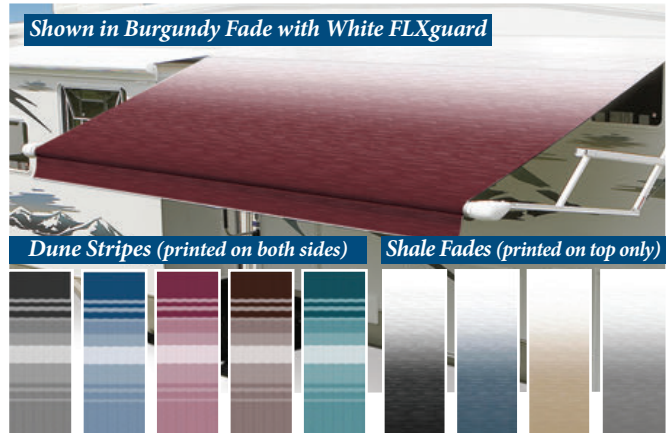


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servation platforms over swamps where we spot our first alligator, a 6-footer lazing in the black water, along with dozens of eastern mud turtles.

After spending a peaceful night, we'd planned to kayak the river, but a sudden morning thunderstorm convinces us otherwise. Instead we churn south down Highway 27, on the east side of the Creole Nature Trail's U-route, to Cameron Prairie National Wildlife Refuge and Pintail Wildlife Drive & Boardwalk.

Pintail is a 3-mile driving route through ponds and watery wetlands filled with stilts, herons, egrets, ibis, cormorants and dozens of duck species. Some ponds are covered with giant lilies, their yellow flower stalks flagging in the wind.

We spend a few hours creeping along Pintail Drive, stopping often to snap photos. While visitors must stay in their vehicles, there's also an opportunity to walk the raised, accessible boardwalk that extends for a half-mile over a marsh and see cormorants and green herons so close you can almost touch them. As we pass, stinkpot turtles evade us by diving headfirst into the brown water.

We're famished by the time we leave Pintail and, at the intersection of Highway 27 and Route 1143, we stop at T-Boy's Cajun Grill for a basket of crispy, light-as-air fried crawfish tails. Then it's on to Grosse Savanne Eco-Tours, a privately owned, 50,000-acre sanctuary of freshwater and



From top: The Gulf Coast has miles of unspoiled, uncrowded beaches. A+ Motel & RV Park earns its name with tidy grounds, full hookups, level sites with picnic tables and barbecue pits, and plenty of amenities.

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saltwater marshes, cypress swamps, coastal prairies, pine forest and agricultural lands.

Capt. Sammie fires up the boat and we motor into the swamp. We move slowly because it's breeding season and rookeries of egrets, cormorants, and blue, green, and tricolored herons have built nests on tree-filled islands. As we approach, the parents rise up, big wings flapping, trying to distract us from the nests. On lower branches, the young birds, some with bristly feathers on their heads, peer out at us. As soon as we pass, the parents flutter back to the treetops.

For the next two hours, we explore the wetlands. Around every bend there's another delight — wigeon ducks churning along; iridescent ibis stalking the shallows; giant chinquapin lilies as large as beach balls; turtles sunning themselves on logs; and small and large alligators, just their eyes, noses and head tops

Right: Boudin sausage — made with pork and rice — is a favorite dish in Louisiana.

visible, patrolling the waters. At one turn, the treetops blaze pink with roseate spoonbills that flap away en masse, filling the sky with their rosy flight.

Around another, we come upon big, dead trees, all of them filled with the twiggy nests of egrets and cormorants. The cacophony of these noisy birds shatters the quiet. We count a dozen, two dozen, three dozen and more nests. Then we spot them — baby birds, some teenagers with crazy-looking spiky feathers, others still naked and blushing. A mother bird flies in and gracefully lands next to the youngest birds that crane their necks, mouths open wide to signal they want dinner.

It's a special moment and one that lets us know we've got to come back. We've just begun to explore the magic of Louisiana's Creole Nature Trail. **M**



### For More Information

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# Family Ties

These Class C motorhomes offer features fit for the whole tribe . . . and then some

**W**e are often bitten by the RVing bug at an early age, meaning many of us have most of our lives ahead when we decide to ditch the tent and take the motorhome plunge. So it's little surprise that at some point or another, the majority of us will be looking for a motorhome that not only suits our needs, but is an ideal fit for the entire family as well. Considering RVing is perhaps the perfect family-friendly activity, it makes sense that most motorhomes are geared toward multiple occupants rather than one or two. In fact, it's tough to find a motorhome that doesn't at least offer a tip of the cap toward the little folk, be it additional seating, high-traffic flooring or even a bathtub.

Another important factor for family units is maneuverability. Because these motorhomes will often be used in smaller campgrounds that focus on junior rangers, or even

to transport little ones to soccer games or field trips, a Class C is a smart choice. Class C's are generally lauded for their nimbleness and represent an easy transition from the minivan, SUV or truck that many families already have in the driveway, making them perhaps a bit more accessible to this segment than Class A coaches.

Taking that into consideration, some Class C manufacturers go above and beyond subtle family-friendly features and swing for the fences, offering things like bunk beds, removable game tables and storage appointments you may not find in couples-oriented coaches. If that sounds like your cup of tea, we've gathered some of the more notable family-friendly floorplans and configurations to help begin your quest for family togetherness; the campfire songs and roasted s'mores are entirely up to you.



## Coach House

The Platinum 272XL FS is a dual-slideout 27-foot motorhome that can sleep up to four RVers. Like all Platinum motorhomes, the 272XL FS is constructed using a one-piece molded fiberglass shell with carbon-fiber reinforcement.

The rear bedroom features a queen bed in its own slideout, offering extra

space to move around, and easy access to the storage drawers and wardrobe closet. The power sofa up front folds down into a full-size bed that can sleep two little ones.

By day, two removable tables may be set up so that the sofa can be used for board and card games, dining or simply relaxing.

The full galley features everything

you need to feed a hungry group, including a three-burner LP-gas stove, a stainless-steel sink with cover, a three-way 6-cubic-foot refrigerator-freezer and a microwave convection oven. The private bathroom features residential appointments such as a full-size stand-up shower and porcelain toilet.

Chassis	Ford E-450
Engine	6.8-liter V-10
Fuel capacity	55 gal
GVWR	14,500 lbs
Exterior length	26' 10"
Exterior width	8'
Exterior height with A/C	10' 5"
Wheelbase	176"
Freshwater capacity	38 gal
Black-/gray-water capacity	20 gal/25 gal
LP-gas capacity	15 gal
Base MSRP	\$163,220

**Coach House**  
800-235-0984, [www.coachhouserv.com](http://www.coachhouserv.com)



### Coachmen

If you're in camp with children, chances are you'll be spending most of your time outside, playing or hiking around the campsite, or maybe grilling some burgers and hot dogs for dinner. Coachmen's Leprechaun 319MB makes it even easier to stay outside by bringing the inside out. Available options include an exterior camp table, sink, refrigerator, and even an exterior entertainment center, complete with 32-inch LCD TV, DVD player and stereo. But the inside of the Leprechaun is quite family-friendly as well. There are plenty of sleeping positions thanks to the overhead bunk with child safety net and ladder, sofa bed, 45-by-82-inch U-shaped dinette and the comfy queen bed in the master bedroom. Entertainment is provided via a 40-inch LCD TV/DVD player housed in a power lift, which keeps the TV out of sight when not in use. The Leprechaun utilizes composite Azdel construction in its side walls, which is lightweight, better insulating and more durable than traditional wood.

Chassis	Ford E-450
Engine	6.8-liter V-10
Fuel capacity	55 gal
GVWR	14,500 lbs
Exterior length	32' 11"
Exterior width	8' 5"
Exterior height with A/C	10' 11"
Wheelbase	223"
Freshwater capacity	50 gal
Black-/gray-water capacity	29 gal/32 gal
LP-gas capacity	16 gal
MSRP	\$91,459

**Coachmen RV**  
**574-825-8380, www.coachmenrv.com**



### Dynamax

Family time is fun time, and that means you need to have the space to let loose, and the ability to bring along some toys. The Dynamax Isata 5 combines diesel power with luxury living to house and entertain multiple guests and the power to tow up to 10,000 pounds. The 36DS floorplan can sleep up to six adults thanks to the king bed (with 66.5-by-75-inch mattress), sofa bed and a cabover bunk. Amenities include a 39-inch LED TV in the living area, 2,000-watt pure sine-wave inverter, a 6-kW Onan diesel generator, soft-close full-extension ball-bearing drawer guides, whole-coach water purification system, a 16-cubic-foot stainless-steel residential refrigerator with icemaker, a three-burner gas cooktop and a microwave

convection oven. The Isata 5 also includes premium Beauflor vinyl floors, solid-surface countertops and solid-hardwood raised-panel cabinet doors.

Exterior highlights include a one-piece crowned fiberglass roof, corrosion-resistant rotocast storage compartments and side-opening aluminum storage doors with metal paddle latches. The motorhome also features a Ram ESC Suspension and Stability package, an exhaust brake, a trailer-brake controller and four-wheel ABS.

Chassis	Ram 5500 SLT
Engine	6.7-liter Cummins turbodiesel
Fuel capacity	74 gal
GVWR	19,500 lbs
Exterior length	36' 2"
Exterior width	8'
Exterior height with A/C	12' 4"
Wheelbase	264"
Freshwater capacity	95 gal
Black-/gray-water capacity	42 gal/42 gal
LP-gas capacity	20.3 gal
Base MSRP	\$175,614

**Dynamax Corp.**  
**888-295-7859, www.dynamaxcorp.com**



### Forest River

Recognizing the need for versatility when designing a family-friendly motorhome, Forest River offers the Sunseeker 3170, a bunkhouse model that can easily sleep as many as eight to 10 RVers. The standard footprint includes a single overhead 60-by-80-inch bunk (with a 42-inch LED TV), a sofa bed, a convertible dinette, a kid-size sofa bed with a flip-down bunk above and a queen bed for mom and dad. Buyers can also opt for the alternative floorplan, which swaps the single overhead bunk for two 26-by-62-inch bunks (for kids who want to

sleep separate from their annoying siblings), along with additional storage and a smaller (but still 32-inch) TV. With either configuration, the rear bunk area includes its own TV for kid-friendly viewing, and the convenient location of the bunks near the bathroom isn't lost on us. Other highlights include a gel-coated fiberglass exterior, a flip-up countertop extension in the galley, a porcelain toilet in the lav and options for an exterior TV and LP-gas quick-connect for a campside grill.

Chassis	Ford E-450
Engine	6.8-liter V-10
Fuel capacity	55 gal
GVWR	14,500 lbs
Exterior length	32' 3"
Exterior width	8' 5"
Exterior height with A/C	11' 3"
Wheelbase	220"
Freshwater capacity	44 gal
Black-/gray-water capacity	39 gal/39 gal
LP-gas capacity	10 gal
Base MSRP	\$94,360

**Forest River Inc.**  
**866-837-6044, www.forestriverinc.com**





## Jayco

Like all of Jayco's new motorhomes, the Greyhawk 29ME is built with the company's JRide Plus ride and handling package, which offers Hellwig helper springs, rubber isolation mounts, upgraded Bilstein shock absorbers, an oversized sway bar and a computer-balanced driveshaft. This all adds up to a smoother ride for the driver, meaning he/she will be more likely to toss a ball or go for a hike with the kiddos when the family arrives at camp. Once the playing is over, the family can retreat to the spacious interior to view the cabover entertainment center with optional 39-inch LED TV. A feature that's sure to delight the little ones, the entertainment center also features a pullout bunk, for comfortable sleeping by night, and what will likely become a cool fort by day. Other highlights include a 1,000-watt inverter, frameless windows, electric awning with LED lighting and an 8-cubic-foot

double-door refrigerator. The rear of the motorhome offers mom and dad a roomy retreat, with a queen bed, chest of drawers and a dresser. Outside, the seamless fiberglass front cap, one-piece roof and fiberglass running boards, plus a powered entry step and large pass-through storage, mean the Greyhawk not only looks good, but is a practical, family-friendly cruiser.

Chassis	Ford E-450
Engine	6.8-liter V-10
Fuel capacity	55 gal
GVWR	14,500 lbs
Exterior length	32' 5"
Exterior width	8' 3"
Exterior height with A/C	11' 5"
Wheelbase	223"
Freshwater capacity	32 gal
Black-/gray-water capacity	31 gal/41 gal
LP-gas capacity	13.2 gal
Base MSRP	\$106,243

**Jayco**  
574-825-5861, [www.jayco.com](http://www.jayco.com)



## Nexus RV

Nexus is a factory-direct manufacturer offering stock floorplans with the ability to add upgrades. The Phantom 32P comes standard already loaded with family-friendly flourishes. Kids should love the built-in bunk beds, touch-screen radio with backup camera and the exterior TV cable jack. Mom and dad will love the fiberglass front cap, radius tinted windows and electric patio awning outside, and should delight in the raised-panel hardwood cabinetry, LED lighting, upgraded Beauflor flooring, soft-touch upholstery and double-door refrigera-

tor inside. The stainless-steel sinks, deluxe innerspring mattress and heated and enclosed holding tanks are all standard and a nod toward the Phantom's luxury. The list of options is impressive, and includes appliance and cabinetry upgrades, a solar power system, automatic leveling jacks, an exterior entertainment center and an on-demand water heater.

Chassis	Ford E-450
Engine	6.8-liter V-10
Fuel capacity	55 gal
GVWR	14,500 lbs
Exterior length	33'
Exterior width	8' 5"
Exterior height with A/C	11' 3"
Wheelbase	223"
Freshwater capacity	40 gal
Black-/gray-water capacity	28 gal/28 gal
LP-gas capacity	12.2 gal
Base MSRP	\$74,999

**Nexus RV**  
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### Phoenix Cruiser

Phoenix Cruiser, another factory-direct motorhome manufacturer, is providing potential buyers with a choice of nine floorplans and allowing them to decide the rest. From the chassis selection (Ford or Sprinter) to the body paint, and the flooring on up to the interior wall colors, Phoenix makes it easy to truly make this motorhome your own. Each unit features vacu-bonded laminated side walls, roof and floor, plus a smooth

gel-coat exterior and one-piece fiberglass roof. Options include a slideout, a double-sofa floorplan which provides more sleeping space for the family, backup monitor, durable wood flooring and more. The 2350 floorplan (pictured above) is a popular selection, offering a rear bathroom, a streetside slide with an electric sofa and a swivel chair near the entry door for more seating options while watching the TV in the cabover entertainment center.

Chassis	Ford E-350
Engine	6.8-liter V-10
Fuel capacity	55 gal
GVWR	12,500 lbs
Exterior length	23' 11"
Exterior width	7' 9"
Exterior height with A/C	9' 10"
Wheelbase	158"
Freshwater capacity	38 gal
Black-/gray-water capacity	35 gal/23 gal
LP-gas capacity	10 gal
Base MSRP	\$97,995

**Phoenix Cruiser**  
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## Renegade

OK, so maybe it isn't exactly nimble or compact, but the joys of driving a Renegade Verona — built on Freightliner's robust M2 HD Business Class chassis — are felt the second you get behind the wheel. The Cummins engine is capable of upwards of 350 horsepower and more than 1,000 LB-FT of peak torque, which are serious numbers for an engine in this class. And the fact that it's rated to tow up to 20,000 pounds isn't too shabby, either. But the Renegade is about more than brute strength; the VBH model pictured here is a family-friendly bunkhouse, with dual bunks in addition to a sofa bed and convertible dinette. The rear bedroom is appointed with a plush king bed, as well as dual closets, a dresser and washer/dryer prep. Stainless-steel appliances include an 18-cubic-foot residential French-door fridge with icemaker. Solid-maple cabinets and solid-surface countertops will help ensure the Verona lasts for all of your family adventures.



Chassis	Freightliner M2 HD Business Class
Engine	Cummins ISL9
Fuel capacity	100 gal
GVWR	34,300 lbs
Exterior length	40' 2"
Exterior width	8' 3"
Exterior height with A/C	12' 8"
Wheelbase	309"
Freshwater capacity	150 gal
Black-/gray-water capacity	75 gal/75 gal
LP-gas capacity	24.2 gal
Base MSRP	\$278,831

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**Thor Motor Coach**

Thor's Quantum WS31 makes room for the whole family with a full-wall slide to open up the living area. The opposing dinette and jackknife sofa offer sleeping comfort for the kids, while the cabover bunk houses a spacious 54-

by-87-inch sleeping area, in addition to the standard 40-inch LED TV and DVD player; the built-in skylight with electric shade helps to illuminate the front end by day. A whole-coach water-filtration system keeps the late-night glasses of water tasting fresh, while Thor's Rapid

Camp wireless motorhome control system makes setup a snap, with touch-screen technology that controls things like leveling jacks, the slideout, the AC generator, the awnings and the patio lights. The WS31 also features a 16-cubic-foot residential refrigerator with icemaker, 30-inch stainless-steel microwave and solid-surface counter-tops and sink covers, making meal prep for the whole tribe easier than ever.

Chassis	Ford E-450
Engine	6.8-liter V-10
Fuel capacity	55 gal
GVWR	16,000 lbs
Exterior length	32' 2"
Exterior width	8' 3"
Exterior height with A/C	11' 1"
Wheelbase	223"
Freshwater capacity	40 gal
Black-/gray-water capacity	28 gal/28 gal
LP-gas capacity	10 gal
Base MSRP	\$113,400

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## Winnebago

When it comes to family adventures, getting a good night's sleep is important in order to avoid a band of grumpy explorers the following morning. Winnebago's Minnie Winnie 31K offers multiple sleeping spaces designed to accommodate the whole family. The large U-shaped dinette, sofa bed, overhead cab bed and walk-around queen bed in the master bedroom all ensure your tribe sleeps well. They can eat well, too, thanks to the fully equipped galley, which can be upgraded to include an optional four-door refrigerator and microwave convection oven. A large slide opens up the living area, making it a great place for entertaining, movie time or simply stretching out. Outside, the electric awning helps keep things cool around the campsite. The motorhome is also equipped with a large rear trunk storage compartment for lawn chairs, fishing rods, firewood and the like. All Winnebago motorhomes are built to meet the company's SuperStructure standards, ensuring maximum durability for many years down the road.



Chassis	Ford E-450
Engine	6.8-liter V-10
Fuel capacity	55 gal
GVWR	14,500 lbs
Exterior length	32' 9"
Exterior width	8' 5.5"
Exterior height with A/C	11' 1"
Wheelbase	220"
Freshwater capacity	44 gal
Black-/gray-water capacity	30 gal/30 gal
LP-gas capacity	18 gal
Base MSRP	\$87,486

**Winnebago Industries Inc.**

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CA07368



# The BIG Chill

A hands-on comparison of seven portable coolers reveals which features to consider when shopping for a new ice chest

**F**or many years, a cooler was just a cooler, with very few available options and materials. Today, that is no longer the case; there is a wide variety of types, brands, features and sizes. These new coolers include features such as antimicrobial liners, built-in cutting boards, built-in tie-down points, stainless-steel hinge pins, locking tabs, UV inhibitors and dual-stage drain plugs. If you haven't shopped for a cooler in a while, you'll find that these new models have so many upgrades they'll make your old cooler obsolete. Of course, the price of these coolers has changed as well, so before you read on, brace yourself for coolers that approach the \$500 price point.

In order to bring you up to speed on these new "super coolers," we picked six of the most popular products on the market and decided to do our own comparison to see how much they have changed. We also wanted to see if it is possible for a sub-\$100 cooler to compete with one that costs more than \$400, so we included a standard Coleman Xtreme to the mix to see how it does against the coolest coolers on the market.

In addition to the price, another noticeable change is the overall size. Since these new models are designed to hold ice for a very long time, their exterior has increased in size relative to their interior volume. Manufacturers have increased the thickness of the walls and lid to better insulate this new generation of coolers. Some units now have walls that are 3 inches or more thick and weigh up to 40 pounds or more. A good example of this is the difference in the Coleman Xtreme 70-quart versus a similar-capacity 75-quart ORCA. The ORCA not only has a 44 percent larger footprint than the Coleman, it also weighs 35 pounds versus 13 pounds for the Coleman.

Although we are not a certified laboratory, while trying to control as many variables as possible, we tested each of these coolers side by side,

not once, but twice in an attempt to observe the longevity of cooling for each unit. We tested typical bag ice as well as blocks of ice made from gallon jugs of frozen water, and reusable ice packs to see if any of those made a significant difference in how long the items stayed cold. Since blocks of ice are thicker, denser and have less surface area, it is often said

that block ice will stay frozen longer, so we wanted to test both types to see if that really matters.

During the first few hours after filling a cooler with ice, a significant amount of the ice is melted while lowering the temperature of the cooler. Naturally a 51-pound, 95-quart Pelican will consume more ice cooling it off than will a 13-pound, 70-quart Coleman. If you make sure everything you place in the cooler is already cold, it will offer a measurable performance difference. So whenever possible, chill everything before tossing it in the cooler.

Our ice-retention tests were conducted indoors in our below-ground photo studio with a constant ambient temperature just below 70 degrees Fahrenheit. Although our test conditions are not exactly representative of a summer camping vacation, the performance of the coolers compared to each other is still valid.

It has long been said that block ice lasts longer than cubed ice. Since the solid blocks of ice (and frozen ice



Right: These modern coolers have improved dramatically in materials and features compared to older models from the past.

packs) have less surface area than cubes or crushed ice, it will not melt, or cool off the contents of your cooler, as fast. In our second ice-retention test we took our best two performing coolers — the Pelican and Esky — and retested them. This time we replaced 16 pounds of cubed ice in the Pelican with two 1-gallon containers of frozen water jugs (equal to 16 pounds) and tested it again against the Esky. The Esky was filled with cubed ice, just as it was in the first test. Test No. 2 confirmed the theory that block ice is slightly slower to melt. So if you need the longest-lasting setup, replace some of your cubed ice with block ice to obtain longer-lasting storage.

When we purchased the Cabela's Polar Cap cooler, we also bought two of its 5-pound ice packs. In the second test of the Cabela's cooler, we replaced 10 pounds of cubed ice with the two frozen 5-pound ice packs and tested its performance again. Just as with the frozen water jugs in the Pelican, the ice packs did extend the usable life of the Cabela's cooler compared to cubed ice only. If you have access to reusable ice packs, they do work as advertised.

After melting more than 1,000 pounds of ice, and evaluating these

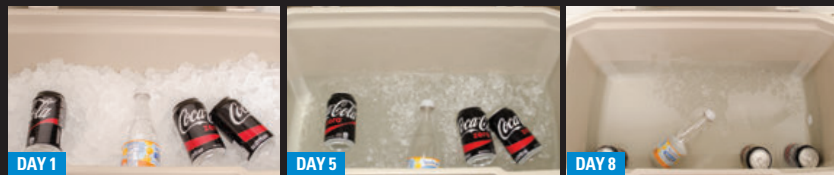
## THE ICE-RETENTION CHALLENGE

In the sequence of photos below, you can see that the Pelican kept its contents cold for an incredible 14 days, which is one of the reasons it's an Editors' Choice. The much less expensive Coleman lasted for 8 days, which is still very impressive considering its low cost.

### BEST COOLER: PELICAN 95QT ELITE



### STANDARD COOLER: COLEMAN XTREME 5



coolers, we learned a lot about the units and naturally we liked some better than others. However, all of these coolers performed well. That said, there are clear differences that can help you choose the model that will best suit your needs.

The first thing you should consider is the cooler's size and weight. These super coolers are significantly larger than standard coolers. If you only need a few days' worth of storage, and size or weight is a concern, stick to a standard cooler such as the Coleman Xtreme

5. If, on the other hand, you need the maximum storage time and can deal with the added weight and bulk of the best models, then pick based on the cooler's features. All of the longest-lasting coolers will hold ice for quite a while; what separates them are their features and design differences.

In the following section we note

1) Here is a look at all the coolers before we filled them with ice. 2) Here you can see the equalization valve built into the Cabela's cooler. Also notice that the rubber hold-down straps have a built-in bottle opener. 3) The Esky drain valve features two openings as well as retained straps to prevent losing the caps, and a threaded hose fitting for attaching a water hose for drainage.





which models have certain features — such as a hose attachment to facilitate draining. A hose attachment allows you to connect the cooler to a traditional water hose and drain it so that you don't have to pick up the heavy cooler and take it to a suitable location to drain the water after the ice melts.

Another difference we noted is that some models have a sloped interior bottom so that all of the water empties out when the cooler is flat. This is done by manufacturing the drain valve at the very bottom of the cooler floor. Combined with a sloped floor, these models allow all the water to drain without having to lift up one end. If you use your cooler a lot, this is a feature that you will come to appreciate.

Five of the coolers have a retained drain plug so you can't lose the plug while draining. On models without a retained plug, it is very easy to misplace it when draining the water. In the long run, you will be much better off with a unit that includes this feature.

Another feature is a locking tab, which allows you to place a lock on the lid to prevent unauthorized access. Six models have locking tabs, but only three of them have a more-difficult-to-compromise metal locking tab. If your cooler is going to be used in areas where you need to keep out unauthorized users, then this feature is a must.

All but two of the coolers have tie-downs to prevent movement during transport or use. The tie-down feature is designed into the body of the cooler so that the lid can still be opened to access the contents. This is a very nice feature if you ever plan on using the cooler in a boat or in the back of a truck.

Although only one of these coolers (the Dometic Avalanche 65LW) came equipped with wheels and a pull handle, the Cabela's Polar Cap is made to allow it to be used with an optional Cabela's cooler cart (\$149.99). Once filled, these coolers are quite heavy and the ability to roll them around is a major benefit. We found the Dometic to be useful when loading the coach as well. We loaded it with the refrigerated items



4] The ORCA cooler has a built-in cargo net on the back that can be used for storing items that don't need to be kept cool. 5] The Esky cooler is loaded with features. Here you can see the interior rack, a cable that prevents the lid from opening too far, as well as the lock slot and tie-down point and the cutting board stored on the inside of the lid. Around the perimeter of the lid is the freezer-grade rubber gasket to seal in the cold air.



and then used it to roll everything to the motorhome. After unpacking the cooler, we stored it in the basement for use at the campground. Then we unloaded the refrigerator the same way using the Dometic cooler as a rolling cart to carry everything back into the house at the end of the trip.

Another difference in these coolers is the carry handles. Many of them use a rope handle with a plastic sleeve, while others use either a molded handle or a rigid plastic folding handle. The Cabela's cooler has both, with one set of rope handles and a set of fixed-position plastic handles molded into the body of the cooler. The Pelican has folding plastic handles attached to a fixed-position bar on the body of the cooler that can also be used as a carry handle. We liked these two designs best.

As you can see in the photos, most of these coolers use rubber straps to hold the lids closed. The Dometic Avalanche, Cabela's Polar Cap, YETI and ORCA all use rubber straps that are pulled down to lock into the body of the cooler. The Esky, however, has its straps constructed into the body of the cooler, which means you pull them up to lock the lid in place. The Pelican Elite is the only unit that doesn't use rubber straps — it has replaceable, high-quality press-and-pull latches. All of these methods worked well.

All but one of these coolers has a freezer-grade gasket around the top of the lid to seal the cooler when the lid is closed. On traditional coolers, the

seal is made by the mating sections of molded plastic, but when you are looking for maximum storage time, be sure to pick a cooler with a gasket.

It's not often we struggle to name winners in a product review, but this test was challenging because these are all really good coolers. After considering the critical factors — the ice-retention test, drain-plug type and design, water draining, handle design, warranty, tie-down locations and design, bear-resistance rating, extra features, and hardware type — we finally came up with our two favorites: the Esky and Pelican. Right behind them are the Cabela's, ORCA and YETI, and then the Dometic. Frankly, all of them will work well for the average user. We suggest you look carefully at the design features and see which one fits your needs. All of these manufacturers make various sizes, so if you like a particular model but want a larger or smaller unit, or a different color, it is probably available. Now check out the summary of each model and pick one for your next adventure.

## ICE RETENTION TEST NO. 1 RANKING

- 1 Pelican 95QT Elite
- 2 Esky 85 Quart
- 3 Cabela's Polar Cap 60-quart Equalizer
- 4 YETI Tundra 75
- 5 ORCA 75
- 6 Dometic Avalanche 65LW
- 7 Coleman Xtreme 5

### Pelican 95QT Elite

Cost	\$499.95
Weight	51 pounds
Dimensions	37.75 x 20 x 24.8 inches
Capacity	95 quarts
Bear Rated	Certified
Drain Plug Type	Single
Retained Drain Plug	Yes and hose attachment
Complete Drain	Yes
Handles	Plastic folding and fixed handle
Locking Tabs	Metal
Tie-Downs	Yes (4)
Gasket	Yes
Made in USA	Yes
Hardware	Replaceable latches
Extras	Fish scale on lid
Warranty	Lifetime
Website	www.pelican.com



**Comments:** Ice retention was very good, but the shape of the interior is deep and narrow, which makes it difficult to access items on the bottom.

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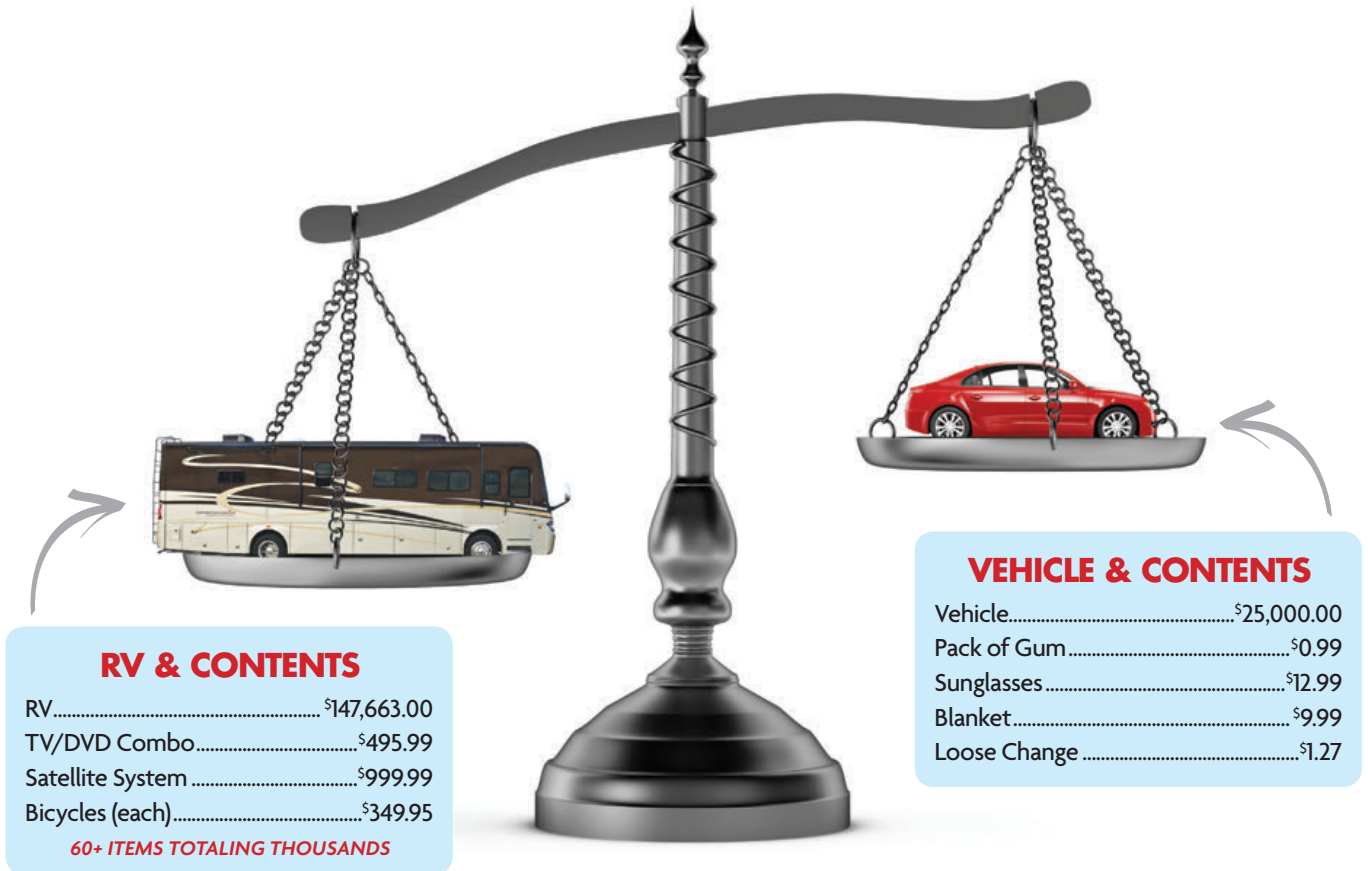
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### Esky 85 Quart

Cost	\$499.99
Weight	42 pounds
Dimensions	32.8 x 19.4 x 21.8 inches
Capacity	85 quarts
Bear Rated	Certified
Drain Plug Type	Dual
Retained Drain Plug	Yes and hose attachment
Complete Drain	No
Handles	Rope

Locking Tabs	Metal
Tie-Downs	Yes
Gasket	Yes
Made in USA	Yes
Hardware	Not replaceable
Extras	Antimicrobial, built-in cutting board, fish scale and interior rack
Warranty	6 years
Website	www.campingworld.com

**Comments:** Ice retention was very good; overall, this is one of our favorites.

### Coleman Xtreme 5

Cost	\$79.99
Weight	13 lbs
Dimensions	31 x 15.75 x 18.25 inches
Capacity	70 quarts
Bear Rated	No
Drain Plug Type	Single
Retained Drain Plug	Yes
Complete Drain	Yes
Handles	Hard plastic

Locking Tabs	No
Tie-Downs	No
Gasket	No
Made in USA	Yes
Hardware	None
Extras	Cup holders on lid
Warranty	N/A
Website	www.campingworld.com

**Comments:** The lid is a friction fit — which makes opening it more difficult than the other models — but it's a solid performer for the price..



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### YETI Tundra 75

Cost	\$449.99
Weight	34 pounds
Dimensions	33.25 x 18 x 18 inches
Capacity	75 quarts
Bear Rated	Certified
Drain Plug Type	Single
Retained Drain Plug	No
Complete Drain	Yes
Handles	Rope

Locking Tabs	Plastic
Tie-Downs	Yes
Gasket	Yes
Made in USA	Yes and also the Philippines; call 512-394-9384 to request a U.S.-made YETI
Hardware	Rubber strap
Extras	Interior rack
Warranty	5 years
Website	<a href="http://yeticoolers.com">http://yeticoolers.com</a>

**Comments:** Lid would not stay open when loading or unloading.



### ORCA 75

Cost	\$459.99
Weight	35 pounds
Dimensions	35 x 18 x 18 inches
Capacity	75 quarts
Bear Rated	Resistant
Drain Plug Type	Single
Retained Drain Plug	No
Complete Drain	Yes
Handles	Rope

Locking Tabs	Plastic
Tie-Downs	Yes
Gasket	Yes
Made in USA	Yes
Hardware	Rubber strap
Extras	Cargo net on back
Warranty	Lifetime
Website	<a href="http://www.shoporca.com">www.shoporca.com</a>

**Comments:** ORCA offers a wide range of colors.

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## THE BIG CHILL



### Cabela's Polar Cap 60-quart Equalizer

Cost	\$299.99	Locking Tabs	Plastic
Weight	30 pounds	Tie-Downs	Yes
Dimensions	37 x 19.8 x 19 inches	Gasket	Yes
Capacity	60 quarts	Made in USA	Yes
Bear Rated	Certified	Hardware	Rubber strap
Drain Plug Type	Single	Extras	Glow-in-the-dark rope, dolly attachment and equalization valve
Retained Drain Plug	Yes	Warranty	1 year
Complete Drain	Yes	Website	www.cabelas.com
Handles	Rope and plastic		

**Comments:** Third-best score overall in ice-retention tests. Includes molded section to retain handles when not in use.

### Dometic Avalanche 65LW

Cost	\$395.97
Weight	28.7 pounds
Dimensions	23.4 x 17.6 x 22.5 inches
Capacity	65 quarts
Bear Rated	No
Drain Plug Type	Single
Retained Drain Plug	Yes and hose attachment
Complete Drain	No
Handles	Plastic
Locking Tabs	Metal
Tie-Downs	No
Gasket	Yes
Made in USA	N/A
Hardware	Rubber strap
Extras	Wheels, cup holders on lid
Warranty	7 years
Website	www.dometic.com

**Comments:** Built-in wheels and handle make this one very convenient. **M**







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# SMALL WONDER

The latest Class C from Leisure Travel Vans makes the journey as rewarding as the destination By Chris Hemer

**H**ave you noticed? Small is a pretty big deal these days. From diminutive towable dwellings to shipping container cottages, the prevailing message seems clear: We can — and perhaps should — do more with less.

That's nothing new to motorhome owners, of course. We've gotten along so famously in compact quarters that many of us consider 400 square feet of living space excessive. Yet the tiny trend has affected the RV industry nonetheless — and where it once seemed like some manufacturers were unprepared for it, companies like Leisure Travel Vans (LTV) have embraced it.

A brand of long-standing Canadian manufacturer Triple E Recreational Vehicles, LTV specializes in small

Class C motorhomes, offering five different models in the 24- to 25-foot range. The newest addition to the family is the 2017 Wonder, built on the Ford Transit diesel chassis and offered as a more affordable alternative to the company's popular Unity motorhome, which is built on a Mercedes-Benz Sprinter chassis. The Wonder gives up a streetside living area slideout (and consequently some elbow room) to the Unity, but little else — and the Transit chassis is so good, it may just sway silver-star intenders to the blue-oval camp.

We found this motorhome to be very enjoyable to drive, and the chassis has much to do with this. The rack-and-pinion steering is nicely weighted and has good on-center feel; the steering wheel even features

welts at the 10 and 2 positions like a performance car. The brakes are predictable and have excellent feel, and the chassis tuning inspires confidence. The independent MacPherson strut front suspension with stabilizer bar results in exceptional handling, and though it does get pushed slightly when passed by 18-wheelers, the movement is predictable, easily corrected and not a bit scary.

The 3.2-liter Power Stroke five-cylinder common rail turbodiesel engine is based on Ford's proven global diesel engine architecture, and it shows. There's a little bit of pleasant diesel clatter at idle, but on the highway, the engine emits only enough sound to let you know it's there. It's powerful, too — with 350 LB-FT of torque on tap, it had little trouble hustling the Wonder up a 6 percent grade at 63 MPH and the six-speed automatic transmission with manual mode shifted smoothly and quickly. The Wonder's aerody-

**ABOVE:** The LTV Wonder is a pleasure to drive to your travel destination thanks to its well-sorted chassis and excellent overall build quality.



dynamic shape practically eliminated wind noise at highway speeds, and also contributed to impressive fuel economy. Though we got 15.9 MPG over a long combined drive cycle, we managed 17.1 MPG on level highway at 65-70 MPH.

Heading to our destination in California's Los Padres National Forest, we couldn't help but feel that the Transit's cockpit is better than the Sprinter's as well. Visibility, either through the windshield or side windows, is excellent. Everything is easily in reach, including the shifter, which is located just to the right of the steering wheel. The switch gear feels well-made, the analog tachometer/speedometer are easy to read, and a centralized multi-information display offers a variety of useful info, including distance to empty, average fuel economy, diesel exhaust fluid (DEF) level and much more. The touch-screen display atop the center stack incorporates controls for the Bluetooth phone system, navigation and radio, which includes SiriusXM but no CD player.

The Transit chassis also includes a backup camera display integrated into the rearview mirror. It's small, but it works, and there is a switch on the dash to leave the camera on while traveling; the large sideview mirrors do their job 90 percent of the time, but you sometimes can't see when someone is right behind you, as is often the case on a windy road with impatient traffic on your tail.

The seats, though commercial



**BELOW:** The galley is well-organized and has enough room for meal prep. Overhead cabinets, plus large drawers and a wall organizer keep your necessities within reach. The rear bath is separated from the living area by a pocket door with foot-operated travel latch. Seats and table can be converted to a queen-size bed in less than a minute.



in origin, feel comfortable and supportive, and are covered in a soft Ultraleather. There are cup holders atop the dash on either side, which is convenient, as well as a larger cup holder in the center console that can accommodate bigger beverages. The center console also includes a clearly marked 12-volt DC power outlet, a row of four AUX switches, two USB outlets and red/white/yellow RCA receptacles. There are bins underneath each dash cup holder for small items, and above the windshield are shelves that would be perfect for stowing maps, travel guides and the like.

In fact, the only detail in the cockpit we would like to see is improved privacy/sun protection. There is no screen to go across the windshield due to a large plastic

rearview mirror mounting box that prevents a screen from mounting flat against it. Instead, there is a curtain behind the seats that is only partially successful; the seats must be moved forward and the backrests raised before the curtain can be drawn across and fastened in the middle with a few strategically placed magnets. Most of the time it's fine, but in hot weather, the sun can still stream in through the large windshield, with only the cloth curtain and a lone air conditioner to keep the interior comfortable. If it were our motorhome, we would have a custom sunscreen made for the windshield and side windows, which would solve this minor problem.

Walking into the living area, the first thing that strikes you is how

**Left:** Bath area offers a small but elegant vanity, large mirror and enough storage for small items. The shower will accommodate 6-plus-footers and features residential-style fixtures.



## LEISURE TRAVEL VANS WONDER

roomy it feels, especially considering the lack of any slideouts. This is due, in part, to the sleek, contemporary interior design, but mainly because of a feature that is largely absent in permanent residences today but is perfect in this application: a 60-by-80-inch queen Murphy bed that folds down from the driver's side wall. It was fun to watch the reaction of visitors when they walked inside — almost everyone said, "Wow, it's a lot bigger inside than I thought," but no one said, "Where's the bed?" That's because LTV makes great use of space when the bed is stowed — so you don't really notice that it's gone. Most of the time, there are two comfy-looking white chairs facing the entry door with a table between them. But unlike the Unity's Murphy bed floorplan, which offers multiple seating arrangements, the Wonder really only offers two: facing forward, or facing the table. That's not a bad thing, though, because it makes

deploying the bed fast and easy. Just toss the seat cushions aside, release the latches and pull it down. As you do so, the table and backrests fold with it — and a thoughtful detent supports the bed while you rotate a brace to its underside. The detent also works when folding the bed up.

Overall, the arrangement looks and works great, but there are a

few problems. The two seats have no safety belts, so friends can't travel with you. And, since there is no slideout, the bed is situated lengthwise, which leaves very little room between the side of the bed and the opposing entertainment console. When you swing your legs over the side, the hard edge of the platform scrapes the back of your legs, and

## LEISURE TRAVEL VANS WONDER



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walking back to bed from the rear bath in the dark could definitely cause a memorable shin injury. Rounding some corners, maybe putting a foam-backed vinyl cover over the edge, would really help. Otherwise, the bed is comfortable, and the forward curtain combined with the window shades throughout means a nice, dark place to watch a movie or get some shut-eye. You can't really lie in bed while watching TV, as it is on the streetside in the console and you'd have to turn your head to watch it. However, LTV places fixed pillows on the opposing wall, so it is quite comfortable to sit up on the bed and watch TV. It's a compromise, but a very small one.

Unlike the Unity we tested, where the TV popped up out of the console with 007-style flair, the Wonder's entertainment center is simpler in its function. Just pull the countertop to its upright position, and the TV is right there, with a Samsung Blu-ray player

next to it and a bungee net to secure the remotes, magazines, etc. We would like to comment on the sound/picture quality, but having dry camped we had no TV signal.

Storage space is excellent, if a bit perplexing at times. Everything is covered in white laminate panels for a clean, modern look with no exposed handles or knobs anywhere. But that means there are several possible ways to open each door/drawer. Depending on what you are attempting to access, you might pull from the top center, pull from the bottom center or push it to make it pop open. It's just a matter of acclimation. In a design exercise to keep the cabinets looking uniform and clean, the refrigerator is concealed behind a lower door. Pushing this door releases the latch and allows the refrigerator door to open at the same time.

The galley is compact but makes good use of space. The two-burner Dometic stove has a glass cover, and

**WHAT'S HOT**

Excellent driving manners and build quality, quiet engine, elegant design.

**WHAT'S NOT**

No safety belts on dinette seats, minimal space between edge of Murphy bed and opposing console, some sharp edges.



with this down, there is adequate prep space if you have a small cutting board. The round stainless-steel sink is huge and has a residential-style high-rise faucet, as well as a matching cover for the black laminate counter. Beneath the cooktop are three large, deep drawers, and above the counter are two cabinets



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# Specifications

## Chassis

Model	Ford Transit
Engine Power	Stroke inline 5-cylinder turbodiesel
SAE Hp	185 @ 3,000 rpm
Torque	350 lb-ft @ 1,500-2,500 rpm
Transmission	Six-speed automatic
Axle Ratio	3.73:1
Front Tires	195/75R16C
Rear Tires	195/75R16C
Wheelbase	178"
Brakes	Disc with ABS
Suspension F/R	Independent MacPherson strut with stabilizer bar/solid axle with leaf springs and heavy-duty gas shock absorbers
Fuel Capacity	25 gal
Fuel Economy	15.9 mpg (combined city/highway)
Warranty	3 years/36,000 miles basic, 5 years/60,000 miles powertrain

## Coach

Exterior Length	24' 9"
Exterior Width	7' 5"
Exterior Height	9' 11.5"
Interior Width	7' 1"
Interior Height	6' 5"
Construction	Welded aluminum framing, vacuum-bonded walls with 2-pound density polystyrene foam insulation, fiberglass skin, one-piece fiberglass flex roof
Freshwater Capacity	34 gal
Black-Water Capacity	37 gal
Gray-Water Capacity	28 gal
Water-Heater Capacity	6 gal
LP-Gas Capacity	13.2 gal
Air Conditioner	(1) 13,500 Btu with heat strip
Furnace	16,000 Btu
Refrigerator	6.7 cu ft
Inverter	1,200 watt
Battery	(2) 12-volt deep cycle
AC generator	3.6 kW
MSRP	\$105,820
MSRP as tested	\$110,595
Warranty	2 year limited

## Wet Weight

(Water and water heater, fuel and LP-gas tanks full, no supplies or passengers)

Front Axle	3,740 lbs
Rear Axle	5,440 lbs
Total	9,180 lbs

## Chassis Ratings

GAWR F/R	4,130/7,272 lbs
GVWR/GCWR	10,360 lbs/13,500 lbs
ROCCC	1,180 lbs



Above: What looks to be an ordinary cabinet quickly turns into an entertainment console by lifting the lower edge. A flat-screen TV and Blu-ray player stand at the ready.

— a shallow one in the center and a deeper one in the corner. Underneath the sink is a door that opens to reveal a good-sized trash can with a lid, which we loved. There is also a mini pantry/spice cabinet to the right, a 120-volt AC outlet and a switch for undercabinet task lighting. On the left, or back wall of the galley, is a multifunction storage area that incorporates a paper towel holder, moveable hooks, and a handy dish-drying rack that can be stored in one of the drawers.

Lighting, both electrical and ambient, is excellent in the Wonder. LED fixtures throughout are thoughtfully placed and easy to use, with most switches located to the left of the entry door. Rotate one knob, and all the overheads come on; you can then adjust brightness to your liking. There is also under cabinet ambient or “mood” lighting that looks cool and would be perfect to leave on when you have planned to return to the motorhome at night. Even the interior grab handle can be illuminated. Within easy reach over the bed/seating area is a huge Euro-style skylight that literally is a breath of fresh air. It works beautifully and features integrated day-night screens, so you can leave it open on a warm night to let the cool breeze in. Combine this with the Hehr tilt-out windows atop the stowed bed and above the entertainment console, and the result is excellent ventilation — even with the entry door closed. There is also a powered Fan-Tastic Vent above the galley area that is likewise accessible by the vertically challenged.

Instead of jamming the bath area

into one side as we’ve seen in other small motorhomes, LTV capitalizes on the rear of the motorhome to great effect. The area is small, but not cramped, and features a dark wood vanity with a cute stainless-steel sink and residential-style faucet. A huge mirror makes the area feel larger than it is, and there is adequate storage space for essentials. The shower features chrome fixtures and has enough room for 6-footers, courtesy of an overhead skylight; there is also a waterproof LED light on the wall.

The Wonder’s exterior looks thoroughly modern as well, with its clean lines and full-body paint, but like the interior, is thoroughly functional. A power awning features an LED light strip, and the lower compartments incorporate hydraulically dampened radius doors. There is only one lower compartment on the curbside (the others conceal the battery and generator compartments) but there is a large cabinet on the rear corner with bungee nets, adjustable shelving and a utility hook for a variety of storage options. On the streetside is a well-organized utility center and an access compartment for the LP-gas and sewer hose storage, plus a longer compartment aft of the driver’s door that easily accommodated the 30-amp power cord, freshwater hose, a box of DEF and some other items.

The Wonder is an ideal choice for couples who want to tour the country in comfort. Indeed, sometimes good things do come in small packages. **M**

**Leisure Travel Vans**, Triple E Recreational Vehicles, 877-992-9906, [www.leisurevans.com](http://www.leisurevans.com)





**WOW SUPER COUPON**

**SAVE \$90**

**Customer Rating** ★★★★★

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

LOT 61258 shown  
61840/61297/68146

**BADLAND**  
comp at \$159.99

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15416687

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**PITTSBURGH**

**CLAW** LOT 69006 shown  
60715/60714

**RIP** LOT 47873 shown  
69005/61262

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**WOW SUPER COUPON**

**2.5 HP, 21 GALLON, 125 PSI VERTICAL AIR COMPRESSOR**

LOT 69091/67847 shown  
61454/61693/62803

**CENTRAL PNEUMATIC**

**Customer Rating** ★★★★★

**SAVE \$339**

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**WOW SUPER COUPON**

**Customer Rating** ★★★★★

**18 VOLT CORDLESS 3/8" DRILL/DRIVER WITH KEYLESS CHUCK**

**drillmaster**

LOT 62868/62873  
69651/68239 shown

Includes one 18V NiCd battery and charger.

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**RAPID PUMP® 1.5 TON ALUMINUM RACING JACK**

**PITTSBURGH**

LOT 69252/60569 shown  
68053/62160  
62496/62516

**Customer Rating** ★★★★★

**SAVE \$60**

- 3-1/2 Pumps Lifts Most Vehicles
- Weighs 34 lbs.

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**WOW SUPER COUPON**

**3-IN-1 ELECTRIC BLOWER VACUUM MULCHER**

**NEW**

**Customer Rating** ★★★★★

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**WOW SUPER COUPON**

**TRIPLE BALL TRAILER HITCH**

**HaulMaster**

LOT 61914  
61320 shown

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**6.5 HP (212 CC) OHV HORIZONTAL SHAFT GAS ENGINES**

**PREDATOR ENGINES**

LOT 60363/69730  
LOT 68121/69727 shown  
CALIFORNIA ONLY

**Customer Rating** ★★★★★

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**3 PIECE DECORATIVE SOLAR LIGHTS**

**one stop gardens**

LOT 95588/60561  
69462 shown

**Customer Rating** ★★★★★

**SAVE 70%**

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**WOW SUPER COUPON**

**US \* GENERAL PRO**

**Customer Rating** ★★★★★

**30" 5 DRAWER TOOL CART**

LOT 69397/61427  
95272 shown

704 lb. capacity

**SAVE \$180**

**\$169.99**  
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**WOW SUPER COUPON**

**FOLDABLE ALUMINUM SPORTS CHAIR**

LOT 62314/63066  
66833 shown

**Customer Rating** ★★★★★

**SAVE 55%**

**\$21.99**  
comp at \$49.97

• 250 lb. capacity

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LOT 66287 shown  
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**8750 PEAK 7000 RUNNING WATTS 13 HP (420 CC) GAS GENERATORS**

**PREDATOR GENERATORS**

• 76 dB Noise Level

**Customer Rating** ★★★★★

**SAVE \$449**

**\$549.99**  
comp at \$999

LOT 68530/63086  
63085/69671 shown  
LOT 68525/69677  
63087/63088  
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15399671

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**WOW SUPER COUPON**

**CENTECH AUTOMATIC BATTERY FLOAT CHARGER**

**Customer Rating** ★★★★★

**SAVE 82%**

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comp at \$34.99

LOT 69594/69955/42292 shown

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By Ken Freund

# Banks Power for Diesel Pushers

The company's PowerPack improves fuel economy and power on a Cummins diesel

**M**any lower- and midpriced diesel motorhomes have just enough power to get where you're going, but hitch up a trailer or dinghy or head for the mountains, and you'll be wishing for more zip. A bit of extra fuel economy wouldn't hurt, either!

With this in mind, we recently tried out a PowerPack designed for 2003-09 Cummins ISB-CR 5.9-liter diesels, which was the stock engine on a 2004 Fleetwood Expedition Class A pusher motorhome coupled to an Allison model 3000 automatic transmission. The test coach weighed 21,950 pounds.

Modifications were completed at Banks headquarters in Azusa, California, and consisted of the EconoMind Diesel Tuner and a Banks iQ driver interface, which gives you six distinct levels of adjust-on-the-fly power and lets you monitor many critical engine functions (boost pressure, exhaust-gas temperature and more). There is also a fuel-economy setting. The tuner works in conjunction with engine and transmission electronic controls to adjust and optimize fuel injection, the variable-geometry turbocharger, transmission shifting and torque-converter lockup, all to get the best performance in all conditions.



A 2004 Fleetwood Expedition is tied down on the Mustang MD-750 chassis dyno at Banks.

Whenever additional fuel is injected into the engine, extra air is needed as well to keep exhaust-gas temperatures from getting too high. In conjunction with the fuel increases, Banks changes the turbocharger's variable-geometry settings to increase boost and needed airflow.

Maintaining durability is a high priority. Power is briefly reduced during shifts to lower the torque going through the transmission, which protects it and reduces wear on clutch packs and other components. As part of product development and testing, Banks installs special high-tech cylinder-pressure sensors, which measure peak pressures to ensure that safe limits are always maintained and these are programmed in.

## Installation

During installation, the tuner is mounted in the engine bay and the wiring is routed. The tuner works by optimizing fuel injection, increasing dwell (spray time) of the injectors. It also advances injection timing when it's advantageous, and the system increases fuel-rail pressure for better fuel atomization. However, peak fuel pressure is always kept below the stock pressure-relief valve setting to maintain reliability. All this results in more complete combustion, more power and better mileage due to greater efficiency.

Next, the iQ driver interface display is installed near the dashboard and



The Banks PowerPack for this model consists of an EconoMind Diesel Tuner and a Banks iQ driver interface unit.

wiring connected. The iQ uses a 5-inch color touch screen, which allows many operating parameters to be monitored, and the driver can adjust power levels, custom tune performance settings, measure performance, see GPS-correct speeds and more.

### Testing and Results

Before driving the motorhome, we ran it under load on a Mustang MD-750 chassis dynamometer with dual energy absorbers, which is rated to handle up to 1,500 horsepower at the drive wheels. Keep in mind that rear-wheel horsepower and torque numbers are substantially lower than power measured on an engine stand dyno, which measures output at the flywheel, before it goes through the transmission and differential where substantial frictional losses occur. Instead, a chassis dyno measures real-world power that's actually put down on the road. This is why the horsepower and torque ratings may appear low, compared to factory dyno numbers, which are taken at the flywheel.

The Mustang dynamometer is fully computer-controlled and can even follow a simulated driving sequence such as that required by the EPA for emission certification. Dyno testing is more repeatable than driving on public roads, where constantly changing conditions throw off the consistency that is needed, especially for fuel-economy testing. Dyno testing also eliminates variations caused by wind, traffic and other factors that cause unwanted variations during instrumented road tests.

Banks claims on its website that this combination produced peak gains of 85 horsepower and 203 LB-FT of torque. The test coach came very close



PHOTO: PATRICK MCKINLEY

Measuring power at the drive wheels results in real-world numbers directly relating to performance you get on the road.

to these claims, with a gain of 78.2 horsepower, and beat the torque claim with a substantial 228.5 LB-FT gain. In addition to the horsepower and torque improvements, which result in shorter times and distances when accelerating and higher hill-climb speeds, there was also a significant fuel-economy improvement of 6.1 percent (see chart). These results were accomplished without making any mechanical changes to the motorhome.

### Driving Impressions

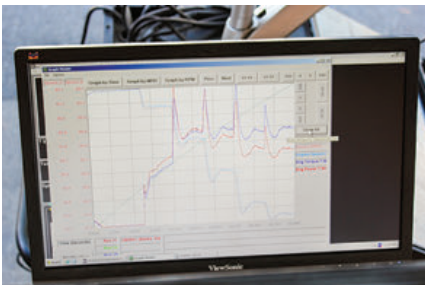
The test coach was in good mechanical shape and ran well in stock condition with no problems. However, its acceleration and general performance were underwhelming. Driving on city streets and relatively level highways was acceptable, but merging onto high-speed interstates, especially with uphill ramps, was a white-knuckle experience. And that was without a trailer or dinghy vehicle behind!

This type of motorhome comes

with one of the smallest diesel engines available in the segment. Although the 5.9-liter Cummins is a strong and reliable powerplant, it's working hard to keep up with traffic. When moderate 3-4 percent grades are climbed, full throttle is needed to maintain speed. Steeper gradients, such as a 6 percent grade, which is typically maximum on interstates, requires the transmission to downshift to fourth gear with full throttle. Under these conditions, the stock engine is working hard and exhaust-gas temperatures are near the maximum limit. Overall the coach seemed to have just enough power to get there and back with nothing extra.

Driving after the PowerPack was installed showed a marked improvement that could easily be noticed during a test drive, even without special instrumentation. The additional torque was readily noticed, particularly during initial acceleration from a stop and midrange pull. Merging into highway traffic was significantly more comfortable and less stressful, allowing the driver to pay more attention to lane position and following distances and less concern about finding a spot to merge into.

From left: During test pulls, the chassis dynamometer provides the operator with a wealth of real-time information about what is going on in the engine bay.



PHOTOS: KEN FREUND



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**PLATINUM II**  
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- Choice of chassis: Ford E-450 (gas) or Mercedes Sprinter (diesel).
- Nationwide warranty service.
- High ratings for ride and safety.



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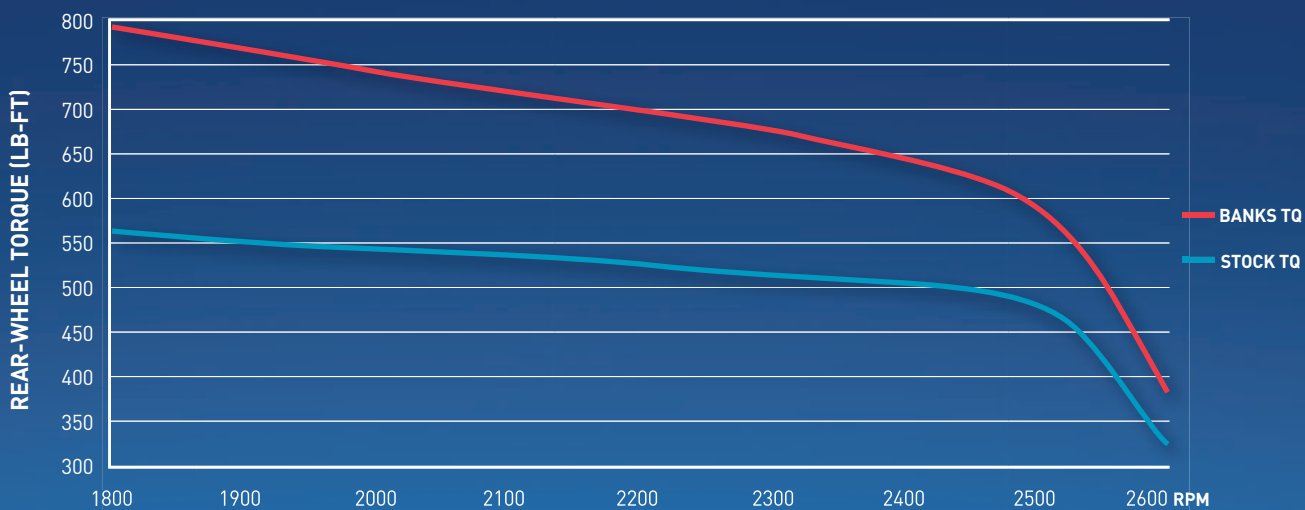


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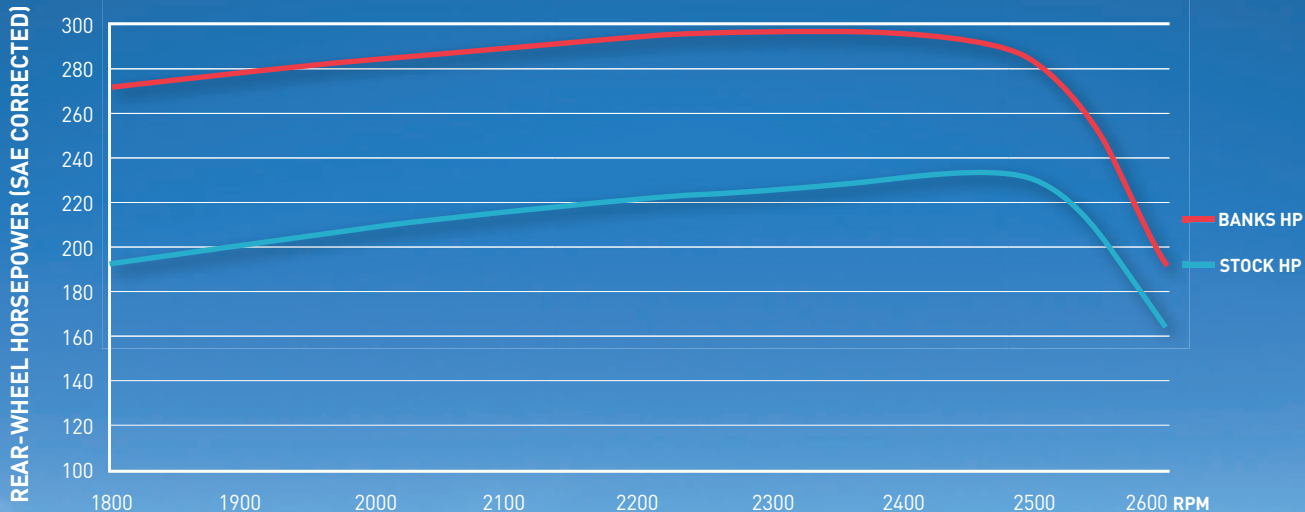


PHOTO: KEN FREUND



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**STEP TEST**

RPM	2600	2500	2300	2100	1900	1800
Stock Torque	329.1	481.3	513.3	539.2	550.9	563.8
Banks Torque	387.0	593.1	675.0	717.8	767.1	792.3
Torque Gain (in LB-FT)	58.0	111.8	161.7	178.6	216.2	228.5
Percentage Gain	17.6	23.2	31.5	33.1	39.2	40.5
Stock Horsepower	162.9	229.1	224.8	215.6	199.3	193.2
Banks Horsepower	191.6	282.3	295.6	287	277.5	271.5
Horsepower Gain	28.7	53.2	70.8	71.4	78.2	78.3

At the highest power setting, the motorhome readily climbs moderate grades without holding full throttle, with some reserve power if needed. During hill climbs and full-throttle acceleration the exhaust-gas temperature never exceeded readings observed during the stock run and stayed in the safe zone. Overall, driving is more relaxed, thanks to a feeling

that the motorhome now can keep up with the traffic and accelerate, climb and pass when necessary. On some grades the coach was able to run one gear higher uphill.

The system seems to be well-designed and made, the installation was done right, and the product did what it claimed to do. It doesn't require any modifications to the engine or exhaust,

there are no moving parts and should you decide to remove it, it doesn't leave any electronic memory in the computer.

Suggested retail price for the parts is \$2,047.41. Prices may vary with individual dealers around the country; installation labor at Banks' shop came to \$490. Labor costs at other installation centers may vary.



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## PERFORMANCE SUMMARY

TEST	Stock	PowerPack	Improvement
Rear-wheel Horsepower Best Gain	199.3 @ 1900	277.5 @ 1900	78.2 HP (39.2%)
Rear-wheel Horsepower Peak-to-Peak Gain	229.1 @ 2500	295.6 @ 2300	66.5 HP (29.0%)
Rear-wheel Torque Best Gain/Peak-to-Peak Gain	563.8 @ 1800	792.3 @ 1800	228.5 LB-FT (40.5%)
0-60 MPH Acceleration Time	29.48 Sec	22.13 Sec	-7.35 Sec (24.9%)
40-60 MPH Acceleration Time	15.41 Sec	11.25 Sec	-4.16 Sec (27.0%)
Hill Climb Speed (8.6% Grade)	42 MPH (3rd gear)	51 MPH (4th gear)	+ 9 MPH (21%)
Fuel Economy	10.12 MPG	10.74 MPG	+0.62 MPG (6.1%)

Banks' warranty coverage for the tuner and iQ is for one year; details are listed on the company's website. Although this product should not void any factory warranties, that's basically a moot point because the model applications covered should be out of warranty. Motorhomes in California of this weight class are not required to undergo a California Smog Check,

but the California Air Resources Board (CARB) requires an executive order (EO) number for the product to be legal in the state. Buyers in states where California rules are applicable should check with Banks for documentation.

Banks Power offers other products for various motorhome engines, including diesel PowerPacks for the 2007-12 Cummins 6.7-liter and

1993-98 Cummins B series, along with many gasoline models. Special air intakes, exhausts, torque converters and other performance-enhancing items are also available. **M**

### Source

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# Community SPIRIT

9100 PowerChannel Power Patio Awnings feature new PowerChannel Technology

## Dependable Dometic RV appliances and accessories provide reliability and convenience, and high-quality innovations make life more comfortable

As more people fall in love with RVing, the on-the-road lifestyle is growing in unique ways. A true RV fellowship is being developed as people share long-lasting friendships. Living and recreating aboard an RV is no longer just for hardy adults—today young and old, singles, couples, families and seniors are enjoying the freedom aboard an RV.

Whether you're looking for a new RV, or refreshing the appliances and accessories you already have, 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 lifestyles.

## Awnings



The PowerChannel system on the new 9100 PowerChannel Power Awning transfers 12V power to run accessories such as this light anywhere on the tube.

Dometic's awnings set new standards in innovation with a complete line of patio, door and window awnings. The 9100 Power Awning with PowerChannel Technology breaks new ground. Using Dometic's patent-pending Power Transfer Module, the PowerChannel system transfers 12V power from the vehicle through the awning's roller tube to run multiple and different types of accessories up to 15 amps, such as fans, lights and speakers, from anywhere on the tube.

An independently-powered LED light strip, located in the roller tube, provides ambient lighting. Lighted switches alert you when the LED lighting and PowerChannel are in use, and there are no visible wires.

The PowerChannel Rail (4' and 2' lengths) allows for the use of these convenient accessories inside the RV and also could be used



in your residential home. The PowerChannel Rail makes it easy to set up a fan, add lighting and listen to music indoors, and it's also a great place to store your accessories when the awning is stowed. Look for more PowerChannel Accessories to come.

The 9100 Power Awning (also available in a manual version) opens and retracts with ease by pressing a wall-mounted switch. It features stylish and rugged single-sided or double-sided vinyl fabric.

The Dometic WeatherPro power awning provides superior performance and prevents damage by utilizing a wind sensor that closes the awning automatically when it detects high winds. An exclusive Knee Action Design™ allows the awning to automatically flex in moderate wind, avoiding nuisance retractions.

The Dometic Veranda Room makes your RV patio awning into a comfortable screened-in enclosure free from flying insects, and increases your living space. Thanks to the NEW patent pending connection system, setup is fast and simple, and the Veranda Room can now be installed on most any Power Awning and to traditional manual awnings. Reduce the sun intensity by more than 50 percent with the simple-setup Veranda Shade, which comes in a kit with all tie downs and stakes.

For convenience and added ease, open and close your awning in seconds with the NEW G-Series Geared Awning's patent-pending separable crank handle, with only seven steps compared with 12 steps on torsion-spring models. For windows, the Deluxe Plus and Elite Window Awning offer a patented, easy-to-use PermaLoop pull strap.

All of today's Dometic awnings for motorhomes feature double-sided Linen Fade vinyl or acrylic fabric that comes in a wide range of crisp colors. Fabrics are also available in Replacement Fabrics that fit any awning.



*PowerChannel Rail can be installed in the interior of your RV—even your home!*



*The WeatherPro utilizes a wind sensor, automatically closing the awning when high winds are detected.*

## Slidetoppers

To protect the top of RV slideout rooms, stain- and mildew-resistant vinyl SlideToppers function by extending automatically to keep water and debris from entering the RV when the slideout is retracted. The Deluxe EZ features a vinyl weathershield and reflects heat and light to help keep the interior cooler. An anti-billow mechanism holds the stain and mildew resistant vinyl canopy snug. The new EZ design is a complete kit that is quicker and easier to install than earlier versions.

The Elite EZ features a metal weathershield that reflects heat and light and has an anti-billow function. The wrap-around design encloses the vinyl awning and extends and retracts automatically with your slideout, and comes in a complete kit.

All SlideToppers are available in hardware and fabric colors that include polar white, black, champagne, and satin.





Elite 2 + 2



Super Hybrid

Dometic has been perfecting RV refrigeration since the 1950s. Dometic's new Super Hybrid refrigerator addresses the growing demand for flexibility – the fresh food unit, on top, uses energy-efficient absorption technology that can run on either propane or electricity.

The fresh food unit has three times the evaporator size of standard RV fridges, and pull down is half of a standard absorption refrigerator. It uses powerful variable-speed compressor technology, and runs on 115VAC or 12VDC electricity. It provides 9 cubic feet of extra-large storage capacity.

The Elite 2+2 Refrigerator offers 15% improved performance and four doors. Unlike other dual-door refrigerators, the 12.3 cu. ft. capacity Elite features a divider-less freezer compartment for wall-to-wall cooling. With its upscale refinements such as through-door ice water and optional icemaker, the Elite offers home-style convenience.

*Portable Freezers/Refrigerators*

Never buy ice again with the new CFX Series of Portable Freezers/Refrigerators. The CFX is available in six sizes, available from 27 to 86 quarts (26 to 95 liters), and utilizes a fully hermetic WAECO compressor with integrated control electronics and low-voltage protection.

The lineup includes the CFX-28US, CFX-35US, CFX-40US and CFX-50US, and the two largest CFX models, the CFX-65DZUS and CFX-95DZUS, have CoolFreeze DUAL-ZONE capability. This offers 3-in-1 versatility that no other portable cooler can match, allowing you to use the CFX as a cooler and freezer with separate compartments for refrigeration and freezing; as an "all cooler" with entire area dedicated to refrigeration; as an "all freezer" with entire area dedicated to freezing.

CFX models come with a soft-touch digital thermostat, and can be controlled with a Wireless Display, except for the CFX-95DZUS, which can be remotely



monitored and controlled by a NEW mobile app. A quick-chill turbo function runs compressors at maximum performance until desired temperatures are reached, from -8°F to 50°F. CFX units can run on 120V AC, 12V DC or 24V DC power.

Chilled wine is a much-appreciated luxury, and the MF-6W six bottle wine cooler stores your most precious wines perfectly. The desired temperature (between 41°F and 68°F) is preset and reliably maintained by the cellar cabinet (up to 64°F below the ambient temperature). The MF-6W is compact, practical and absolutely vibration-free. An easy-to-read control panel shows the preset temperature as well as the actual temperature, and the unit features a transparent door, safe magnetic lock, interior light and three removable grid shelves. All these features make the MF-6W great for optimally cooling or chilling white or red wines.



## Portable Ice Makers

## Microwaves



The Dometic HZB-15A Portable Ice Maker makes up to 33 lbs. of fresh ice every 24 hours, and the first batch is delivered in under 15 minutes. It comes with an energy-saving clear window in the lid to check the ice level without losing cold. Choose from small, medium or large cubes.

Dometic's HZB-12SA Compact Portable Ice Maker is a smaller yet makes ice in less than 13 minutes. It also is available in new red (HZB-12RD) and teal (HZB-12TL) colors. Its compact size makes it perfect for stowing in an RV, boat or even a car. It produces 26 lbs. of ice every 24 hours, and a removable basket holds 1.8 lbs. of ice. Cube size can be large or small and there is an easy-to-use display on the lid.



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

Dometic's Over-the-Range microwave offers a large 1.6 cubic foot capacity and 1,000 watts of cooking power. The one-touch electronic controls make for simple operation, and inside the adjustable metal rack accommodates a variety of dishes. The unit has sensor technology to cook any item to the optimal temperature and retain moisture.

## Air Conditioning



As a perfect cooling solution for fifth wheels, travel trailers, and motorhomes, the Blizzard NXT has a powerful motor and fan. It's the newest in Dometic's line of rooftop air conditioners, heat pumps and RV climate control systems and uses the most advanced technologies, including environmentally friendly R410A refrigerant.

The Blizzard NXT provides an industry-leading 350 CFM airflow and advanced engineering that maximizes airflow around the evaporator coils for better performance.

Expanded polypropylene (EPP) foam construction provides better insulation, plus reduces weight and unwanted condensation. Use of heavy sheet metal is minimized to improve performance and eliminate noise issues. It's available in white/black or black/black with A/C and heat pump models available in capacities of 13,500

and 15,000 BTUs

The Brisk II and Penguin II line of air conditioners offer reliable climate control to make life on the road more pleasant. The well-designed Brisk II Air Conditioner is the result of two years of re-engineering. One of the most popular and most imitated RV air conditioners, the Brisk II is stronger, lighter, smaller and more environmentally friendly.

The Brisk II uses its smart design, tighter specification allowances and improved materials to maximize air flow and performance. This RV A/C unit offers a 15% air flow increase and is 19% lighter than previous models, making it the smallest 13,500 BTU rooftop unit available. The Brisk II Heat Pump offers 15,000 BTUs of heating and cooling from a single unit.

The Penguin II low-profile RV rooftop air conditioner is a versatile cooling system that is thermostatically controlled in a multi-zone system with the Comfort Control Center II Thermostat or the Dometic Single Zone Liquid Crystal Display. Its low profile is less than 10 inches in height, and the sleek, contemporary shroud reduces drag for improved mileage. In a non-ducted single-zone system it can be controlled by the Universal Air Distribution Box with Cold-Shot Technology.

Controlling the temperature has never been easier, thanks to the CT (Capacitive Touch) Thermostat. Using the advanced technology

of capacitive sensors instead of physical buttons, gentle taps on three input areas of the control give you access to all the climate control features.

The CT Thermostat is very easy to use and can be set for manual or automatic operation of your non-ducted or ducted rooftop air conditioning unit. The CT Thermostat is also available in a Bluetooth-enabled model to give you remote-control capabilities using a free Dometic app. Both the app and the physical CT Thermostat look the same, for simple operation.

## Washer/Dryer Combo Unit

*Dometic's ventless Washer/Dryer uses 20% less water than competitor's and features separate compartments for pre-treatment, detergent and fabric softener.*



Dometic's Ventless Washer/Dryer Combo unit offers easy installation and is quite efficient, using 20% less water than competitive brands. It offers an easy-to-read LCD for monitoring, programmable frequent user settings, 15-pound capacity and cycle-timer display with complete alarm notification. An ergonomic door handle and easy drainage and service access are other benefits. The unit also features three separate compartments for pre-detergent and fabric softener.

## Central Vacuum Systems



Dometic InterVac RVac™ and RVac™ Plus vacuum cleaners easily install under seats, in closets or storage compartments. The RVac™ line provides powerful suction and comes with a 40-foot flexible stretch hose that retracts to 10 feet, a pistol grip, and includes a range of tools to vacuum hard-to-reach places.

For RVs that can benefit from two or more remote hookups, the RVac™ Plus is an expandable system that allows for location flexibility because of its multi-port design. In addition, the RVac™ Plus can be used with the VacPort™ central vacuum baseboard accessory (sold separately). This accessory is also compatible with all household central vacuum systems. The VacPort™ is built of rugged polycarbonate and activates with a slight touch of the toe, so you can sweep dirt directly toward the opening and let the power of the vacuum do its job.

## Mobile Electronic Safe



Storing electronic devices is easy with the Dometic Mobile Electronic Safe. Cushioned felt padding protects contents and there's enough space for a 17" laptop. Predrilled holes, two on the bottom, two on the back wall, allow for secure installation of the 31-pound safe.



# Sanitation

Dometic has toilets for RVs of all sizes, including the fully featured 320 (the industry's No. 1 Gravity Discharge Toilet) and the 310 with full-sized 100% vitreous ceramic bowl, easy foot-pedal operation and unique removable components that simplify winterization. Joining the 310 is the new 300 ultra-light toilet with powerful triple-jet rinse action. The 300 model offers an innovative drop-away ball and valve system plus a full-size bowl.

The Dometic 320 series features an elongated, deep ceramic bowl and enameled wood seat that offers comfort surpassing many smaller RV toilets. The pressurized full-rim flush delivers a bowl-clearing rinse every time. Ergonomic one-direction foot pedal action results in easy, hands-free flushing for added sanitary benefits, and is available in white or bone colors, and standard or low-profile heights.



Dometic 310 Series RV Toilet

Dometic 320 Series RV Toilet

## D-Line™ Products

Campers and outdoor enthusiasts no longer have to sacrifice effective cleaning and sanitation products in order to be eco-friendly. Dometic introduced its new D-Line™ series of eco-friendly and campground approved products, so 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 are formaldehyde-free, campground-compatible, nature-friendly and professional strength. These effective products include: D-Line Premium Holding Tank Treatment, 3' n 1 Bowl Cleaner



and Tank Treatment, Non-toxic Clean 'n Green Holding Tank Treatment, Gray Tank Odor Treatment and Toilet Bowl & Seal Cleaner.

Another popular D-Line product is the extra soft and absorbent Ultra Enviro-Soft toilet tissues. They break up quickly to prevent clogs and have 500 sheets per roll.

D-Line RV Cleaning products include the new RV Wash 'N Wax Cleaner, a professional strength, multi-purpose wash formula. Other RV cleaning products include: NEW Advanced AC Coil Cleaner, Slide Out Seal Saver, Slide Out Lube & Protector and RV Roof Cleaner & RV Roof Sealer.

Camping World offers consumers a tremendous value on Dometic products, with a Lowest-Installed Price Guarantee. Camping World provides a large selection of Dometic products to ensure you can find the right accessory, right now.

New product development and existing product improvement never stop at Dometic. With more than 80 years in the RV industry, Dometic is poised to grow and evolve with the changing needs of RVing and camping families. For more information about these and other Dometic products, simply log on to <http://www.campingworld.com/Dometic>

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Questions & Answers



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## Do you finance private party RV loans?

Yes! You can purchase a 2008 model year or newer rig from a private party seller in your town or from across the country. We'll pay off the seller, put the new registration in your name and handle all necessary paperwork.



## Are your rates the same for new and used RV purchases?

Yes! Our rates are the same whether you purchase a new or used rig from a dealer or a private party seller across town or across the country.

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\* Estimated APR (Annual Percentage Rate). Subject to consumer loan program requirements and credit approval. Certain fees, closing costs, and restrictions may apply.

\*\* Rates and terms may vary with market conditions and are subject to change without notice. APR applied to the loan is the APR in effect on the date the application is received and is valid until 30 days after the loan is approved. APRs may vary with loan term. For a refinance request, RV must be 2006 model year or newer. For a purchase request, RV must be 2008 model year or newer. Maximum loan to value is determined by the following: credit score and model year, with collateral value being established per NADA Used Wholesale Base Trade-in value. Maximum loan term may vary based on model year, loan amount, loan type and lender guidelines. Example of a recreational use RV loan: A 7 year fixed-rate \$55,000 loan. Based on an APR of 3.79%, this loan has 84 monthly payments of \$746.48 each.

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 EQUAL HOUSING LENDER



By Bill and Jenn Gehr

# PURE & SIMPLE

## Taking the guesswork out of water filtration and purification systems

**W**ater is the lifeblood of any self-contained motorhome. Not only is drinking at least eight glasses of water every day suggested for good health, water is also used for cooking, bathing and cleaning. Water that is murky is not pleasant, and when it takes on strong odors, especially chlorine, it's hard to drink without holding your nose. Add cysts, bacteria and viruses to the equation, and finding pure water these days can be quite the challenge.



When we're at home, the water is usually provided by a municipal system or from a well. If you're lucky, the water will be clean and drinkable, but if it's not, you have the option of installing various systems that can treat the water effectively. When traveling, water quality will be unknown until you hook up and turn on the faucet, and then you still will have no idea if the water is actually safe. There are many campgrounds where drinking out of the tap is not a problem and the water is clear and tastes good. Unfortunately, water

that is high in sediments, but still drinkable, can wreak havoc on faucets, showerheads and even the toilet valve. Water that's contaminated can get you sick and spoil a trip. Ideally, some type of onboard filtration/purification — whether permanently mounted or used as a portable system — should be considered for protection against bad water when hooking up to campgrounds, as well as when filling the water tank from unknown sources.

Choosing a filtration system for your needs will be an individual process and there are a few questions

that must be answered before proceeding. How much volume of water will be used? How often is the motorhome used? What level of purification is required for your needs? Do you want to filter the entire motorhome or just the cold side of the galley faucet for cooking and drinking purposes? Perhaps adding an auxiliary faucet for drinking water alone would be ideal. Cost can be a factor as well, but there are many different options on the market to suit your needs.

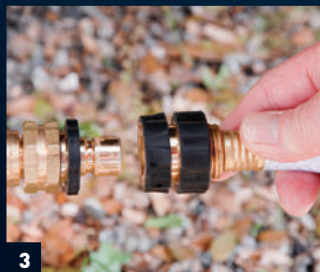
Having absolutely pure water in a motorhome is not easily attainable.



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[1] Typical standard (10-inch) canisters are connected with a brass fitting for convenience and easy handling. Water hoses can be connected to brass fittings on the inlet and outlet of the canisters. [2] While it is OK to lay the canisters flat on the ground during use, many owners rig up systems to keep them upright. Here, an oblong plastic bucket was cut to accommodate the two canisters. [3] The use of brass quick connectors makes setup and takedown quick and clean. [4] A special plastic wrench is used to loosen the filter housing from the top plate with the fittings. An O-ring seals the two pieces without overtightening.

The best system for purification is reverse osmosis, but these systems are expensive, take up valuable space and use a lot of water. Distillation provides the purest water, but having such a system in an RV is not practical. Water softeners only remove calcium, which is the stuff that makes the water hard and leads to clogged faucets and showerheads.

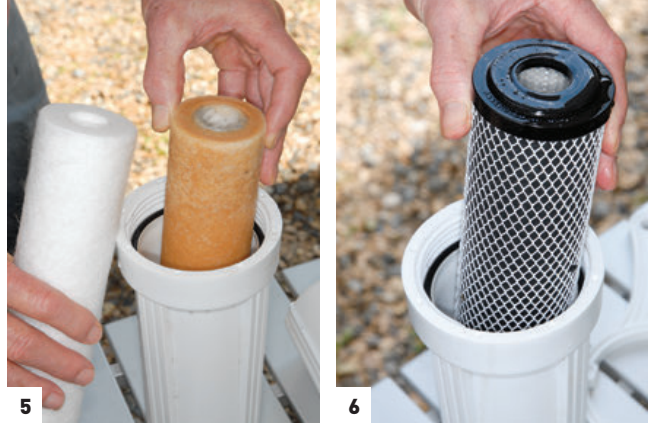
There may be a multitude of contaminants found in city-water supplies. Commonly identified biological contaminants include cysts, protozoa, chlorine, Giardia, bacteria and viruses. The best defense against bad water is to use a sediment filter set up in front of another filter designed to capture biological contaminants. A single in-line filter cannot perform the task that multiple canister systems are capable of. Following are the common options used by the RV community.

### Sediment Filters

These filters are designed to remove dirt, sand, minerals, metals and other similar contaminants that can create problems with the water. Smell and taste will pass through a sediment filter. Every motorhome should have a quality sediment filter. The most popular systems use two canisters, one with a filter that traps the sediment followed by a filter that improves taste. It's recommended that the cartridge be at least able to filter out anything larger than 5 microns. The life of these cartridges is dependent on amount of usage, but generally will need to be replaced when the water flow slows down.

### Carbon Filters

The second filter in a good two-cartridge system should be carbon. It should be rated at .5 microns and capable of removing lead, heavy metals and cysts — all contributors to bad taste. When choosing a carbon filter, go with a solid carbon block product because it removes much smaller contaminants than granulated carbon filters. Water that's forced through a solid block of carbon will be stripped of many more contaminants when compared to the water that flows in and around granules. Water that comes in contact with carbon will taste better, generally.



[5] A sediment filter is used in the canister closest to the water source. After only five weeks of service, it's easy to see why a sediment filter is needed. Filter should be replaced when water flow slows down. [6] A charcoal filter is used in the second canister. This filter will remove lead, heavy metals and cysts that taint the water and contribute to bad taste.

### In-line Filters

Basic in-line filters will treat water to a lesser degree and for some owners, it may be all that is necessary, depending on the water source and how often they use their motorhomes. These types of filters can also be used to fill your water storage tank from a home or campground source.

When shopping for an in-line filter, choose a model with KDF additives. This cartridge will have zinc and copper additives incorporated into the carbon filter that resist bacteria growth. These types of filters/additives are particularly good for occasional use. In-line filters are the biggest culprit for diminishing water volume and flow and the problem is compounded as the filter clogs with sediment and particles. High-quality filtration is not feasible with an in-line filter simply due to its small size. However, these cartridges can help improve taste to a small degree, but will not remove chlorine or other biological contaminants.

### Ceramic Filters

Ceramic cartridges are the kings of submicron filtration. A micron is equal to one-thousandth of a millimeter. Ceramic filters, in a candle configuration, will remove biological contaminants and chlorine and they can be cleaned and reused for many years with great success. While there are a number of these filters on the market, the Doulton cartridge is said to be best for purification. Ceramic candles impregnated with



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[7] Carbon filters used in the jumbo canister last much longer and will not restrict water flow. [8] In-line filters will help, but are designed for light-duty use in motorhomes that are used infrequently. Always look for an in-line filter with KDF additives, which help retard bacterial growth. [9] Filters that purify water can be routed through an independent faucet that's used for drinking and cooking. In most cases, it's not necessary to purify water for the entire motorhome, which will shorten the life of a carbon and/or ceramic filter.





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[10] For this RV, which is lived in full-time, jumbo canisters are mounted under the sink and are used for purification purposes. Jumbo canisters can be set up outside to service all the faucets in the motorhome. [11] Six Rio 2000 ceramic candles are used inside this jumbo canister. This filter configuration provides the purest water without going to a reverse-osmosis or UV system. [12] Ceramic candles can be cleaned with a special brush. Keeping the ceramic filter clean will add years to the service life. This filter has been in full-time service for eight years.



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silver nitrate will prevent the growth of algae and mold.

A ceramic filter, used in conjunction with a sediment and carbon filter, will provide the greatest protection against bad water for any motorhome, even in areas where the water supply is not up to strict quality standards. Only a reverse-osmosis system or ultraviolet light can improve on the filtration and protection afforded by ceramic filters.

Standard or jumbo canister-type systems are typically found on the market. The standard 10-inch versions are available at most home-improvement stores, Camping World and RV supply stores. These are generally the most popular models used by RVers. A basic, single standard canister can be used with a sediment or a carbon filter. A double-standard canister system can be equipped with the sediment and a ceramic, solid carbon block or even a hybrid ceramic/carbon block filter.

Full-timers, or those who spend long periods of time on the road, should consider the jumbo canister, like those

marketed by The RV Water Filter Store. These canisters are designed to treat larger volumes of water and are capable of the best filtration possible, over a longer period of time. The best jumbo filter combo canister contains a plastic block that holds six ceramic candles. The water flows into the canister and passes through each candle. The added bonus of the jumbo canister versus the standard canister is that the volume and water pressure are not restricted.

When setting up a system for a motorhome, most owners position their filters outside, in line with the water hose. Standard, 3/4-inch brass fittings make hookup simple

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# *Pleasure-Way*

## *30th Anniversary*

1986-2016



Pleasure Way , Circle 129 on Reader Service Card

and the use of good-quality quick connectors will add convenience to the process. Many users build boxes or supports to hold the filters upright, which can be done by modifying milk crates or buckets. While this keeps the filters off the ground, it's not necessary; most filters will do just fine lying on the ground in a horizontal position. Protection from direct sunlight is more important. Filters that are shielded from the sun will last longer and resist growing algae and other similar stuff inside that can plug the cartridge(s) prematurely. This can easily be done by placing the filters under the motorhome when in service, by building them into a compartment or by placing a cloth or sunscreen material over the filter housings. While it's best to drain the filters prior to storage, this is not necessary except to keep water from running all over the compartment when storing portable systems.

Tip: Install a strip of masking tape

on the canisters and write the date the filters were last serviced. It's best to service the filters before the water flow becomes too restricted.

When shopping for any type of water filter, check for the National Sanitation Foundation certification (NSF). The NSF thoroughly tests filters for flow rates, chlorine removal, taste, odor and particulates. For instance, a Class I filter can remove 75 to 100 percent of chlorine. A Class II removes 50 to 75 percent and Class III will remove 0 to 50 percent of the chlorine. To test chlorine-removal effectiveness, we visited an RV park where the chlorine smell was exceptionally strong, rendering the water almost undrinkable. After running the water through the ceramic-and-solid-carbon-block jumbo canister system, the smell was gone and the taste was as good as that from bottled water.

Not only will you have the confidence that the water is safe, regardless of region and source,

but there are weight, space and cost factors to consider. Think of how many water bottles you would have to buy and store to supply enough drinking water without having to run to the market every couple of days.

While there are a variety of these types of filters on the market for stationary homes, the best places to shop for systems is RV supply stores and specialists like The RV Water Filter Store, which has become a recognized expert in RV water filtering and purification, and who has provided valuable information to the RV community for many years. **M**

### Sources

**Camping World**

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

**Discount Filter Store**

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

**The RV Water Filter Store**

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

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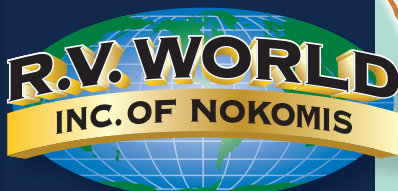
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By Chris Hemer

# SEAMLESS SOLUTION

RV ARMOR'S UNIQUE LIQUID-APPLIED, UV-RESISTANT SYSTEM CREATES A HIGH-PERFORMANCE AND LONG-LASTING ROOF MEMBRANE

---

**A**sk motorhome owners, and they'll probably tell you that the thing that worries them most about their coach is its roof. It's easy to understand why. The roof stands up to the forces of Mother Nature, providing protection from rain, snow and hail, and it doesn't help matters that something as small as a cracked strip of caulking can lead to thousands of dollars in water damage. Interior stains, mold and mildew infiltration, and delamination of the side walls are all common issues caused by a roof that is failing in one way or another, and a hot, dry climate is no assurance of immunity to these problems. UV rays can cause rubber roofs to blister, peel and crack, and all roof types can suffer from chalking and fading over time. Protecting the roof with a high-quality RV cover is an obvious solution, but you can't do that 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Or can you?

RV Armor says you can. Through a painstaking process of rigorous inspection, cleaning, repair and a liquid-applied membrane and roof system, RV Armor says it can effectively make your motorhome roof maintenance-free, yielding what the company claims will be the last roof your coach will ever need. In fact, the company guarantees it with a lifetime warranty for materials and labor that is transferable and not prorated. Perhaps best of all, there's no need to drive to a shop to have the RV Armor system applied; a nationwide network of factory-trained technicians stands at the ready to visit wherever you may be and can even treat your roof while you continue to live in the motorhome.

Based in Florida, RV Armor is the brainchild of Lee Thaxton, a third-generation roofing contractor and full-time RVer. For years, he and his wife, Carol, had searched for a way to tie his commercial roofing expertise and product knowledge into the lifestyle they were passionate about, and RV Armor was born.

The process is most commonly applied to problematic rubber roofs but may also be used on one-piece fiberglass, TPO,

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The RV Armor roof is extremely durable, flexible and tough, plus it's resistant to fungus, salt, acids and most chemicals. According to the company, it won't crack, peel or chalk.

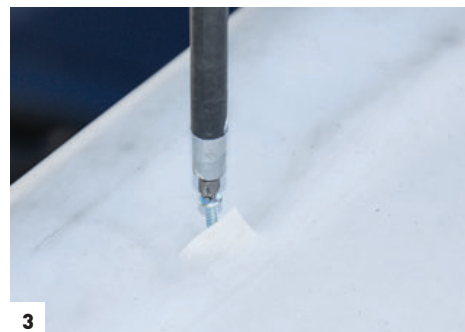




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vinyl, metal and even directly on wood decking. RV Armor technicians can also replace or repair wood damage, repair damaged membrane, and replace vents and skylights. In short, RV Armor offers a one-stop, one-time solution to roof problems, and the system typically costs 30 to 50 percent less than a roof tear-off or replacement, according to the company.

The process usually takes two full days to complete but may take up to three. Once finished, the RV Armor roof is extremely durable, flexible and tough, plus it's resistant to fungus, salt, acids and most chemicals. The UV-resistant formula has a temperature range of minus 75 degrees

[1] The owner of this motorhome kept it covered most of the time, so the roof was in good shape and relatively clean, which made preparation easier. The first step was a quick sweep to remove dust and accumulated dirt, followed by a wipedown with denatured alcohol. [2, 3, 4] On motorhomes with a radius roof, the edges are carefully inspected for areas where the underlayment is starting to delaminate, causing the rubber membrane to lift in some areas. While RV Armor can't completely solve this issue from an appearance standpoint (that would require removing and replacing the membrane altogether), the technicians can improve upon it and stop the issue from worsening. The first step in this direction is to make a small L-shaped incision in the membrane where the underlayment is rising. A self-tapping screw is then driven in place, and the area is covered with foil tape. [5] With the roof secured, the next step is to inspect the sealant around the vents and skylights. If the sealant is in good shape, as was the case here, it is cleaned thoroughly with a terry towel and degreaser. Cracked or peeling sealant would be scraped off and resealed prior to applying the RV Armor system. [6] The plumbing vent covers are removed, and the sealant around them is cleaned and inspected.

[7, 8] On rubber roofs, the RV Armor process involves three different stages over two days (sometimes three). The first is a yellow epoxy primer that creates a barrier between the membrane and the base/final coats, preventing solvents in the product from forming gas pockets underneath the membrane. The primer is cut in with a brush along the edges, near the front and rear caps, and around the vents and skylights. [9, 10] Part of what makes it possible to apply RV Armor at a home, campground or storage lot is that each application is rolled on by hand with a common paint roller. Spraying the product on would create overspray. Once the yellow primer is applied, it is allowed to dry for approximately two hours.



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to 350 degrees Fahrenheit, and the company says it won't crack, peel, chip or chalk. As a side benefit, the bright white coating (also available in gray or tan) can even net an improvement in thermal efficiency, keeping the motorhome cooler in hot summer months.

The owner of the 2013 motorhome shown in these photos wanted it to be the last one he ever owns — so even though the roof was in relatively good condition, he elected to have it treated to the RV Armor process before it began to degrade. We met the owner,

**[11, 12, 13]** Prior to application of the gray base coat, the roof is recaulked along the edges and as needed along the front and rear caps, and around the antenna, vents and skylights using self-leveling sealant.

and RV Armor installation technician Luis Mendes, at a storage lot near the owner's home in La Verne, California. Mendes was prompt, courteous and very detail-oriented, carefully explaining the process to the owner before and during the installation. In the end, we were impressed with the final result and could see no reason why the treated roof would not live up to the company's claim of lifetime

durability.

The RV lifestyle should be worry-free. If the roof of your motorhome is a concern, RV Armor could be the ideal solution. The company even offers financing. **M**

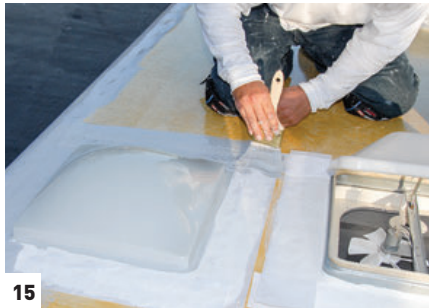
**Source**

**RV Armor**  
855-782-7667, [www.rv-armor.com](http://www.rv-armor.com)

**[14]** After the self-leveling sealant is applied, fabric mesh is gently pushed into it while it is still wet, helping to strengthen the area and prevent cracking once cured. **[15, 16]** Once the sealant is dry, the gray base coat is applied. This is actually the same material as the third and final white coat, but using two colors makes it easier for the technician to see which areas have been covered and which ones haven't during the final coat application. As with the previous step, the gray coating is first cut in around the vents and skylights, etc., before it is rolled on. It will then cure overnight. **[17]** The next morning, the RV Armor technician begins by applying another layer of sealant over the fabric mesh in all areas, then placing masking tape along the edges. **[18]** Finally, the white coat is laid on thick, and the masking tape removed, leaving a clean exterior edge. It will dry overnight and cure completely within four days. **[19]** The finished product looks great and is guaranteed for the life of the motorhome.



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By Ann Eichenmuller

## 2003 BEAVER SANTIAM

THE FIRST INSTALLMENT OF OUR NEW SERIES ABOUT OLDER MOTORHOMES THAT STILL MAKE THE GRADE



Gilbert's homemade basement slide-out trays offer convenient storage space.

*The purchase of a motorhome is the purchase of a dream — the dream of having the freedom to make the open road your home. While we would all love to begin our romance with the RV lifestyle behind the wheel of a brand-new unit, the fact is that most of us will start out with a used motorhome. What these units lack in the latest technology they make up for with their definitive style and the innovative modifications of their dedicated owners. This article is the first in a series looking at those motorhomes that have stood the test of time and can still make dreams come true. Each has earned the right to be called "The Classic Ride."*

**B**eauty is only skin deep. Faded paint will not ruin a trip, but a blown head gasket, faulty electrical system, or crowded sleeping arrangements certainly can. For anyone in the market for a used motorhome, outward appearance must be secondary to the unit's structural integrity, the dependability of its systems and the livability of its layout. That was the mindset of

first-time buyers Dave and Jackie Gilbert in 2011 when they set out hoping to find a big rig with strong mechanical performance and all of the comforts of home, but without the big price tag of a new motorhome.

The 2003 40-foot Beaver Santiam they found at a repo sale fit the bill perfectly. With a scant 17,000 miles on the 330-horsepower Cummins turbodiesel engine and an asking



▲ The Santiam sports its new paint, a Harley-Davidson-inspired design.





price of \$70,000, the Santiam seemed like a good deal. A product of the former Monaco Coach Corp. of Coburn, Oregon, the Beaver line was recognized industrywide for its durability, starting with the proprietary Roadmaster raised-rail chassis and Alumaframe superstructure, which featured steel-cage support and a steel-frame floor. The Santiam series also came well-outfitted with Thermopane windows, a 7.5-kW Onan generator, Pacbrake braking system, hydraulic leveling jacks, and a 10,000-pound hitch receiver. But it was what the Gilberts found inside the motorhome that impressed them the most. The 2003 model's spacious layout included triple slideouts — two opposing in the living room/galley area, and a third streetside in the bedroom. The result was an airy, expansive floorplan that left plenty of room for entertaining or bringing grandchildren along for a ride. The Santiam even boasted both a half-bath and a full bath complete with tub, as well as a full-size washer and dryer. Then there were niceties normally found only in newer units, like the light on the dash that reminds you the TV antenna is still up.

From above left: The Gilberts' DIY interior updates included reupholstering the dining room chairs and sewing matching throw pillows for the couch; adding wood molding and rope lighting to the ceiling for a recessed look; and creating new window treatments from an extra bedspread to match the new bedding.

"It was the little things that someone thought of that impressed me the most," Dave notes.

Of course, there are always tradeoffs when buying a used motorhome, even one as well-maintained as the Santiam. Wear and tear is most pronounced on interior fabrics, and the motorhome's upholstery and window treatments were showing their age. While the cream Ultraleather cockpit chairs were in excellent condition, the coach's dining chairs, sofa and window treatments were worn and faded. Dave re-covered the dining chairs and redid the window treatments himself using a blue paisley upholstery fabric. In the bedroom, the couple purchased two matching bedspreads and used the fabric from the extra spread to redo the window treatments. They chose to have the couch professionally reupholstered and used leftover upholstery material from the dining chairs to sew matching throw pillows.

Dave also updated the interior

by adding wood trim with recessed lighting on the ceiling, mimicking the styling of newer units. Jackie felt the cockpit privacy curtains advertised the coach's age, so these were replaced with automated shades. The Santiam came with a dishwasher, a plus for some families, but the Gilberts found they seldom used it. Instead, the appliance became a repository for glassware — a use that did not mix well with the rough Alaskan highways they encountered on one of their trips. Once they swept up the broken glass, they decided that what they really needed was more storage. Dave replaced the dishwasher with two drawers he designed and built himself, and also customized the forward oak cabinetry to house a larger flat-screen TV. He also added large slide-out drawers to the Santiam's generous basement storage areas, perfect for taking



## FEEL INSPIRED TO FIND YOUR OWN 2003 BEAVER SANTIAM?

Asking prices for preowned units currently range between \$59,000 and \$79,000. The Santiam was available in models between 34 and 40 feet, with 13 different floorplans, six of which offered triple slideouts.

▶ The Santiam in the bay at Pro Custom Inc., awaiting its new, custom paint job.

# The Classic Ride

the guesswork out of finding tools. Purchasing these sliding trays can run into the thousands, but once again, Dave's handyman skills allowed him to do the work for a fraction of the cost.

Not that the refit of the Santiam was all work and no play. The couple divided their time between customizing their motorhome and taking to the highways, traveling across the U.S. to the West Coast, Canada and Alaska. In all of those miles, the Gilberts could not find a thing about their Santiam that they didn't like — except the dated exterior. On the outside, there was no amount of wax that could change the fact that the Santiam's paint looked more than a decade old.

That all changed when the Gilberts attended a rally in North Carolina and saw a display of motorhomes with refinished exteriors. They spoke to a representative from Pro Custom Inc., and realized that repainting the motorhome was an affordable option, especially when compared to

replacing it with a newer unit. They decided that this was an opportunity to do something beyond the standard "swirls" that adorn so many coaches, so Dave, a dedicated Harley-Davidson fan, brought out his favorite T-shirt with the trademark eagle. Within 10 minutes the rep had sent a photo of the shirt to the company's office in Elkhart, Indiana, and gotten back a completed custom design that the artist nicknamed "The Screaming Eagle." The name stuck, and from that moment on, the Santiam was reborn.

Of course, the transformation did not happen overnight. Arrangements were made to ferry the motorhome to Indiana and stay with friends a few hours closer while the work was done. In addition to repainting, the Gilberts decided to use the camping downtime to have their manual awning replaced with an automated one. The work was completed in just under four weeks, and the finished product has been declared nothing short of amazing by

everyone who sees it.

So what is the price tag for a Cinderella story like this one? With all of its updates and modifications, the Gilberts have spent an additional \$30,000 above their initial \$70,000 investment. This includes \$15,000 for the new paint, a cost that included all of the prep work as well as some minor delamination repair. The total invested still adds up to only half the motorhome's original 2003 selling price, making it an affordable alternative to a new unit without giving up comfort or performance. Even more important, this reimagined Beaver Santiam has its own unique style, and that is why it earns the distinction of being called a classic ride. **M**

Do you, or someone you know, have a classic motorhome that you'd like to see featured in *MotorHome* magazine? If so, email Ann Eichenmuller at [aceichenm@gmail.com](mailto:aceichenm@gmail.com) with your suggestion and a brief description. Please include "The Classic Ride" in your subject line.

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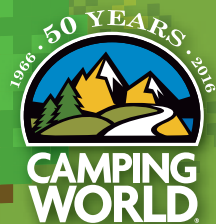
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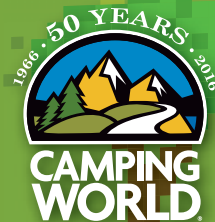


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## Blow Dry

Are you tired of having to use so much elbow grease to wash and dry your motorhome or dinghy vehicle? A quick tip is to wash the vehicle with a brush, and then rinse and blow-dry with a leaf blower. Works slick.

**Diane Sears | Livingston, Texas**



## Get Your Foot in the Door

To keep the floors clean, we always remove our shoes when entering our motorhome. That made the entryway a jumble of footwear until I found an adjustable two-tier shoe rack at The Container Store. I placed the rack on its side behind a chair next to the door. Because the rack is adjustable, it allows the chair to still swivel and the shoes are stacked vertically in two rows against the wall. Now there's no more tripping over shoes left by the steps!

**Nanci Dixon | Minnetonka, Minnesota**

## Grab Some Shut-eye

We travel in a 25-foot Class C motorhome and we like the convenience of driving and parking a smaller vehicle. Our biggest inconvenience is the corner bed, which is common in shorter Class C's and B's. Our grandkids love the setup, but their body parts still function according to spec. We don't find the corner bed to be as much fun, and have been working on ways to make it more easily accessible.

One of the quickest and most effective changes has been the addition of a grab bar on each side of the opening to the bed. The grab bars are available at home-improvement stores for about \$20 each or less, and are generally used in bathrooms near the tub. They come in a variety of sizes and styles. We bought bars that are about a foot long, which provides plenty of room to grip but not too much so as to be in the way when getting in and out of the bed.

The bars need to be mounted to a substantial structure in the motorhome. In our case, the framing around the refrigerator is on one side of the corner bed and the bathroom wall is on the other side. The studs behind the paneling on both sides have so far proven sturdy enough to hold both grab bars and with some heavy use.



One caution: Carefully measure the thickness of the structure where the bar is being attached as well as the length of the screws. You wouldn't want a nicely mounted grab bar with a screw through the side of your refrigerator.

**Dennis Jauch | Tampa, Florida** 



**Have an Idea?** Quick Tips is looking for submissions. Please send your DIY ideas to: *MotorHome* Quick Tips, 2750 Park View Ct., Ste. 240, Oxnard, CA 93036, or email [letters@motorhomemagazine.com](mailto:letters@motorhomemagazine.com). Be sure to include any photos, illustrations or drawings. If your tip is selected for publication, you will receive \$35. All payments require an FEIN or SSN.





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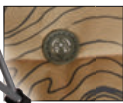
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# Flip-Down Support

MORryde's Chair Buddy makes unsightly hold-down straps obsolete

By Bob Livingston

## CONVENIENCE UPGRADE

Cost: \$50 each

Time: 30 minutes

Difficulty: 3/10

**A** freestanding dining table and chairs offer greater versatility when it's time to enjoy meals or for work projects. The added maneuverability of movable chairs makes it easy to belly up to the table and usually there's

more room to ward off claustrophobia. The chairs can also be positioned to other areas in the motorhome to accommodate guests when extra seating is needed. While the popularity of this configuration has skyrocketed, the downside is the result of its inherent design: the chairs can move freely and become projectiles during emergency maneuvers if they are not secured.

Typically, the chairs are lashed to the floor using nylon straps and plastic buckles. While this system works, it's less than convenient and in many cases the tie-downs screwed to the floor get in the way. MORryde's Chair Buddy changes the paradigm.

The Chair Buddy is a clever hold-down system that uses an 80-pound gas strut and a T-handle to apply pressure to the chairs and keep them from moving when on the road. The simplicity of the design is brilliant; the installation requires very little mechanical expertise.

Before ordering the Chair Buddy, a number of mea-

surements must be made to confirm compatibility. The system is designed to fit dining tables that are 30 inches high (measured from the underside to the floor) with standard 17- to 19-inch chairs. If the table and chairs meet those specifications — or are at least pretty close — you should be good to go. The other consideration is that the table post must have a flat surface parallel with edges of the table where the chairs slide under. There also must be at least a 2-inch-wide-by-4-inch-tall mounting surface. If the table does not have a center post, an optional steel bracket (CB56-002) can be used to mount the hold-down hardware.

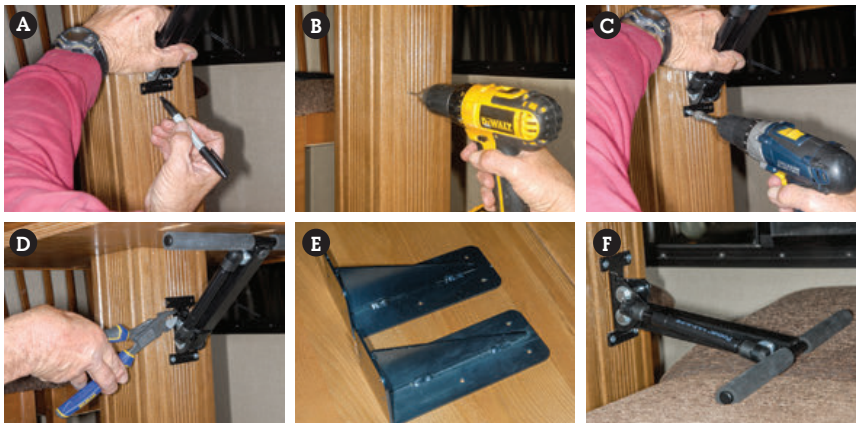
Figure on 30 minutes to complete the project to hold four chairs (two Chair Buddy kits), using simple hand tools. Begin by positioning the Chair Buddy as high on the post as possible; the T-handle should be touching the underside of the table. Mark a line on the post and confirm there is at least 19½ inches of clearance to the floor. If the table has a sliding mechanism, you'll have to make sure the table can move without interfering with the Chair Buddy while maintaining the requisite 19½ inches from the floor to the bottom of the bracket.

Pilot holes are drilled to prevent the post from splitting and the bottom screws are driven first to secure the bracket. Once the cable tie is cut to unload the strut, the top screws are set.

When it comes time to travel, the padded T-handle is simply rotated down against the cushions on the chairs. It's best to slide the chairs close to the center post to make sure the T-handle grabs some of the seat. In testing, the chairs stayed put, even on rough sections of highway.

For about \$50 each, you can toss those unsightly straps and ensure the chairs will be safely stored with almost no effort. The optional bracket retails for \$14.79. **M**

**MORryde**, 574-293-1581, [www.morryde.com](http://www.morryde.com)



**[A]** The Chair Buddy mechanism is held as close to the underside of the table as possible while a line is marked at the bottom of the bracket. There must be at least 19½ inches to the floor. **[B]** A 7/64-inch bit is used to drill 1-inch-deep pilot holes in the center post. Failure to do this step could lead to split wood. **[C]** Provided screws are used to attach the Chair Buddy to the post. Once the bottom screws are driven, the cable tie **[D]** is cut to unload the strut. After pulling down the T-handle, the top screws are installed. **[E]** Optional adapter brackets can be used on tables that do not have a center post. **[F]** The T-handle is rotated down against the chair cushions; the struts apply constant pressure against the cushions and prevent the chairs from moving while on the road.



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# Off Course

Aggravated by a dysfunctional GPS unit in his motorhome, a reader asked Hot Line for help. He wrote:



“ I’ve been having problems with the Rand McNally GPS unit in my motorhome. While traveling last summer, the unit would intermittently freeze up and need to be manually reset. I sent it in for service and it was returned as finding no issues. The unit did work for a while but then I found out that the plug on the external speaker jack would only go in partially. I sent it back for warranty service again and included a long description of the problems. When it was returned to me I noticed that the speaker jack would accept the plug, but has low output, and the unit still freezes up while the motorhome is in motion.

I have done all of the latest updates and tried different power sources. I installed a separate cigarette-lighter socket dedicated just for the GPS and had a voltmeter monitoring the voltage for any voltage drop. I even tried using the GPS in the dinghy vehicle, but got the same results. Can Hot Line please help?

**Al Shuhart | Punta Gorda Isles, Florida**

Shuhart’s complaint was forwarded to Rand McNally. Hot Line did not hear back from the company, but Shuhart filled us in on the rest of the story. He wrote:

“ A few days ago we sent you a letter to see if there were any updates on contacting Rand McNally. Well, today we received a new GPS from Rand McNally along with a very nice, personal handwritten note. Thanks to Hot Line’s involvement, we are looking forward to our summer adventures with one of the best GPS units on the market for the RV industry.

**A.S.**

“ Last April I traded in my 2009 Roadtrek 170 Class B for a new 2014 Roadtrek 190 at Ruff’s RV Center in Euclid, Ohio. The salesman at Ruff’s, Joe Ours, said he would look over the motorhome to make sure it was prepped prior to pick up. When I arrived, I noticed that the LP-gas cover was missing. Joe took the cover off my trade-in (the 170) and forced it to fit on the new rig. He said he’d order a new one and send it to me. Driving home, I discovered that the XM Radio wasn’t working and the power outlets didn’t work for the phone charger and GPS.

Once I got home, and had a chance to thoroughly look over the motorhome, I found more items that

needed to be fixed. It seemed to me that nothing was prepped, so I called Joe and told him that I had been charged \$550 for dealer prep, which I didn’t receive. I also mentioned that the jury-rigged LP-gas cover had fallen off in transit. He told me that he ordered the cover and would look into refunding the prep fee.

I called him every month, sometimes more, for 10 months and kept getting the same answer: He will send the cover and look into the money return. Then I received a courtesy call from Roadtrek to see how I was enjoying my new motorhome. I explained the problems I was having and the company invited me to bring the motorhome back to the factory to make the repairs that should have been fixed during dealer prep. I drove to the factory, which took three days, two hotel stays and 950 miles. At this point I started asking a little louder about my prep money, but received the same reply.

I am asking Hot Line to help me get an LP-gas cover and a refund of \$550 from Ruff’s RV Center.

**William Hayes | Edgewood, Maryland**

Hot Line contacted Ruff’s RV Center in an attempt to facilitate a positive resolution to Hayes’ dilemma.

We received the following letter from Hayes that filled us in on the conclusion to his case. He wrote:

“ I heard from Rick at Ruff’s; he sent me an LP-gas cover and a check for the prep fees. Thanks to Rick and Hot Line for providing a resolution to my complaint.

**W.H. M**

## Prep Misstep

Believing that his dealer did not prepare his motorhome properly before he took delivery, a reader turned to Hot Line for assistance. He wrote:

## Take Action Contact Hot Line for Help

Hot Line assists in mediating conflicts between consumers and RV dealers and manufacturers, accessories suppliers and service providers. After exhausting all other resources, send typed letters to *MotorHome* Hot Line, 2750 Park View Court, Suite 240, Oxnard, CA 93036 and enclose copies of appropriate bills and correspondence, plus a self-addressed, stamped envelope. Selected letters will be edited and published unless otherwise requested.





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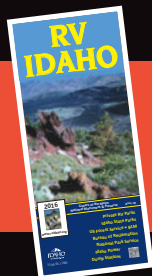
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By Ken Freund

## Message Concern

**Q** I have a strange problem with my 2010 Fleetwood Bounder 35E on a Ford chassis with a Triton V-10. After the motorhome has been parked for a few days (in a park with hookups), with the key out of the ignition, I will hear a random beep and the message CHECK GAUGES where the odometer reading is located. I looked this up and it says it is either low fuel, low oil pressure or low battery. None of these should be a concern with the engine off. I called Ford's owner helpline and they told me to run the engine for 30 minutes. I did that and still got the message and beep. How can I determine the cause of this, and how can I fix it? It does not always happen, but once it starts happening, it won't quit for a while. I can pull a fuse to make it stop, but that seems like we are treating the symptom and not the real problem.

**Dave Krajcar | Vancouver, Washington**

**A** Where you mention that low fuel, low oil pressure or low battery should not be a concern with the engine off, the last item is of concern. The engine-starting battery on most coaches does not get charged by the power converter when plugged in to 120-volt AC or the genset is running. On these models it only gets charged when the engine is running, from the alternator. However, even when everything seems to be switched



off, there are various small parasitic current draws (from electronic memories, etc.) from that battery that are leading to the discharge problem you refer to. Another possibility is that after about six years, if you have the original battery, it is starting to deteriorate; this should be tested.

To determine if your electrical system charges the engine battery, simply measure voltage at that battery's posts with a multimeter. It should read about 12.6 volts. Then plug in the shorepower cord and measure battery voltage. If the voltage comes up noticeably, it is getting charged; if not, well you know the answer.

I assume when you say you can pull a fuse to make it stop, you are referring to the fuse for the dash indication. No, you don't want to do that, but pulling one or more fuses may actually be what's needed to stop the current draw. However, there's a better way. ISL Products (<http://www.islproducts.net>) makes kits (TriK-L-Start and Amp-L-Start) that will transfer power that comes from the power converter to the coach batteries on to the engine-starting battery and disconnects it when power is not flowing.

## Workhorse Intermittent Limp Home Mode

**Q** My motorhome is a 1999 38-foot Newmar Mountain Aire on a Workhorse chassis with a GM 454 cid engine and Allison four-speed transmission. My wife and I have owned the coach for three years and have driven it back and forth across the country without a problem. A few months ago I went to pull out for a short overnight trip and the coach started to accelerate then went into limp mode with no power. I turned the engine off and looked for blown fuses. When I restarted the coach the error code (reduced engine power mode, engine check light) had cleared and upon starting back up

the problem seemed to have cleared itself. The rest of the trip went without a hitch. As with most problems that just disappear, this one came back over the next few months and progressively got worse such that I would be driving down the highway and suddenly go into limp mode. My mechanic ran a scan and got a P1125 error indicating fuel air mixture issues. Pretty vague, and to his credit he suggested I take the coach to the local Chevy dealer to see if they could narrow it down some. The Chevy service manager said they didn't work on motorhomes but agreed to run his handheld scanner to check for error codes. His scan turned up the same error code P1125; however, instead of showing a fuel air mixture

problem it indicated an Accelerator Pedal Position Sensor System (APPSS) problem. I grabbed a small channel-lock pliers and semi-aggressively "tapped" on the accelerator pedal housing. After doing so the coach drove fine. I have a new pedal assembly on order. I've had the error occur a couple more times and each time I've been able to clear it by banging the accelerator pedal housing, so I'm sure the problem is the pedal assembly. My hope is that this may help another stranded coach driver get to his or her destination in a pinch.

**Terry Bush | Pahrump, Nevada**

**A** Typically, intermittent problems like this are caused by either bad

electrical connections, or components that fail when they heat up and then start working properly again when they cool down. Unfortunately, that covers a lot of items. Often, the trouble code will give some hint in which direction to look for the problem, but in your case until the Chevy service manager checked it, you didn't have much to go on. What I usually do if a faulty sensor is suspected is try to "exercise" it by cycling it during testing. In this case, you could try repeatedly revving it up (from idle to say 3,000 RPM) in PARK (brakes set, wheels chocked) and see if it does anything odd. The sensor can also be monitored on an oscilloscope. It can also be very helpful to Google the trouble code along with the model vehicle and see what comes up. Often other folks have already had and solved the problem. Thanks for writing, I'm including your letter because it may help others fighting similar gremlins. Let's hear from you again after you have the new pedal assembly in for a while.

### Genset Shutdown

**Q** My 2003 Monaco Diplomat has a 7.5-kW Onan diesel genset (purchased new), presently with 830 hours of run time. During a trip in 2014 (660 hours), the genset started to exhibit intermittent shutdowns. The problem continues, although less frequently, since I did two things to try to fix it: I cleaned all battery ground connections to the chassis and to the genset, and installed a new Magnum pure sine wave inverter/charger. The fault code for every shutdown is 11, which indicates the genset is sensing a current overload. There are no indications of any problems with any 120-volt AC appliances, no circuit breakers opening, and no issues with shorepower. The genset will always restart after any such shutdown and may run under load for as little time as one minute or for very long cumulative periods (including several normal shutdowns) before

another code 11 shutdown occurs. I kept a detailed operating log since mid-2015 that notes run time with virtually every 120-volt AC appliance in the motorhome and under various ambient conditions, and there is no correlation between current load and/or appliances running and the code 11 shutdowns. Any idea what is causing these intermittent code 11 shutdowns?  
**Edward Proctor | Via email**

**A** I want to make sure you are clear on how to obtain codes, because based on your description of the situation, it appears that overheating may be a factor. Let's start with the basics. One blink indicates shutdown due to high temperature, two blinks indicates shutdown due to a loss of engine oil pressure and three blinks indicates shutdown due to some other abnormal condition. Fault Code Nos. 1, 2 and 3 are first-level faults. Avoid interpreting them as second-level Fault Codes 11, 22 and 33. The pauses

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between repetitions of the fault codes are longer than the pauses between the tens and units digits of the code. For example, Fault Code 33 would appear as: blink-blink-blink — pause — blink-blink-blink.

With a 13-year-old cooling system, it's very possible that the system is not working up to par. Check for cleanliness and verify cooling system operation before going further.

If you suspect that certain appliances are drawing too much current, you can measure current load of appliances with a clamp-on ammeter that goes around the wire. You may want to have an electrician chase this down for you. However, the high draw should trigger circuit protection. If you still can't find the problem I also recommend contacting Onan; I have found its telephone answering tech staff at 800-888-6626 very knowledgeable and helpful.

## Using Leveling Jacks for Storage — Revisited

**Q** I was reading your column in the February 2014 issue of *MotorHome*; I'm a slow reader! Actually, I read them all, but in no specific order. Jim Walsh asked a question in this issue about "Using Leveling Jacks for Storage" and the response was basically, "No, just for the short term." What about those of us who are camping, or staying in one location for a long period of time; say a month or two? Does this mean that we should lower our coach for a day or two, and then relevel it? I don't get it. What's the difference?

**Rich Marcom | Alpharetta, Georgia**

**A** The leveling jack manufacturers recommend not using them for extended use, which generally means storage. Hydraulic jacks, hoses and check valves must remain under high pressure continuously in order to support the thousands of pounds of weight. This stress can lead to leaks and expensive and inconvenient failures that may not occur otherwise. Additionally, leaving the shafts, which are

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very sensitive to dirt, rust and pitting exposed to blowing dust or rain, humid air and airborne contaminants can only lead to premature wear and failure. Many RVers roll the dice and use the jacks as they need them and make repairs as needed. If the coach needs to be leveled long term, appropriately sized jack stands could be used to support the coach at appropriate spots on the frame, but most RVers don't want to carry them around. As far as having the jacks down long term, occasionally wiping them down should work well to prolong the life of the seals, but little else. If you decide to wipe them down, remember — safety first! Support the coach with jack stands, set the emergency brake and chock the wheels before getting underneath!

wobbling of the Jeep Cherokee when flat towing behind a motorhome. I want to clarify a few things in regard to the answer provided. We also tow a 2014 Jeep Cherokee behind our 2015 Thor Outlaw and have experienced this wobble three times ourselves. It is a dangerous situation. There are more than 40 2013/14/15 Jeep Cherokee owners who have brought what many are calling "the death wobble" to the attention of Chrysler. Chrysler has verified that this is not a fault of any RV or tow bar; instead it is an issue with the electronic power steering. Chrysler is installing a new wiring harness in towed vehicles to remedy this problem.

Please, contact Hadley and share this info with him so he can contact Harris Ramon, (ramon.harris@fcgroup.com) the recall customer assistance site manager with Fiat-Chrysler. Ramon will lead him through the steps for getting this serious safety issue fixed.

**Tammie Mihet | Fort Myers, Florida**

(continued on page 143)

**Jeep Cherokee Wobble — Update**

In the March issue you addressed Rick Hadley's question regarding the

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**COACH & POWERTRAIN**

(continued from page 140)

Thanks for bringing this to our attention. At the time that the earlier reply was written, this new information had not come to light. I recently queried Fiat-Chrysler with Hadley's concern and received the following reply:

"Cherokee owners are being advised by mail that if they plan to flat tow 4x4 models, FCA US is recommending that they use a specific MOPAR wiring kit (part no. 68321424AB) available through Jeep dealers."

In defense of my earlier answer, I've never found a vehicle where a wobble problem could not be improved or eliminated with the use of a hydraulic steering damper.

**Frosty Fridge Tip**

Regarding the May letter "Frosty Fridge," I've found that the problem is often caused by a refrigerator door hinge that has moved or is loose. I think the motorhome manufacturer removes the door, including a hinge, to get the decorative wood on it. They then remount the door and if they don't tighten the hinge screws well and/or if the door has a lot of weight in the door (milk jugs, etc.), the hinge loosens, the door slides but still closes, and the gasket does not totally cover the gap. The gap is hard to see, and the gasket looks OK when the door is open.

**Gene Wengert | Bishop, Georgia**

As we move into humid summer weather, frost buildup typically becomes more of a problem. I agree door alignment problems are often at fault. The old trick of pinching a dollar bill in the closed door under the gasket and dragging it around to find loose areas will help pinpoint this problem too. **M**

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# Gold Digger

A few hours with a shovel and a pan will convince you “you’re golden” is more than just an expression

By Alan Rider

**A**s we approach the Independence Day holiday, you’re bound to hear a lot of high-minded talk about “American values” like freedom. But while that word is often bandied about, especially in an election year, the reality is that many Americans don’t have any idea what it really means.

Freedom is no abstract concept for motorhome owners, however. In fact, when you really stop to think about it, it’s the reason most of us bought our rigs in the first place.

That one fundamental truth aside, I think it’s safe to say freedom is not the only intangible “value” that’s part of motorhome travel. I’m thinking here of experiences that cost little but add immeasurable value to our lives. Starting with the people we meet on the road.

Thinking about this idea of what we value reminded me of a past outing in California’s Sierra Nevada. It was an excursion that, at first, was driven by a different kind of value — the promise of a distinctly material reward.

We’re talking gold here, folks. Gold, gold, gold! The four-letter word that drew 300,000 fortune-seekers to these mountains in 1849.

But while everybody’s heard of the California Gold Rush, here’s something most people don’t know: There’s still plenty of gold in them thar hills.

Which explains how we ended up in the historic hamlet of Jamestown, where we met our guide to the goldfields, Brent Shock, from Gold

Prospecting Adventures (209-984-4653, [www.goldprospecting.com](http://www.goldprospecting.com)).

If ever there was a man who looked the part of a savvy, old-time prospector, it would be Brent. With his bushy gray beard and his sweat-stained cowboy hat, he looked to have been ordered up straight out of Central Casting.

Appearances aside, you need to understand that Brent is no mere poser. He’s been following in his father’s footsteps for better than 20 years, helping ordinary people like us experience the unique thrill that comes with seeing those first few flecks of precious metal emerge from the fine gravel being swirled in the bottom of a gold pan.

After meeting Brent at the opera-

tion’s Main Street storefront (look for the gold-panning trough out front), our personal prospector led us down to a secluded spot on nearby Woods Creek.

As I stepped into knee-high rubber boots and waded into the water along this shady stretch of the mountain stream, Brent started me off with a patient hands-on tutorial on the use of the gold pan. But, while I had some luck, after an hour I was ready to graduate to the big-boy toys.

Now, granted, the pan has been a prospector’s primary tool for more than a century. But it simply can’t compete with the long metal trough known as a sluice box.

You see, where the gold pan is slow and labor-intensive, the sluice box uses the stream’s current to wash away the gravel and trap the heavier gold flakes along a series of small baffles. Since this method allowed me to process about 20 times more gravel per hour, gold flakes started appearing so fast I was sure I’d have enough of the stuff to retire by the time I decided to knock off for the day.

Needless to say, that didn’t happen. But I did make two even more valuable discoveries. First, that there is still gold in these hills. And second, that all of us increase the odds of striking it rich with every new person we meet along The Road Ahead. **M**

“While everybody’s heard of the California Gold Rush, here’s something most people don’t know: There’s still plenty of gold in them thar hills.”

## Going for the Gold ☺

The author tries his hand at prospecting in a shady, gold-bearing creek in the heart of the Motherlode with the help of his guide, Brent Shock, from Gold Prospecting Adventures.





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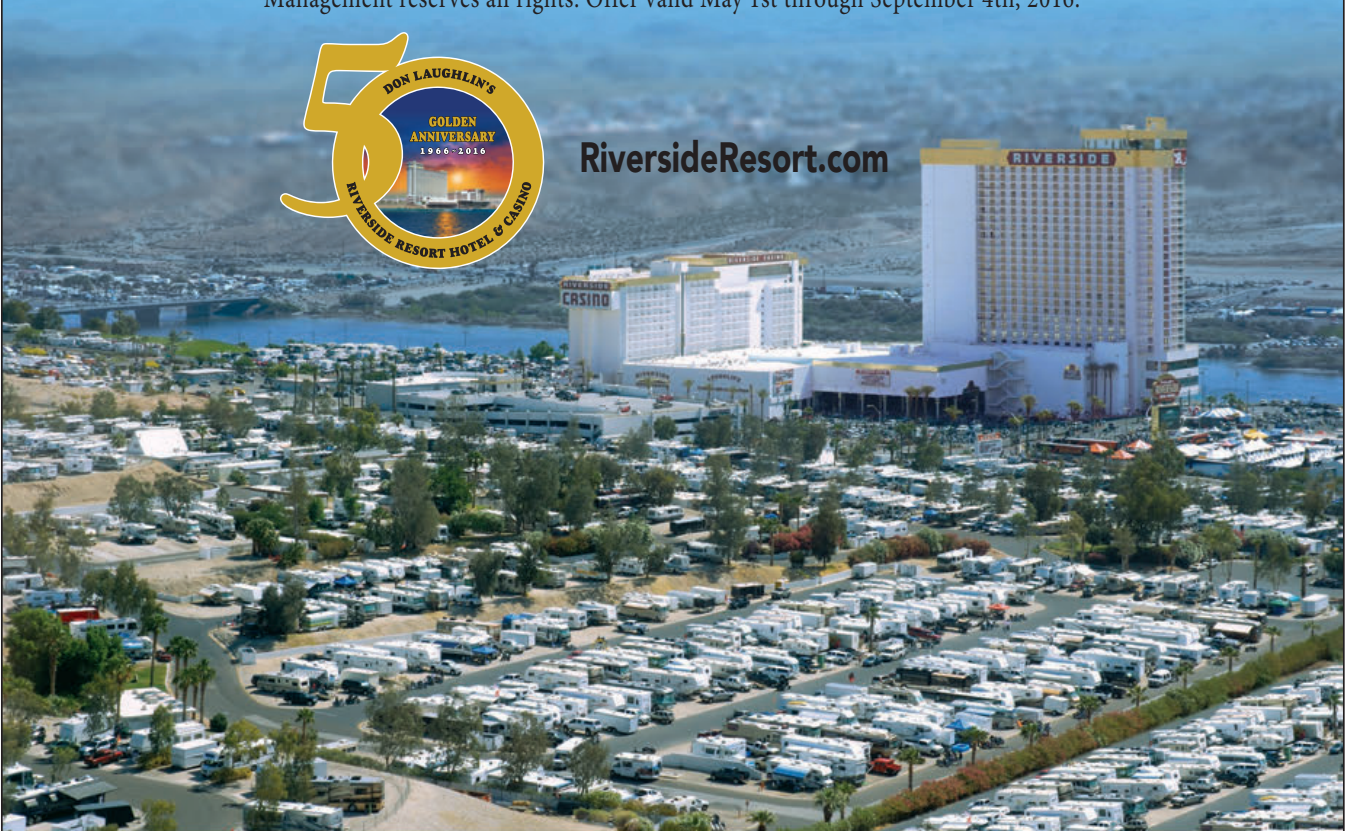
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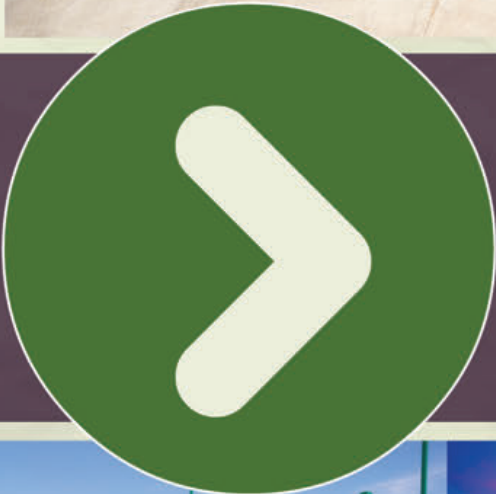


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