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MotorHome

Travel, Tech, Lifestyle – For the RV Enthusiast

October 2014

18 ESSENTIAL TIPS FOR
HOME SECURITY



RETRO MODERN

Winnebago Brave Cruises in Nostalgic Style

TRAVEL: Adirondacks,
Lake Superior, NC Waterfalls

REVIEWS: What's New
in the World of Class C's

TECH: DIY Backup
Camera Installation

**FOREST
CAMPING**
California's Ancient
Coastal Redwoods
Pg. 21

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Autumn splendor on Lake Flower near Saranac Lake (see page 31).



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ON THE COVER

Testing Winnebago's new Brave (see page 42), a reintroduction of a motorhome that had its beginnings in 1967, when the company rolled the first one out of the factory. Iconic eyebrow over the windshield and flying W on the side of the motorhome remain as important design elements. Photo by Bob Livingston.



By Bob Livingston

Fresh New Look

You've no doubt heard the phrase, "out with the old and in with the new." For most people, starting fresh feels good, opens new opportunities or maybe just signifies a time for change. Interestingly, as much as people enjoy moving forward, most of us like to hold on to the past. Memories are an important part of everyone's lives and nostalgia is a big thing these days.

Seems like everything old is new again.

And so we revisit the iconic Winnebago Brave, a motorhome that helped shape the direction of the Class A market. I got the first crack at testing a prototype Brave (see page 42) and it was certainly a trip down memory lane.

Winnebago's reintroduction of the Brave, sporting that classic eyebrow above the windshield, is a big deal. While talking to Winnebago CEO Randy Potts, I immediately felt the energy that went

into the project. The development team spent countless hours searching for the right look — and from the end result, they had fun doing it. Potts wanted to make people smile, and he succeeded.

Nostalgia is all about looking back to a period of time that had the greatest impact on our lives. Classic car enthusiasts relive the era of the model; RV enthusiasts want to revive the days of simple camping. For me, the Brave brings back the 1960s, a time in American history that was colorful to say the least, but possibly the most important decade in modern times.

I've tested a lot of new motorhomes over the years, but none more fun than the Brave. No one could believe that the

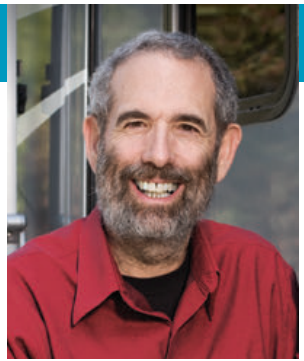
Brave was a retro and new for 2015. Once everyone learned that "my beautiful restoration" was actually a new motorhome, they got even more excited. Darn, it was kind of fun to fantasize for a split second that I actually restored a 1967 Brave (the first year it was built). It's amazing how many people remember the Brave's eyebrow and flying W graphics.

MotorHome magazine was also born in the '60s. And while we relish the history of this publication as purveyors of valuable information for motorhome enthusiasts, we're bringing in the new with a fresh look. Art Director Rick Damien started with a clean slate; all the columns, departments and features were given a new look with cleaner pages and the right amount of white space to make the reading experience more enjoyable.

What an interesting dichotomy. On the cover of the first redesigned issue is a retro motorhome. The Brave takes its design cues from the past using modern technology, and *MotorHome* magazine looks to the future and banks on its past experience.

It's all good. **M**

"Nostalgia is all about looking back to a period of time that had the greatest impact on our lives."



Contributors | October



Cyndi Hoelzle has interviewed stars such as Clint Eastwood, Will Smith and Dolly Parton. She lives in Nashville, Tennessee, with her husband, singer-songwriter Radney Foster, and their kids.



Rhonda Ostertag is the author of numerous travel books and articles. She collaborates with her husband, photographer George Ostertag. The couple lives in Oregon when not on the road.



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



Patricia Krasenics lives her life by the saying, "Enjoy life, this is not a dress rehearsal." She owns a Roadtrek RS-Adventurous Class B and travels six months out of the year exploring America.



Ken Reid is a freelance writer and photographer who travels extensively with his wife, Gayle, in their Fleetwood Southwind motorhome. Ken is a frequent contributor to travel magazines.



Bill Yancey, M.D. recently published a novel titled "Reluctant Intern," which is available on Amazon. He owns a 2007 Roadtrek and has put 30,000 miles on it during the past two years.

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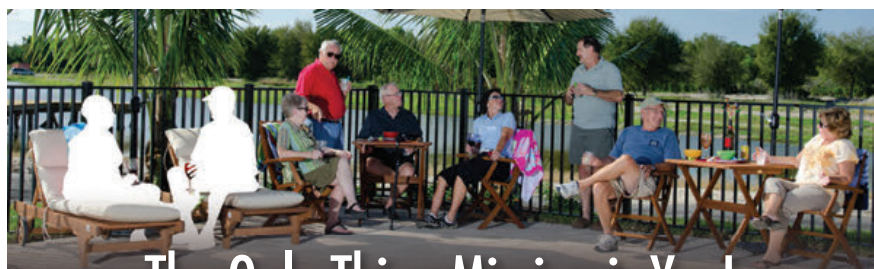


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Do you carry a portable printer with you in your motorhome? If so, which model do you recommend and why?

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

No Problem on Rough Roads

We have traveled for several years with an Epson XP-400 and find it outstanding. It is compact and stores in an overhead cabinet in the bedroom. It's also ruggedly built — we have never had a problem on rough roads, even on the Alaska Highway. We operate it wirelessly with a Dell laptop on the dining table up front.

Paul Cutchen | Milton, Florida

Folds Up Like a Clam

For nearly five years my wife and I have been using a Canon PIXMA iP100 printer with very good results. It folds up like a clam and weighs less than 4.5 pounds.

The power adapter that comes with the printer uses standard 120- to 240-volt AC household current, but

Amazon sells a 12-volt DC power adapter for \$24 that we use in our motorhome. We use a USB printer cable, but Canon offers a Bluetooth adapter for about \$45 that enables wireless printing. An extra-cost rechargeable battery, which adds about 1 pound to the printer's travel weight, enables total wireless portability.

The Canon brand ink cartridges are fairly expensive, but we've had good results with third-party ink cartridges, which significantly lowers printing costs. We haven't abused the printer, but we don't pamper it either. It has been subjected to temperature extremes, bounced around in the trunks of our cars, in our RV, on cruise ships and used in countless destinations.

Lewis A. Edge Jr. | Princeton, New Jersey



More Than Just a Printer

I researched portable printers for use in our motorhome. The portable printers that I found were pricey and they were just printers. I purchased an HP Deskjet 3520 All-in-One printer for our use. It is small, easy to use, wireless and works with our mobile hotspot. I found it online for \$55 delivered. I leave it sitting on a shelf with nonskid underneath and it doesn't move at all while we're traveling down the road.

Barbara Snell | Lemoore, California

Lightweight and Portable

Several years ago my husband was doing a lot of business traveling and was lamenting the limitations of not being able to print from his laptop. I gave him

Featured Letter

A Workstation For Two

We do personal genealogical research all over the U.S. When we set up at a campground we place a table between the two swivel cockpit seats, place our laptops back to back and put our HP Deskjet 3050A on a small table off to the side. The whole operation runs wireless off our MiFi. When we're traveling, the laptops go under the bed, the tables go behind the recliner and the printer fits comfortably into an overhead bin with an extra ream of paper.

The 3050A is small, lightweight and can be used wirelessly; it's also a scanner and copier. We purchased ours at Wal-Mart's "Black Friday" sale for \$35. And yes, the ink cartridges cost almost as much as the printer. When we get home, we put the printer in the house and use it there as well.

That way nothing gets dried out or plugged up.

We love *MotorHome* magazine. We first subscribed about 30 years ago and we enjoyed the old regular columnists. We miss some of those who have passed on. My favorite was stories of Rocinante and Big Red.

Neldon Sommerville | Via email



EDITOR'S NOTE: William C. "Andy" Anderson was *MotorHome* magazine's Off Ramp columnist for 15 years. He frequently wrote about "Big Red," his wife, Dortha, and their motorhome, which they dubbed Rocinante. His last column was published in September 2003.

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an HP Officejet H470 mobile printer. He wasn't very impressed with it at first because it's so small, but now it's become a necessity on every trip — in the RV or elsewhere. This little printer has more miles under its belt than we do on the road in our RV and that's saying a lot!

Stevie Giffin | Via email

Bag the Ink

We bought an HP Officejet J4680 All-in-One for use in our home and RV. At home, we use it in wireless mode where our computers can access it; in our RV, we just change the printer port to use a USB bus on our laptop. It's easy to set up and has been very reliable. Just remember to take the ink cartridges out and store them in a sealed bag so the ink doesn't leak when moving it or traveling.

Ron and Barb Krainz | Mesa, Arizona

Stores in a Cupboard

We have been full-timing for four years and use an HP Deskjet 3050 printer with our Verizon hotspot for wireless

connection to the printer. The printer rides in a bedroom cupboard, which has an electrical connection in it. We don't need to move the printer out of the cabinet to use it as it picks up the Wi-Fi signal easily from the front of our rig. The printer weighs about 8 pounds and measures 10.5 by 15 inches.

Dick and Brenda Hollenbeck | Lake Alfred, Florida

Wi-Fi is the Way to Go

In our 2006 Holiday Rambler Admiral we use an HP Officejet 4630 All-in-One Wi-Fi printer, fax, scanner, copier. It fits very nicely in a cockpit compartment with an electrical outlet over the passenger's side. We use a Wi-Fi hotspot when printing from our laptop or make PDF documents. It works great.

Vern Hundt | Geneva, Illinois

USB Cord Not Included

I carry a Canon PIXMA iP100 printer in my Winnebago View Profile. It measures 12.5 by 7 by 2.5 inches. It prints well on

standard inkjet paper, and connects to the computer with a USB cord. Be sure to buy the proper cord when you buy the printer. Amazingly, it doesn't come with a USB cord.

Ford Rollo | Ennis, Montana

Rides on the Dash

HP makes a variety of all-in-one printers. I use a Photosmart 5520, which only cost \$99. It is lightweight and if you put it on a nonslip pad it rides very nicely on the dash. My all-in-one works from computers, cellphones, etc.

Robert Bilodeau | Farmington, New Hampshire

Large Laser

We found the Samsung ML-1865W black-and-white laser printer a few years ago and couldn't be happier. It's about the size of a stack of three reams of paper and works wired or wireless (if you have a router). We move ours from the house to a cabinet over our dinette in our 2009 Winnebago View J for our travels. Since

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it's so compact, after connecting the power and printer we have to lower the paper tray and add paper to use, but View owners put a premium on compactness. The Samsung handles the roughness of the RV life with no problem.

Jeff and Diana Shamis | Via email

No Stale Ink

We travel about six months a year with a Canon PIXMA iP2600 printer. We use it regularly and while it is not a wireless printer, it comes with a USB cable. It has performed spectacularly for the past four years. The color cartridges are reasonably priced and do not become "stale" when we're not traveling.

Dick Newbert | Langhorne, Pennsylvania

Rugged and Travels Well

We have used an HP Deskjet 3000 for several years — it's perfect for our Class C's limited space. It is rugged and travels well. It has a small footprint (17 by 8.5 inches) and can be configured as a wireless printer. Its biggest pro is the

price — it can be found for less than \$100. The only drawback is that it is only a printer; no copy, fax or scan functions.

John Micena | Via email

Fits in a Drawer

We use the Canon PIXMA iP100 color inkjet printer. It is small enough to fit in a drawer and can be used wirelessly. We have had it for three years and use it while we are on the road and at home.

Dave and Jodi Hansen | Big Bear Lake, California

Scan, Copy and Print

I use an HP ENVY 4500 e-All-in-One wireless printer. I wanted wireless, but I also wanted the capability to scan and to copy (and I've had a need to do both while camping). I use my computer at the dinette table and store the printer in the cabinet overhead. I never have to take it out of the cabinet. It fits neatly and I just pull the power cord down to plug in behind the dinette and pull the printer slightly forward so the paper will feed

through the opening. It works with either the Wi-Fi from the campground or my smartphone hotspot.

Cheryll Mclean | Lakeview, Arkansas

Small and Fast

My wife and I work while we're on the road in our Leisure Travel Van Unity IB. Since the motorhome is only 24 feet, storage and space are important to us. We travel with the HP Officejet 150 All-in-One. It is ideal. The printer has a small footprint, is lightweight, has Bluetooth, a scanner and prints fast. We highly recommend it.

Mark Batterman | Via email

Compact RV Office

I use the Canon PIXMA iP100 printer (about \$150). It fits easily in a drawer along with a 30-sheet pack of paper. The printer has Bluetooth connectivity to the computer (reducing cord clutter) though you can also use a USB connector.

On a related subject, I also recommend a single-page portable



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scanner. If you have a paper form that can be scanned and emailed, this is a must. I bought the Epson DS-30 (about \$100), which gets its electrical power and "communication" through a single USB connection to the computer. It is extremely compact (10.9 by 2 by 1.4 inches). The Epson includes several pieces of scanner software including Optical Character Recognition (OCR). This printer and scanner make for a compact RV office.

Mark Hoecker | Charlotte, North Carolina

Low-Profile Printer

We use the HP ENVY 120 e-All-in-One Printer. It has a low profile, and does a beautiful job of printing, faxing, etc. It is heavy enough to stay put, but doesn't take up much room.

Mark McCormick | Via email

Use a Tablet Instead

For most on-the-road use, I find it more practical and less costly to save information to a dedicated device rather

than printing it out. You can purchase a tablet for less than the cost of a printer. Whatever info you want to keep (fuel prices, attractions, campgrounds, etc.) can be saved to a dedicated tablet wirelessly or by using a free syncing service such as Dropbox. Plus, a tablet has other uses (like the "Good Sam Camping" app).

Silas Deane | Owensboro, Kentucky

Runs Off a Battery

We use an HP Officejet 100 Mobile Printer. It's easy to use, connects via Bluetooth and also runs on a rechargeable battery. If I just need a few pages to print, it runs off the battery. I can also put it anywhere in the motorhome — it doesn't need to be next to the computer, tablet or phone to print.

Barbara West | The Villages, Florida

A Printer That Does it All With Style

Without hesitation, I recommend the HP ENVY 120. It is unlike any other printer on the market that I've seen. It looks like a

piece of hi-fi equipment with all the touch controls on the front face, the angle of which can be adjusted. The paper tray ejects and closes like a CD tray and the printouts are delivered through the front after the control panel motors up.

Now to the clever parts. After the ENVY is connected to Wi-Fi, and is registered with HP Connect, there is an abundance of features through the Internet. The front panel will display apps that can be scrolled through by swiping the panel from side to side. These apps include crossword puzzles, recipes, news, forms and so on. Just touch the app icon and the ENVY will print out the latest issue. You can even go to your account (free) on hpconnect.com and schedule the ENVY to print out the latest every day at a time of your choosing.

Moving on, you can assign an email address to the ENVY. It can then receive and print emails sent to it at that address. You can also scan to email a document direct from the printer's

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address. As long as your computer is connected to the same Wi-Fi hotspot, you can scan documents to it from the printer, creating PDF files. Obviously, you will also be able to send print commands from your computer wirelessly and also from your Wi-Fi-connected iPhone.

Our 2013 Thor Tuscany came with a computer drawer and slideout keyboard shelf. I took the door off the latter and placed the ENVY on that. It only needs to be slid out to use the scan/copy functions. The ENVY does it all with style.

Martin Cutter | Champaign County, Illinois

Pricey But Worth It

I recommend the HP Officejet 150 Mobile All-in-One. It is compact at 14 by 8 by 3.5 inches when folded down. The printer is pricey (\$399) compared to larger models, but well worth it for travel.

Milo Miles | Arvada, Colorado

Year-Round All-in-One

I have a Wi-Fi-capable HP Officejet 4500

All-in-One. It was budget friendly and fits in an overhead cabinet. I mostly use the copier function. We keep it in the coach year-round.

Joann Gemmrig | Spokane Valley, Washington

Office on the Go

I traveled for three months and 9,000 miles in my 30-foot Newmar motorhome. Before the trip, I bought a smartphone, a Dell laptop and an HP Officejet 6500A Plus. I bought this printer because it has wireless so I can print from my phone or computer. It is a copier, scanner and can be a fax with a land line. We are very happy with our "office on the go."

Janice Rougier | Newton, New Hampshire

What Color is Your Motorhome?

Is there a conspiracy between coach-builders and air-conditioner manufacturers? I say this because I notice that the majority of motorhomes, especially Class A's, have black or dark exterior colors.

Just imagine RVing in South Texas during the month of July in an all-black coach!

Maybe it's just me, but why don't motorhome manufacturers offer lighter colors that would not enhance the heat signature of the coach — internally or externally? Then again, an all-white 45-foot Class A might look ridiculous ... or would it?

Tom Miller | Standish, Maine

Question of the Month

Are you happy with the color of your motorhome, or would you have preferred a lighter, or darker, model?

Send your comments to:

MotorHome, 2750 Park View Court, Suite 240, Oxnard, CA 93036; or email letters@motorhomemagazine.com.

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Windsor Ruins

The stately columns are all that remain of the once-magnificent mansion

By Morey Edelman

Twenty-three hauntingly elegant columns still stand at the old Windsor Plantation in Claiborne County, Mississippi, as the only remains of what was once the largest antebellum house in the state. Windsor was the home of Smith Coffee Daniel II, who died at the age of 34, only a few weeks after the completion of the house in 1861. Built in a Greek revival style at a cost of \$175,000, which included building expenses and furnishings, the mansion had 25 rooms, each with its own fireplace and interior plumbing,

all built with locally manufactured red clay brick.

Used by the Confederate and Union armies during the Civil War, it survived until 1890 when a guest left a lit cigar on the upper porch. The ensuing fire was discovered too late and the mansion burned to the ground.

Windsor Ruins is located on Rodney Road, 10 miles southwest of Port Gibson. There is open access to the ruins, which is managed by the Mississippi Department of Archives and History.

By Bobbie Hasselbring

We All Scream For Ice Cream

Who doesn't love ice cream, that cool, creamy, sweet treat? One of my fondest childhood memories is hearing the ice cream truck's clang and all of us rushing to buy our favorites. Even my dog goes crazy for the stuff. People have been eating ice cream (or versions of it) for more than 2,000 years! Early Persians poured concentrated grape juice over snow. They later mixed ice with fruits, saffron and other flavors.

The first "real" ice cream was likely invented by Arabians who used milk sweetened with sugar and flavored it with nuts, rosewater and dried fruits. In Europe, because ice cream required access to snow or ice house, ice cream was expensive and reserved for the rich or royalty. Fortunately, by the mid-18th century ice cream became affordable and everyone could enjoy it.

Americans' love of ice cream took off when refrigeration became cheap and widely used. In the early 20th century, ice cream became so popular nearly every U.S. town boasted a soda shop or ice cream parlor.

Smooth Texture King

What makes great ice cream? For me, it's all about mouthfeel — the smooth creaminess of the ice cream. And that's about butterfat. Generally speaking, the higher the butterfat content, the silkier the mouthfeel. More expensive ice creams tend to have higher butterfat content and, thus, taste richer and creamier. Henry's Homemade Ice Cream, in Plano, Texas, is made from 16 percent butterfat mix that gives



Making ice cream in small batches results in a smoother, creamier product.

its ice cream creamy smoothness.

The exception is gelato, intensely flavored and smooth Italian ice cream, which has lower butterfat than most ice cream. Gelato machines move slowly as they churn, which introduces little air into the mixture (American-style ice cream contains as much as 50 percent air by volume). It's also stored at a higher temperature than regular ice cream and the result is a creamy ice cream.

Ice crystals interfere with smooth mouthfeel. Keeping ice cream in the freezer too long (not a problem I have!) creates ice crystals. Henry's shocks the ice cream at 20 degrees in a special freezer to prevent ice crystals from forming.

How ice cream is made also influences the formation of ice crystals. At Mallard Ice Cream, in Bellingham, Washington, they churn fresh, local, and organic ingredients slowly using the salt-and-ice method, which makes small ice crystals and an uber-smooth ice cream. Some ice cream recipes call for making custard and folding in whipped cream before freezing, creating a rich, silky product. Additionally, ice cream should never be refrozen since melting and refreezing causes large ice crystals to form.

When I travel I'm always looking for great ice cream. It's a fun and inexpensive way to get a taste of an area and, best of all, you can stash some in your motorhome's freezer. **M**

Have a favorite? Email bobbie@realfoodtraveler.com (with Road Foodie in the subject line).



Yum! Mallard Ice Cream in Bellingham, Washington, uses fresh, local and organic ingredients. The ice cream is churned slowly using the salt-and-ice method, which makes small ice crystals and an uber-smooth ice cream.



ROAD FOODIE
FAVORITES
Great Places to Eat

Henry's Homemade Ice Cream, Plano, Texas; www.henryshomemadeicecream.com

Mallard Ice Cream, Bellingham, Washington; www.mallardicecream.com

Salt and Straw, Portland, Oregon. Handmade in small batches with flavors like sea salt with caramel and honey balsamic with cracked pepper; www.saltandstraw.com



Let the Force Be With You

Delta Force by SMI Manufacturing brings innovation to the portable dinghy braking scene with dual-signal, proportional braking. A breakaway system and wireless CoachLink are included. Weighing in at 10 pounds and just 25 percent the size of larger systems, maneuverability and storage simplicity are unparalleled, according to SMI. Dual-signal mode allows the Delta Force system to detect the motorhome's brakelights and deliver an even more accurate braking profile. When enabled, Delta automatically detects the presence of the connection and switches itself to dual-signal mode.

SMI Manufacturing, 800-893-3763, www.smibrake.com



Devilish on Dirt

RV enthusiasts now have an easier way to improve air quality and keep their motorhomes cleaner. The Dirt Devil CV1500 by H-P Products runs quieter and offers 26 percent more cleaning power than handhelds and other RV central vacuum systems on the market, according to the company. The versatile CV1500 can be installed out of the way in a storage compartment, under a seat, or in a closet, and with a 35-foot hose that stores at just 7 feet along with an assortment of attachments, the Dirt Devil CV1500 can be used to clean just about every surface found in a motorhome.

H-P Products, 800-822-8356, www.dirtdevilcentral.com



Need a Lift?

Air Lift offers adjustable air-spring kits that work with existing leaf or coil suspensions, helping to distribute weight to all four tires and provide up to 5,000 pounds of leveling capacity. They also help reduce sway while promoting better braking and steering control, and improve headlight aim by reducing rear sagging, according to the company. Kits are available for most Class A and C chassis, including Chevrolet, Dodge and Ford.

Air Lift Co., 800-248-0892, www.airliftcompany.com



LEDing the Way

Designed for the mobile lifestyle, the new JE2414 24-inch LED AC TV is a slim, lightweight and space-saving unit that can be easily mounted to the wall. The unit features a variety of inputs that make it suitable for connecting to DVD players, stereos and gaming consoles. The JE2414 emphasizes Jensen JCOM technology, which automatically turns the TV on when a disc is inserted into the DVD player, when connected by an HDMI cable to a Jensen DVD player. A wireless unified remote control is included with the TV, adding convenience and functionality.

ASA Electronics Corp., 877-305-0445, www.jensenrvdirect.com

Road Trip Giveaway ⬇

Winnebago Industries has partnered with Little Debbie on the Oatmeal Creme Pie Road Trip Giveaway. The promotion, which runs through Nov. 30, awards the grand-prize winner a two-week use of a new Winnebago Minnie Winnie, a copy of Jamie Jensen's best-selling book "Road Trip USA," and the Road Trip board game, which challenges players' road trip knowledge, vocabulary and geography. Monthly, first-prize winners will be awarded a copy of the Road Trip board game; with second-prize winners receiving the "Road Trip USA" book. In addition, 100 winners will receive Winnebago coolers. The back panel of Oatmeal Creme Pie cartons provides details about the Road Trip Giveaway. For more information, or to enter the sweepstakes, go to www.oatmealcremepies.littledebbie.com.



Good Sam Names Top Family RV Parks ➡

The "Good Sam RV Travel Guide and Campground Directory" has announced its list of Top Family RV Parks for 2014, as chosen by the publication's editors and consultants. These 46 family-friendly RV parks feature amenities, entertainment and education programs for the whole family.

According to a press release, the parks cultivate an atmosphere that's welcoming for families big and small. Whether showing G-rated movies or conducting educational nature programs, these parks enable families to enjoy long periods of quality time together. Some of the parks on the list have on-site water features or are near family-friendly attractions, such as Walt Disney Resort in Orlando, Florida.

For a complete list, visit www.goodsamcamping.com/explore/article/details.aspx?articleid=3079369



Photo: Cajun Palms RV Resort

RV SHOWS | OCTOBER



Oct. 10-19	Pomona, California	62nd Annual California RV Show 818-248-6600, www.thebestrvshow.com
Oct. 17-19	Toronto, Ontario, Canada	Toronto Fall RV Show & Sale 905-659-8800, www.rvshowfalltoronto.ca
Oct. 31-Nov. 2	Atlantic City, New Jersey	Atlantic City Fall RV Show 804-243-8847, www.gsevents.com

NEWS BRIEFS

Doctors Say Take a Hike!

► In July, Park Service Director Jonathan B. Jarvis met with DC Park Prescriptions champion Dr. Robert Zarr to learn about an innovative program in which doctors prescribe time in nature as a way to help treat chronic diseases such as obesity.

"This is a unique opportunity for obesity prevention by prescribing parks for [those] who are suffering from chronic diseases. Nature is free and readily available," said Zarr, a primary care pediatrician at Unity Health Care in Washington, D.C.

"The park prescriptions partnership is an example of how national parks can help people lead healthier lives," said Jarvis.

Freightliner 24/7 App

► Freightliner Custom Chassis Corp. (FCCC) has released a mobile app to connect customers with its nationwide dealer and service network. The 24/7 Direct app, which is available free of charge, makes FCCC customer service available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The location-based app uses GPS coordinates to provide customers with information on the closest dealers up to 250 miles away.

New Camping World Supercenter

► Camping World has opened a new supercenter in Olive Branch, Mississippi. The facility, named Camping World of Memphis, offers RV sales, service, parts and accessories. Located off Interstate 22, the 26,000-square-foot site has a Camping World retail store and a Camping World RV sales dealership to serve the greater Memphis communities.

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If autumn finds you in New Hampshire's Lakes Region for fall foliage, base yourself at Danforth Bay Camping & RV Resort, a year-round campground on Ossipee Lake in Freedom, New Hampshire. From late September through mid-October, peak season for fall color, the campground's 185-acre wooded setting provides a spectacular backdrop for its 300 spacious sites.

During your stay, visit the Squam Lakes Natural Science Center, Canterbury Shaker Village and Castle in the Clouds, a mountaintop estate built for a wealthy shoe manufacturer. Cruise on the historic MS Mount Washington on Lake Winnepesaukee or explore Squam Lake, located 45 minutes west from the RV resort.

For more information, call 603-539-2069, or visit www.danforthbay.com — *Lisa Halvorsen*

Tohono O'odham Nation, Arizona

An Out-of-This-World Experience at Kitt Peak National Observatory



Photo: Courtesy Kitt Peak National Observatory

Arizona's Kitt Peak National Observatory is home to the world's largest collection of telescopes: 24 optical, and two radio telescopes. In addition to professional astronomers from around the world who use the facility to conduct research, nearly 7,000 people each year peer through the telescopes in the Nightly Observing Program. Participants arrive about an hour before sunset to explore the visitor center and enjoy a light meal. After a brief orientation, guests gather in one of the domes to view planets, stars, nebulae and galaxies through telescopes.

The McMath-Pierce Solar Telescope gives visitors incentive to come during daylight hours. Built in 1961, it's the world's largest solar telescope. We looked through a white-light filter to see sunspots and a hydrogen-alpha filter to see solar flares — all without sunburning our eyeballs.

Three daily guided tours include the solar telescope at 10 a.m., the 2.1-meter telescope at 11:30 a.m., and the Mayall 4-meter telescope at 1:30 p.m. Self-guided tours are free. Kitt Peak is located 56 miles southwest of Tucson, Arizona, on the Tohono O'odham Reservation. RV parking is available.

For prices and more information, go to www.noao.edu/kpno — *Mary Zalmanek* **M**



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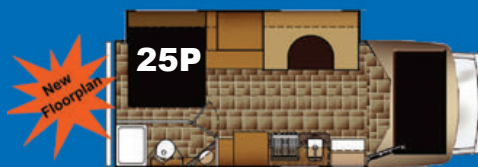
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Fabulous Forest

Henry Cowell Redwoods State Park in California's Santa Cruz Mountains is lush, tranquil and wondrous

By Ken Reid

Wondrous is just one of the many words that came to mind during our recent visit to Henry Cowell Redwoods State Park located near Felton, California. Our group included family members representing three generations, from 14 to 68 years of age, and all were impressed with this expansive forest. We could have easily spent more than the three days allotted for the trip, there was so much to see and do within easy walking distance of our motorhome.

The park is full of huge redwoods that have been there for more than 1,000 years, and peaceful rivers and streams meander through the forest. There is also an abundance of lush ferns and other plants that thrive in this unique coastal mountain area. Within this idyllic setting can be found wonders of nature not found elsewhere, and it can all be accessed on beautifully maintained trails.

Before arriving, we did some research and found that options for

larger motorhomes like ours are limited at the state park's campground. For example, the maximum size that can be accommodated is 35 feet, and there aren't many spaces that large. But there are three RV resorts located along Highway 9, all within walking or bicycling distance. Each of those can handle virtually any size motorhome.

The one we chose — Cotillion Gardens RV Park — has many amenities, and dogs are welcome. More importantly, a trail leads right from the resort to a nearby footbridge (and also to a railroad trestle), where you can cross the San Lorenzo River and enter the state park. By accessing the park on foot or bicycle, instead of driving a vehicle in through the main entrance, you can avoid the \$8 daily parking fee.

HENRY COWELL REDWOODS STATE PARK

Getting There ➞ To reach the campground at Henry Cowell Redwoods State Park, take Highway 17 to Mount Hermon Rd. and follow the road until it ends at Graham Hill Rd. Make a left and go 2.5 miles. The campground entrance is on the right. This route avoids Highway 9, which is narrow and windy.

Located in Santa Cruz County, near the small town of Felton, Henry Cowell Redwoods State Park consists of approximately 4,623 acres — including a noncontiguous extension in the Fall Creek area. Much of the area now included in the park had originally been part of three large land grants that were given out during the 1830s and 1840s, while it was still a Mexican territory. Those “ranchos” were later subdivided. In 1865 an industrialist named Henry Cowell purchased 6,500 acres, including 1,600 acres of prime forest, to expand his already sizable production of redwood and limestone. Those two important building materials were in great demand, especially in the rapidly growing city of San Francisco.

In the 1920s, support grew for the County of Santa Cruz to purchase and preserve much of the area, the unique coastal forest in particular. That action was finally approved in 1930, due in large part to the efforts of Lt. Gov. William Jeter. Samuel Cowell — the last of the family line — eventually agreed to donate a significant portion of the family property bordering the county-owned Big Trees Grove, to the state of California. But he did so under the condition that Santa Cruz County give up its park property to the state, so all of it could be managed together. In 1954, the Henry Cowell Redwoods State Park was created. The Fall Creek extension was added later.

During the 1830s, a man named Isaac Graham settled in the area where the main park entrance is now located. Mexican authorities named his raucous settlement Roaring Camp. In 1875, the area’s first railroad (the Santa Cruz & Felton) began carrying tourists from Roaring Camp to the Big Trees and the Santa Cruz beach area. Today, Roaring Camp and its railroad are the focal point of many fun activities.

Roaring Camp hosts a variety of theme-based events, including Great



Train Robberies, a Summer Gathering of Mountain Men, Musical Saw Festival, Halloween Ghost Train, Civil War Battles and Encampment, and Santa Cruz Holiday Lights Train. During the weekend we were there, it hosted the Redwood Mountain Faire. Think fun, and lots of it! There were several bands and many vendor booths selling food and hand-crafted items — many of which seemed to have a Bohemian theme. The Roaring Camp Railroad offers narrow-gauge steam train rides through the scenic

The two people standing next to a giant redwood help demonstrate its size.

redwoods and train rides to and from the nearby Santa Cruz beach and boardwalk.

Well before arriving at Henry Cowell Redwoods State Park, the beauty and majesty of the surrounding coastal forest should be enough to impress all but the most jaded visitor. It is that scenic. Whichever approach is used, the views are spectacular. But if coming north from Santa Cruz in a motorhome, be forewarned: Much of Highway 9 is narrow, and runs a tortuous course most of the way.

The three RV resorts referenced are all nestled in the forest, between

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GETAWAY

HENRY COWELL REDWOODS STATE PARK



From above: The Santa Cruz Boardwalk is only 6 miles south of Henry Cowell Redwoods State Park. Cotillion Gardens RV Park has large sites and is only a short walk to the state park. Roaring Camp Railroad offers rides through the scenic forest and to Santa Cruz Boardwalk.

the highway and San Lorenzo River. Many shades of green appear most everywhere. At the Cotillion Gardens, we even had a fern-lined stream running right behind the campsite. Beautiful, quiet and serene describe the verdant setting. But it proved to be only a teaser for what lay ahead.

Within a five-minute walk of the resort, there is a footbridge that crosses the San Lorenzo River. We saw trout swimming in a shaded area below the trees. Nearby was a nice beach that offered sun and shade for those who wanted to linger.

After crossing the bridge (or the nearby railroad trestle), you'll encounter one of many well-maintained trails that help facilitate exploration of the park. All of those trails eventually lead to the visitor center and nearby Roaring Camp. The visitor center has an impressive array of displays and informative literature that will make the park experience more meaningful. Many of the wonders to be seen along the way are numbered, and those numbers correspond to written material that can be picked up from either the visitor



center or from boxes at trailheads. Self-guided tours are an option, but there are also frequently scheduled organized tours.

The main park has about 15 miles of trails, and 20 more in the Fall Creek portion. Much of the way is wheelchair accessible. Main trails are paved and fairly level. Dogs on a leash are allowed in the picnic area, campground and on some of the trails. Bicycles are also allowed on some of them. Each trailhead has signs indicating restrictions.

In addition to a large and pristine grove of old-growth redwoods, the

forest is thick with mixed evergreens and riparian foliage along the river. Other trees that can be found include fir, madrone, oak and ponderosa pine. Much of the forest floor is covered with beautiful, lush ferns, and redwood sorrel, which looks somewhat like large clover.

Huge old redwoods, mostly found in a carefully protected 40-acre section of the park, are spectacular. The oldest are about 1,400 to 1,800 years old! These coastal redwoods can grow to approximately 300 feet, with a 16- to 17-foot-diameter trunk. Many of them have survived forest fires that periodically swept through the area during the many centuries of their life. These extremely hardy trees can have 7- to 12-inch-thick bark that helps protect them from fires, insects, disease and fungus. Two of the redwoods were particularly unusual: a rare albino, and one known as the Fremont Tree, named after John C. Fremont. While exploring the area between 1843 and 1846, Fremont and his group of pioneers reportedly camped there.

When first looking at the trunk of the Fremont Tree, it appears that a small area was burned through the bark near its base. But by stooping down and looking closer, it is clear that one of the fires burned a large area inside of the tree — the “ceiling” is so high that a flashlight is required to see it. The dirt “floor” must be at least 10 feet across, and roughly circular. According to one of the park’s docents, 75 school kids crowded themselves inside at the same time during a visit in 2009. Seven from our group stood inside, without even touching. At one time, the interior was equipped with electricity, lights, bed and other fixtures, so tourists could pay to stay. None of the furnishings are left, but a shelf was obviously cut into the charred wall. And devices for routing electrical wiring can still be seen.

Near the entrance to the main park is mounted a cross section of another large, old redwood tree. It toppled in the 1930s. There are small metal tags affixed near some of the several hundred growth rings, from the center to the outside. Each tag bears a date and description of

an event that occurred during the life of that tree. The one closest to the center indicates the tree was already growing when Christ was a baby.

This unique forest is not the only attraction Henry Cowell Redwoods State Park has to offer, by far, but even if there wasn’t anything else to see and do here, the park alone is worth a visit. **M**

➤ FOR MORE INFORMATION

Cotillion Gardens RV Park Located off Highway 9 in Felton. It has 80 spaces, is open year-round and can accommodate virtually any size rig (though some sites are narrow and not very level). Campsites have wooden decks and fire pits; 831-335-7669, <http://www.campingfriend.com/CotillionGardensRVPark/default.asp?source=ctp>.

Henry Cowell Redwoods State Park

Day-use areas are open year-round. Many trails are paved and relatively level; 831-438-2396, www.parks.ca.gov/?page_id=546. The park’s campground has 107 standard sites, some of which are suitable for motorhomes up to 35 feet in length. To make a reservation, go to www.reserveamerica.com.

Roaring Camp Railroads

Located adjacent to the parking lot near the main entrance to the state park. A narrow-gauge train with steam locomotive takes a serpentine route through the beautiful terrain, but doesn’t run every day. There is also a round-trip beach train to the Santa Cruz Boardwalk, most days from April through September. Parking is \$8; 831-335-4484, www.roaringcamp.com.

Santa Cruz Redwoods RV Resort

Nestled in the redwoods, between Highway 9 and the San Lorenzo River. It can accommodate most any size rig and is within walking or biking distance of the state park; 831-335-8312, www.santacruzredwoodsrvresort.com.

Smithwoods RV Park A very nice resort, which can accommodate pretty much any size rig, and is within walking distance of the state park; 831-335-4321, www.smithwoodsrvpark.com.

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Presque Isle River empties into Lake Superior at Porcupine Mountains Wilderness State Park, Michigan.

SUPERIOR FALL TRAVEL

A tour of the U.S. section of Lake Superior follows scenic and rugged shoreline through Michigan, Minnesota and Wisconsin

Although fall in New England is legendary, tripping through autumn along Lake Superior in the U.S. Northern Tier states of Minnesota, Wisconsin and Michigan ain't bad. In fact, it's darn special. The crowds are light, the changing leaves transform land and atmosphere to the warm glow of a campfire and the many waters double the magic. And, hey, hooray, the bugs are gone (mostly). If you don't do as my husband, George, and I did, travel during the 2013 federal government shutdown, a Superior fall flirts with perfection.

While known for Apostle Islands and Pictured Rocks national lakeshores, these federal parks only tap the Lake Superior attractions — a fortunate truth for us during the shutdown. Besides colored leaves, visitors can discover islands, shores and guiding lights; falling waters; hiking trails and historical sites. This is

the land of just-picked apples; fish-fry Fridays and smoked trout and whitefish; and pasties — portable pocket dinner pies, historically a lunch-bucket staple for Cornish miners.

Fishing, shipping, logging, copper mining and iron making forged this region. Native American place names

that tangle the tongue harken to earlier times and ways. The Keweenaw County Historical Society of Michigan's Upper Peninsula (UP) offers a fine collection of stops and tours. You might even check off the UP's seven wonders, suggested to us by a T-shirt.

In the Northern Tier, fall typically runs from late September through mid-October, with the Lake Superior shore the last to color, owing to lake-effect weather. Fall-color hotlines and Web pages for the region can hone your timing and search. Having the luxury of time — if not timing — we budgeted three weeks to the fanfare. Weather ran from chilly nights triggering the color change to rainy days

Paddling on the Brule River in Wisconsin is a tranquil way to enjoy autumn color. The falls at Wisconsin's Amnicon Falls State Park can be seen from the foot bridge or the riverside trail.

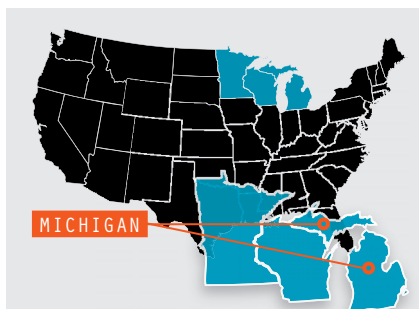
to lengthy spells of Indian summer, with everything in between.

Northern Tier forests blend the profiles of the green-black evergreens: spruce, pine, hemlock and cedar with the yellow, orange and red deciduous canopy of the maple, oak, birch, aspen, ash, dogwood, basswood and beech. Wetland, shrub and understory plants broaden the color show.

The Lake Superior Circle Tour maps out travel. It follows the North Shore Scenic Byway in Minnesota and the Wisconsin Lake Superior Byway as well as various named tour routes in Michigan, including the Whitefish Bay National Forest Scenic Byway. The U.S. circle half follows Highway 61 in Minnesota and Highways 13 or U.S. 2 in Wisconsin, with Highways 28 and U.S. 41 carrying the lion's share in Michigan. Side roads into state and national forests suggest additional exploration.

Counterclockwise, U.S. travel runs from Grand Portage to Duluth, Minnesota, and from Superior to Hurley, Wisconsin. After entering Michigan at Ironwood, the eastbound route adds a spur northeast to Copper Harbor before tracking east from Marquette to Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan. But wherever you hop on board, you'll find trips of gold and plenty to do.

Easing motorhome travel are federal, state and local campgrounds, as well as private RV parks. Services range from primitive to full service. In trade for fewer services, you gain a better doorstep view.



Leaf Peeping

Fall color typically runs from late September through mid-October in the U.S. Northern Tier near Lake Superior.



Minnesota

Minnesota's North Shore provided my first acquaintance with Lake Superior. Our travels here ran between Grand Marais and Duluth, a dream landscape of forest, water and rock. Roadside parks, stops and trails allowed us to experience it all.

Here, scenic waters, spilling in falls and cutting through rock, race to join the inland sea. Lichen-etched cliffs, cobbled and pebbled shores, and sculpted sandy strands complement the endless blue. The picturesque lights serving mariners beckon road travelers point to point, as well.

Where bays and cliffs defined the water at Temperance River or Sugarloaf Cove, I was mindful I was admiring a Great Lake. Where the liquid expanse was unbroken, I'd inadvertently slip into my Pacific frame of mind, looking for whale

spouts I'd never find.

Grand Marais welcomes with its Municipal Park, North Superior Coast Guard Station, jetty, shore and lighthouse. Sunset photographers navigate the jetty rocks to secure an angle on the lowering sun and beacon.

The drive's waterfall lineup bids frequent stopping, with stair-stepped trails and roadside viewing. We admired the showers at Cascade River State Park, Temperance River State Park, Cross River Falls, Caribou Falls, and Tettegouche and Gooseberry Falls state parks. The tannin waters splash over the naked red or black rock in white-and-amber cascades. The framing forests and twists and turns of the rivers add to the beauty and excitement. At some, bubbles from the natural chemistry and force of the drop leave foamy abstracts on the departing



Tahquamenon Falls State Park, Michigan, has rustic and modern campsites. Grand Marais Coast Guard Station was one of five lifesaving stations along the coast of Lake Superior. Picturesque Eagle Harbor Lighthouse in Michigan is still an active light and the keeper's house serves as a museum.

river surfaces.

Cross River traces its name to Father Baraga, a missionary to the Ojibwe who erected a cross nearby in 1846, observing his watery deliverance. In a daring act to reach Grand Portage during an epidemic, Father Baraga and a Native guide left Wisconsin by canoe to cross Lake Superior. Swallowed in an unexpected storm, they washed ashore in the river's vicinity.

Split Rock Lighthouse and State Park and the Two Harbors Light Station ranked high on our sightseeing lists. With a stunning cliff promontory, Split Rock Light is a signature attraction of the North Shore. At its namesake state park, a flock of cedar waxwings feeding on mountain-ash berries vied for our attention. At Two Harbors, we toured the red brick light and the Frontenac pilot house and learned about Great Lakes shipping and shipwrecks.

Duluth has its own lights, along with the Glensheen garden estate and freshwater Great Lakes Aquarium.

Wisconsin

In Wisconsin we continued the waterfall discovery and extended our lake celebration, taking the Grand Tour, the popular cruise along Apostle Islands. We attempted, not always succeeding, to match the attraction to the weather — overcast days for waterfalls and forest, sunshine for lakeshores and vistas. Having a dinghy vehicle allowed us to take in one of the region's celebrated hikes to St. Peter's Dome, a rock vantage overlooking the color mosaic of Chequamegon-Nicolet National

Forest in Ashland County.

Where Pattison State Park offered up the long plummet of Big and cliff-plunge of Little Manitou Falls on the Black River, Amnicon Falls State Park enticed us with its gentle, romantic falls, skipping and cascading over plated rock, with covered Horton Bridge to seal the spell. At the Brule River, we admired more of the region's tannin waters, a historic forest influenced by the axes and shovels of the Civilian Conservation Corps, and the leafy path of the North Country National Scenic Trail, which runs from North Dakota to New York — America's red-plaid, roll-up-your sleeves territory.

The Grand Tour departs Bayfield, an attractive hillside community on the lake and host to the fall apple festival. The three-hour boat tour covers 55 miles, visiting the outskirts of the treed islands composing Apostle Islands National Lakeshore. The tour spotlights sea caves, a fishing camp and the island lights. Narration tells of interesting characters, mishaps, wildlife and occupations. We watched crew in a small fishing boat haul nets.

En route to Ashland, we bought a peck of apples at a farmstand and visited the nature trails and boardwalks of the Northern Great Lakes Visitor Center, a wetland environment. At Ashland, we camped; strolled the Mural Walk, which hints at the town character and origin; and took in the waterfront. An interior drive then carried us to Michigan.

Autumn splendor is reflected on Perch Lake in the Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest, Wisconsin.



Michigan, Upper Peninsula

Through Minnesota and Wisconsin, fall's color teased and tantalized us with subtle brushstrokes and pockets of fireworks. By Michigan, it screamed, "Look at me!"

This pleasing gilded backdrop steered us from the Porkies (Porcupine Mountains Wilderness State Park) to Eagle and Copper Harbors and on to Whitefish Bay. Our Michigan ramble rounded up waterfalls, lights, historical sites and sent us in search of an unusual self-pulled raft with cut-out middle for viewing the spring-fed depths and resident big trout of Indian Lake (Kitch-iti-iki at Palms Book State Park).

The Black River route out of Bessemer called for an early detour north with a handful of waterfalls, an attractive harbor and Lake Superior shore access. It primed the pump for our Porcupine Mountains detour out of Wakefield.

The Porkies lay out a popular, accessible recreation park with two areas of exploration: Presque Isle River, with its waterfall showcase; and Lake of the Clouds, with its escarpment trail and overlooks of the lake and wooded expanse. The more energetic can find lonesome places, but these attractions are worth joining the crowd.

At Presque Isle River, the lower, Manabezho Falls is the site's tallest at 25 feet and wider than it is tall. Manido at the middle is cascading, wearing potholes in the layered rock. Upstream, Nawadaha Falls completes the set. Multilevel boardwalks and catwalks connect them, while old-growth hemlock, yellow birch and sugar maple crowd out light and add to the stage.

The skyline escarpment walk at Lake of the Clouds is popular with photographers, tripods abound, and sunrise attracts a huge fellowship of shutterbugs. Union Bay campground is a popular base.

The Keweenaw Historical Society struts its stuff at Eagle Harbor. Among the units are the Eagle Harbor Light, Schoolhouse and Life-Saving Station. Elsewhere, holdings include a historic town, blacksmith shop, church and mine; brochures help with charting travel. Copper Harbor, at peninsula's end, offers

a quaint village, orderly Fort Wilkins, and the scenery and vistas along Brockway Mountain Road.

With the freedom afforded by a passenger vehicle, we took in the sights, waters and trails of Ottawa National Forest, including the Silver Mountain Trail. Its stairway to the sky alone warranted viewing.

Waterfall chasers find ample reward with Bond, Agate and Tahquamenon Falls, all of national merit. My favorite falls, though, was the more understated Canyon Falls accessed at a roadside rest. Seen under drenching rain, it still won my admiration.

Marquette and area, with a full range of services, may waylay travel with the Michigan Iron Industry Museum, Harbor Light and Maritime Museum, and bluff walk at Presque Isle Point. A bluff monument honors the life and passing of centenarian Chief Charley Kawbawgam, the last of the Chippewa chiefs. East of Marquette, private Lakenenland Sculpture Park, with limited parking, examines the whimsical and political with brightly painted wildlife, Martians, loggers, and beasts, all puzzled together from pieces of metal scrap.

Too few days and a whirlwind of options shooed us east. A shelf cloud at Au Train Bay; historic Bay Furnace; a grudging inland bypass of Grand Island National Recreation Area and Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore; the wind-swept wonder at Whitefish Point, with its Light, Coast Guard Station and Bird Observatory; and the beauty of Whitefish Bay Scenic Byway polished off our Lake Superior acquaintance, but we'll be back. The invitation is too strong. **M**

Trip Resources

Explore Minnesota, 888-868-7476, www.exploreminnesota.com

Lake Superior Circle Tour
www.lakesuperiorcircuitour.info

Michigan Economic Development Corporation, 888-784-7328, www.michigan.org

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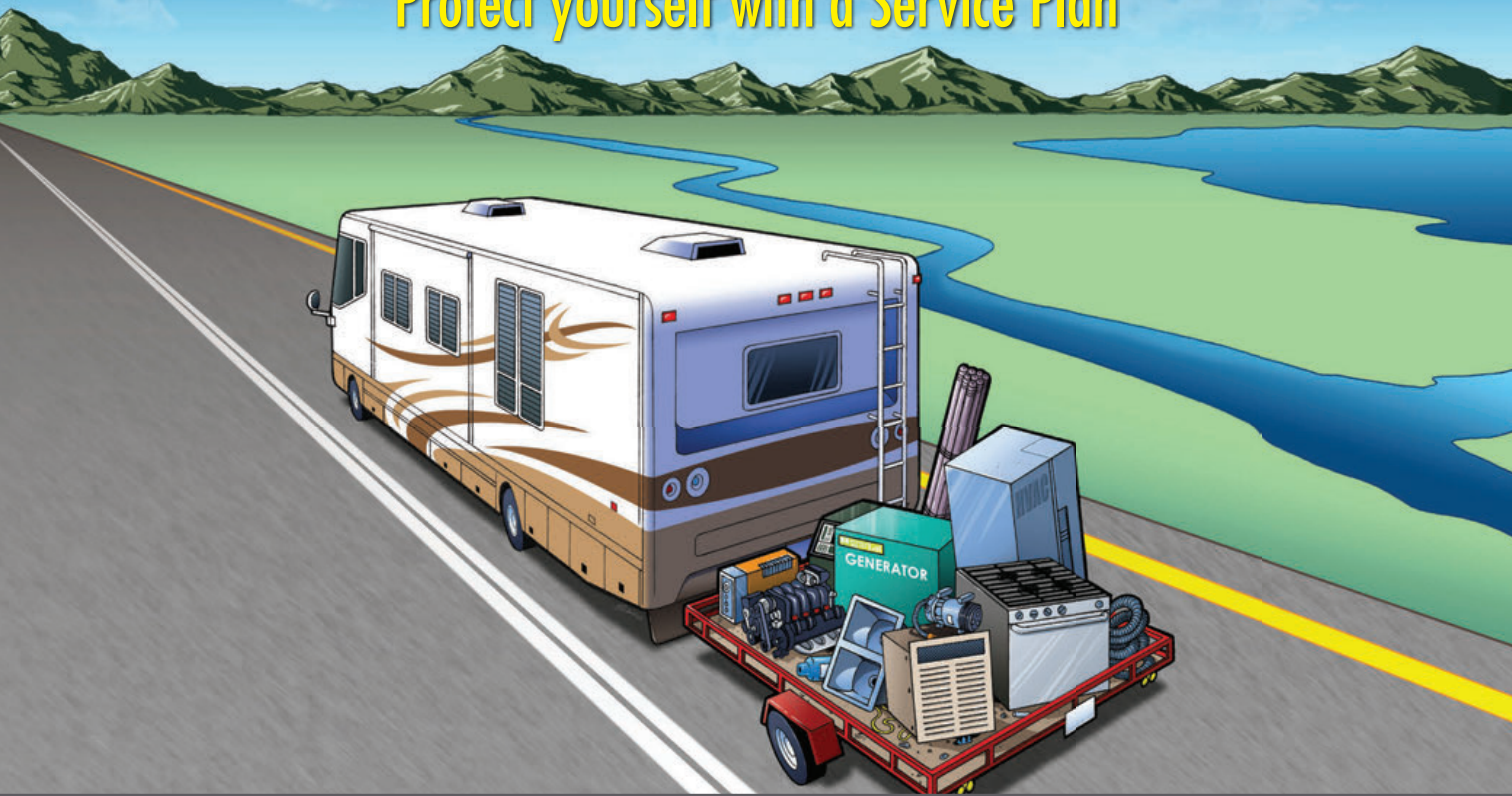
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View from the top of the ski jump at the Lake Placid Olympic Jumping Complex.

AUTUMN CAMPING IN THE ADIRONDACKS

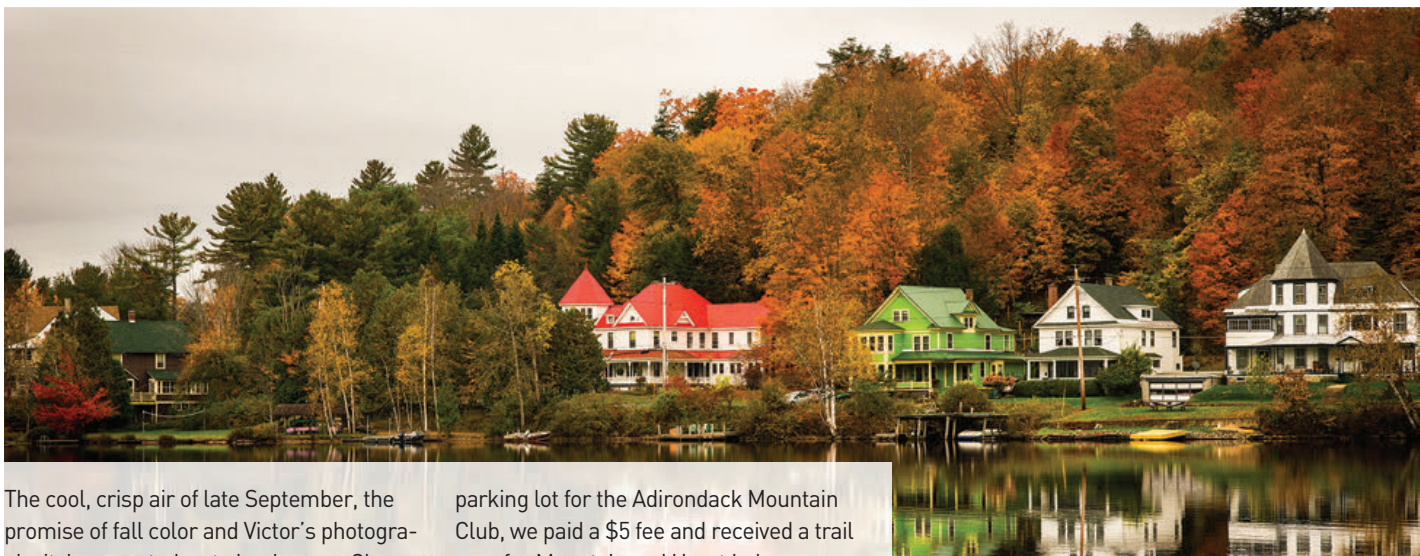


Did You Know?

Adirondack Park is larger than Yellowstone, Yosemite, Glacier and Grand Canyon national parks combined.

New York's Lake Placid and Whiteface Mountain region offers abundant fall color, fun special events and plenty of recreational opportunities

In the late 1800s, wealthy families from New York City and Albany traveled to the unspoiled wilderness of upstate New York to escape the gritty overcrowded cities. In 1892, Adirondack Park was created and a "Forever Wild" clause was added to the state constitution in 1895. Today, Adirondack Park is within a day's drive of 84 million people (including about 18 million Canadians), according to New York's Adirondack Park User's Guide. My husband, Victor, and I are two of those 84 million people who live within a five-hour drive of Adirondack Park.



The cool, crisp air of late September, the promise of fall color and Victor's photography itch prompted us to load up our Class B and drive to the Lake Placid/Whiteface Mountain region of the Adirondacks. Our destination was determined by the weekly fall foliage report at www.foliagenetwork.com, which indicated peak color would be the last week of September in the higher elevations and the first two weeks of October in the lower elevations.

Our first night out we camped at the Lake Placid/Whiteface Mountain KOA in Wilmington, New York. The campground offers full hookups, pull-through sites, Wi-Fi, picnic tables, fire rings, a heated pool, a mini golf course and a dog walk. The following morning, we hiked to the Ausable River inhaling the scent of dried leaves and balsam sap. At the river's edge we watched water surge through a gorge, rush over rocks and cascade down a waterfall.

Mount Jo Hike

After our campground walk, it was time for a hike. Our guidebook, "Adirondack Great Walks & Day Hikes," lists Mount Jo as a moderate 2.3-mile loop. We drove from the campground on Route 86 west, to Route 73 east. After traveling 4.6 miles we turned right onto Adirondack Loj Road, a winding country road lined with bright orange, yellow and fiery scarlet leaves. At the

parking lot for the Adirondack Mountain Club, we paid a \$5 fee and received a trail map for Mount Jo and Heart Lake.

We signed the trail registry and continued up the path to a junction with a sign directing us to the long path, (1.1 miles) or the short path (.09 mile). We chose the short path. Our mountaintrekking Chihuahua followed. The short trail was a moderate climb until we neared the summit, where it became rocky and steep. I climbed over tree roots and large boulders, often gripping a rock to secure stable footing, as Victor followed me carrying our dog in his backpack. For casual hikers and families with children, I recommend the long path, which circles the mountainside and is an easier ascent.

When we reached the summit, slightly winded at 2,876 feet above sea level, our eyes focused on a majestic view in three directions. The distant mountains of Mount Marcy (the tallest), Cascade Mountain, Algonquin Peak and Mount Colden were bursting with russet, gold and flaming red color. Directly below us was Heart Lake.

For our descent, we opted for the long trail. On the way down, a large brown snowshoe hare scurried across the path. At the bottom of the trail, we signed out in the trail registry and made our way to the parking lot, promising to return for a hike around Heart Lake.

Victorian-era homes are reflected in the calm waters of Lake Flower near Saranac Lake.

Whiteface Mountain/Veterans' Memorial Highway

The next day we drove the short distance from our campsite to Whiteface Mountain, a ski resort that hosted the 1980 Winter Olympics. From April to October, visitors can enjoy a gondola ride to Little Whiteface Peak or drive up to the summit on the Veterans' Memorial Highway.

Since we had ridden the gondola on a previous visit, we opted for a drive up the Veterans' Memorial Highway. At the alpine-style gatehouse, we paid \$17 (\$10 for car and driver, \$7 per passenger) and followed the 5-mile narrow winding road to the summit, stopping at several vista points. At the top, a parking attendant directed us to the area reserved for RVs.

To reach the summit, we had a choice of climbing the Stairway Ridge Trail or using the elevator inside the mountain. We chose the elevator and walked through a chilly 426-foot stone tunnel. At the end of the tunnel, the elevator whisked us up 27 stories to the summit building. The building has enormous windows and informational plaques. In addition to the summit building, there is a three-story observatory maintained by the Atmospheric Sciences Research Center from the University of Albany.

We stepped out onto the viewing deck, to a 360-degree view of the Adiron-

“Adirondack Park is within a day's drive of 84 million people.”



Lake Placid/Whiteface Mountain KOA is set among birch and pine trees. Biking is one of the most popular activities at Fish Creek Pond. The High Falls Gorge catwalk leads over the Ausable River.

dacks. To the north is Canada and to the south are views of Lake Placid and the High Peaks. For a “cliffhanger” view, we wandered around the rocky summit. Unfortunately our view was soon obstructed by a low cloud cover and fog accompanied by a cold wind. If you visit the summit, be sure to bring a jacket and check the weather on top of the mountain.

High Falls Gorge

The following morning, we drove west on the Olympic Trail State Scenic Byway, Route 86, stopping at High Falls Gorge. After paying a fee of \$13.95 per adult, which helps maintain the privately owned park, we walked across a footbridge and followed a short path to the river. The 30-minute walk on steel catwalks along the gorge, high above the raging Ausable River, is breathtaking. At the bottom of the gorge, we crossed the river on a steel bridge and enjoyed a view of the four linking waterfalls. In addition to the nature walk, visitors can pan for gemstones and fossils in the mining sluice.

Lake Placid Village

We continued our drive on Route 86 to Lake Placid Village, home of the 1932 and 1980 Winter Olympics. After parking our motorhome in the public lot, we stopped at the visitors center and then walked down the hill to the 1980 arena entrance. A sense of pride stirred within me as I gazed at the steel-and-glass entrance and watched the flags of 37 participating nations fly proudly in the wind.

Just below the flying flags is the 400-meter outdoor speed-skating rink, which looks more like a running track than an ice rink. From December through

March, the rink is open for competitive training, special events and recreational skating. Lake Placid High School is situated overlooking the rink and was used as a private bar during the 1980 Olympics. It is the only high school in the United States to be issued a liquor license.

It was time to go inside and see the Herb Brooks Arena, where the 1980 USA ice hockey team upset the heavily favored Soviet National team and won the gold medal. We climbed the stairs to the top of the stadium, and as I stood in the bleachers watching a skater circle the ice, I visualized a clamoring crowd cheering the USA on to the “Miracle on Ice.”

In search of a late-morning snack, we walked north on Main Street. At the Blueberry Bakery we enjoyed a scrumptious apple strudel and a cup of pumpkin spice coffee. We continued our walk and stopped at the Adirondack North Country Craft Center, which features local artisan crafts and specialty items.

Before returning to our campsite,

we walked to the shore of Mirror Lake, located across from the public parking lot. The lake is known for its clear, clean water, which mirrors the surrounding peaks on its surface. During the summer months, swimming and fishing are favorite activities; in winter, visitors can ride a dog sled across the ice or enjoy a toboggan ride launched from a chute.

Our last stop for the day was the Olympic Jumping Complex on Cascade Road, site of the '80 Winter Olympic ski jumping and freestyle competitions. From Lake Placid Village, we drove south to Sentinel Road, which merges into Cascade Road. As we approached the complex, we gazed up at two giant towers of steel attached to sloping slides. A short walk from the parking lot brought us to the bottom of the 90-meter ski jump where we watched skiers launch themselves into the air and land on a plastic mat sprayed with water to simulate snow. We rode a chair lift to the base of the 90-meter tower

Veterans' Memorial Highway leads to the summit of 4,867-foot-high Whiteface Mountain, where the weather can be cold and windy.



and then rode a 26-story elevator to the top of the 120-meter tower. From the observation deck, you can look down the ski jump track, view the high peaks in the distance and enjoy the forests bursting with autumn color.

Fish Creek Pond State Park

Since it was late afternoon, it was time to find our next campground. We drove west on the Olympic Trail Byway and exited to

Route 30 north stopping at Fish Creek Pond State Park. After securing one of the campground's 305 lakefront sites, we grabbed our camp chairs and basked in the lingering sun. As the sun set, the gray velvet sky glowed with bright orange and pale yellow clouds. The lake's surface was a dazzling watercolor, reflecting the luminous sky. Dark silhouettes of tall pine trees framed nature's painting.

The next morning, Victor awoke at

5:30, grabbed his camera and hiked around the lake capturing the sunrise. After breakfast, we rode our bikes on the main park road following the shoreline around Fish Creek Pond and Square Pond. At the beach area, we watched a kayak glide across the water and a loon drifting on the surface. To complete the 4.7-mile loop, we rode on a paved path past the Trading Post, along Route 30.

While the rustic campground provides only dry camping, with coin-operated showers, the sites can accommodate RVs up to 40 feet. The campground is quiet and well kept. It makes a good base camp for fishing, kayaking, hiking, biking and venturing to nearby attractions such as the Wild Center in Tupper Lake and the Adirondack Interpretive Center.

Our trip home included a stop at the farmers market in Saranac Lake Village where we purchased apples and fresh cider. We picnicked on the shore of nearby Lake Flower surrounded by Victorian homes mirrored on the lake's surface.

Autumn in this part of the Adirondacks is also festival time. Whiteface Mountain Oktoberfest (Oct. 4-5) is a weekend celebration of Bavarian culture with music, dancing, food and beer. The Olympic Jumping Complex hosts the Flaming Leaves Festival (Oct. 11-12) and Lake Placid Olympic Center hosts the Lake Placid Brewfest (Oct. 11) with 23 micro-brewers processing 70 varieties of beer.

Though often overshadowed by our national parks, Adirondack Park with its 6.1 million acres of pristine, rugged grandeur, offers a variety of camping and recreational opportunities for everyone. **M**



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Adirondack North Country Association
518-891-6200,
www.adirondackscenicbyways.org

High Falls Gorge
518-946-2278, www.highfallsgorge.com

Lake Placid CVB
518-523-2445, www.lakeplacid.com

Whiteface Lake Placid
www.whitefacelakeplacid.com

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518-946-2255, www.whitefaceregion.com



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2014	Itasca CAMBRIA 30J	WDS494523	B	\$138,179	\$39,329	\$98,850	Woodstock, GA
2014	Fleetwood BOUNDER 36E	CMO486728	A	\$148,854	\$35,299	\$113,555	Columbia, MO
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LAND OF THE WATER

See the largest home in America, take a tour of the forest location for 'The Hu

A 20-second ride down a 60-foot rock was the catalyst for our family trip to the Blue Ridge Mountains of North Carolina. We wanted to experience Sliding Rock. I had been there years before, and knew my teenagers would be enthralled by the idea of a natural waterslide, especially since "USA Today" named it one of the Top Swimming Holes in America.

Located near Brevard, North Carolina, Sliding Rock is in an area that boasts more than 250 waterfalls. However, Sliding Rock is the only one you're encouraged to take a ride down.

We began our trip with a much different adventure — a visit to the Biltmore Estate in Asheville, North Carolina. Considered a must-see stop, I was unsure whether or not my kids would take to touring a 250-room mansion. But from the minute we pulled into the estate and traveled through the extensive grounds, the whole family was

captivated.

The estate was built by George Vanderbilt, who fell in love with the area during a summer trip, and decided it was the perfect place to build his "little mountain escape." For the next six years, between 1889 to 1895, Vanderbilt brought over European craftsmen and materials to construct the 175,000-square-foot mansion.

For me, it wasn't the opulence of the grounds, the Tiffany lamps or the antique tapestries of the Biltmore House that caught my attention. It

was the private bowling alley, indoor swimming pool and the innovative systems that ran the turn-of-the-century mansion. The house had refrigeration, indoor hot water and its own telephone system, presumably so Mr. and Mrs. Vanderbilt could speak to each other from opposite ends of the house.

The servants also had their own internal communication system: A speaking tube ran from the main kitchen to the butler's pantry, with a bell on each end. The cook would ring the bell for the head butler to come to the speaking tube, where she could alert him that the first course was on its way. I couldn't help but picture characters from the British TV series *Downton Abbey*, and how they would have reacted to such New-World contraptions.

I was particularly intrigued by the four-room laundry complex. With 35



Did You Know?

There are more than 250 waterfalls and 200 miles of mountain streams in Transylvania County and the area near Brevard, North Carolina.

WATERFALLS

Bridal Veil Falls, in the DuPont State Forest, is a beautiful site on its own. Fans of "The Hunger Games" and "The Last of the Mohicans" will recognize the view.

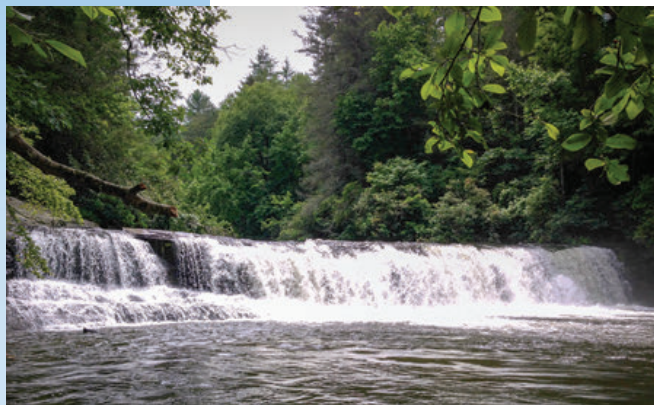
...and ride down a natural water slide in western North Carolina

guest and family bedrooms and 43 bathrooms, there were hundreds of bed and table linens that needed to be washed, dried, pressed and folded every day. After washing in custom-built commercial-style washing machines, linens would be laid out on wide racks, which were then rolled into a steam-heated drying chamber. Next it was off to the ironing room, where servants worked six hours a day, making sure the day's sheets, towels and tablecloths were properly pressed.

Not surprisingly, the laundry room held no fascination for my kids. Instead they loved the servant call buttons throughout the house. Rather than the standard rope-pull system that was popular in English manors at the time, the Vanderbilts installed pushbuttons that activated bells in the servants' areas, and propelled mechanical arrows



People line up for a ride down Sliding Rock, the area's popular natural water slide near Brevard.



to indicate where help was requested.

Just like a real-life game of Clue, we all loved the secret passage into the billiard room, installed so that gentlemen could slip away for some gambling without the knowledge of their spouses.

Vanderbilt's legacy extends beyond the house and garden estate. He is credited with foresting the land, much of which now makes up the core of the Pisgah National Forest. At one time the estate encompassed 125,000 acres [it took a week on horseback to travel the entire property]. Vanderbilt wanted the land to remain in its natural state, rather than sold to private developers after his death. His widow fulfilled that wish, selling most of the land to the state of North Carolina for a token sum. Today, the estate sits on 8,000 beautiful acres.

Once we had gotten a taste of how the other half lives, it was time to delve deeper into the mountains. Mild weather and clear mountain air have brought travelers to the "Land of the Waterfalls"

for decades and we were bound for the area framed by the Blue Ridge Mountains, Pisgah National Forest and DuPont State Forest.

We made our base at Cascade Lake, a wonderful, centrally located recreation area. At the northern end of the 160-site campground there is a swimming lake, boisterous and full of happy kids. We reserved a spot on the main lake, where pull-in sites have their own docks and the nightly sunsets are stunning. These prime spots book up a year in advance, and it's easy to see why. Facing out toward Cascade Lake, the campsites are private, spacious and quiet.

A rental canoe stayed docked at our site, perfect for early morning fishing trips and late afternoon floats. One day was spent at Hooker Falls, a 20-minute paddle up the lake. Since we all couldn't fit in the canoe, my husband and son manned the vessel (and the picnic), while my daughter and I made the short drive by car. To their delight, the boys beat us by five minutes, and were

From above left: Campsites along Cascade Lake are coveted, and often book up a year in advance. Hooker Falls is a 20-minute canoe ride from Cascade Lake.

already swimming beneath the falls. A word of warning — kayakers periodically go over the 12-foot falls, so if you're in the swimming hole beneath, look out for daredevils.

Waterfall safety is a big concern in the area. Tammy Hopkins, a former ranger at the DuPont State Forest who now takes fans on "Hunger Games" tours of the area, stressed that people die every year by making foolish decisions. Her advice: Never swim or play above a waterfall, stay off of slippery rocks and above all, respect the power of the water.

I stumbled across the Hunger Games Unofficial Fan Tours while researching the trip. Turns out the movie was filmed entirely in North Carolina, with the DuPont State Forest serving as the "arena." Hopkins and business partner Leigh Trapp designed the fan tours as a way to show off the filming locations, as well as the beauty of the area.

The tour turned out to be the unexpected highlight of our trip. Tammy took our group to pivotal shooting locations, all the while revealing behind-the-scenes scoops on the filming. We visited several waterfalls used in both "The Hunger Games" and "The Last of the Mohicans" and received training in the art of camouflage (where my daughter painted my son to match a tree). We ended the tour lounging near "Katniss' pool," feasting on a tour-provided snack that the book characters



No trip to North Carolina is complete without a stop at the Biltmore Estate in Asheville.

would have had: goat cheese wrapped in basil, fresh-baked bread and berries.

Even if you've never heard of Katniss Everdeen, DuPont Forest is well worth a visit. Until 1995, the entire property was owned by DuPont, which operated a processing plant on the property. When the plant shut down, the land was slowly acquired by the state with help from conservationists, who believed the 10,000 acres of forest and waterfalls should be available for public use. Now the DuPont State Recreational Forest is visited by more than 250,000 people annually, the number rapidly increasing as word gets out about the "Hunger Games" locations. If you're planning on visiting the waterfalls, it's best to get there early, when RV parking is still ample.

After our survival training, it was time to clean up and head to Brevard, a small town that serves as the cultural hub of the area, with restaurants, art galleries and shops. We had sampled a few eateries in town, but our favorite meal was at The Square Root, a casually elegant spot tucked away down an alley. The architecture of the historic building is lovely, but we chose a table on the outdoor patio to enjoy the night. The Square Root walks the fine line between casual and fine dining, so that my husband and I were able to have pan-seared scallops over wild mushroom risotto, while the kids happily munched on burgers with sweet potato fries.

The next morning, it was finally time to head to Sliding Rock. Since I was last there, Sliding Rock has become a state recreation area, with the addition of lifeguards, changing rooms and two observation decks. The park now charges a small admission fee to cover the lifeguards, but the improvements (and safety) are welcome.

Even if you're not planning to get wet, it's a fun stop and the observation decks make it easy to live vicariously through those brave enough to make the plunge. And it does take courage to make the first descent, as 11,000 gallons of water per minute rush down the face of the rock.

If you take your kids, make sure they're strong swimmers, as the plunge into the frigid swimming hole at the

bottom is swift and strong. You should also be sure to wear cut-offs or sturdy shorts. Even though we were prepared, after multiple trips down the granite rock my son wore a hole right through his shorts.

I suppose I should be grateful that the incident prematurely ended our adventure, because if it hadn't been for the ripped shorts, we'd probably still be splashing down into that icy water. **M**

For More Information

Biltmore Estate, 800-411-3812,
www.biltmore.com

Cascade Lake Recreation Area and Campground, 828-877-6625,
www.cascadelakerecreationarea.com

DuPont State Recreational Forest
www.ncforestservice.gov/contacts/dsf.htm



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Mellow Yellow

Winnebago brings back the Brave and its iconic eyebrow By Bob Livingston

Ah, the 1960s, possibly the most important and crazy decade in American history. Those of us who experienced this decade remember well the counterculture, political unrest, hippies, the drug scene, free love, the peace movement, the war — and the Winnebago eyebrow.

That whimsical structure jutting out over the two-piece windshield became one of the most iconic motorhome design elements of all time. In 1967,

the first Brave rolled off the assembly line, sporting an unusual-looking edifice that became known as the Winnebago eyebrow, popularizing the Brave — in its original form — for more than 10 years. This Winnebago trademark was later modified to reflect a less intrusive look until it disappeared from the exterior lines in the mid 1980s.

There are a number of these classic Class A's still on the road and when someone sees one, it brings back

memories of a colorful but turbulent time — and the days when RVs were simple. So touring California's central coast in Winnebago's reintroduced 2015 Brave was like taking a tour in a time machine.

How fitting to cruise California's coastal towns in a retro-looking Brave that sports a Mellow Yellow paint job and a Good Vibrations interior, clearly themes that had West Coast beach town beginnings. While technology and current components bring the new Brave to modern levels, Winnebago retained the look and feel so closely to the original

ABOVE: The distinctive Winnebago eyebrow structure above the windshield, and flying W graphics, give the new Brave a look from the past.



BELOW: The compact galley is fitted with a large stainless-steel double sink and a unique faucet that make dish washing and food prep effortless. The multi-position couch is comfortable for sitting or sleeping; a clever mechanism with an electric motor rotates the table into place.



that onlookers stopped traffic to tell me what a good job I did on the restoration. Right on, dude!

As a matter of fact, there's not even a slideout in the model 26A (one of two models), which confuses gawkers into thinking the prototype we had on the road was refurbished rather than a new 2015 motorhome that should be on dealers' lots this fall. The exterior lines are still simple and only the smooth side walls, one-piece windshield and protruding leveling jacks are giveaways that something's different.

It didn't even dawn on me until two days into the preparation stage of the test trip that there was no slide. I simply didn't miss it. Attribute that to big windows, the cheery off-white with yellow-accented upholstery, unusually

open floor space for the size of the coach and unique componentry that converts to serve multiple functions — à la a Transformer toy for grown-ups.

What you see initially is not the complete picture — it gets even better. For example, the front living room is one of the most versatile ever conceived. Across from what appears to be a normal-looking couch (forward of the entry door) is a modified dinette that has a bench on one side and a captain's chair on the other. The captain's chair

is a great idea. It swivels to face the cockpit chairs, and a round table (stored in the closet) can be set up to increase dining capacity. It's very comfortable for lounging, watching the TV that's mounted on the wall adjacent to the entryway, or working on a computer at the table. Others who want to watch TV will have to do some neck craning unless seated on the cockpit chairs. But I got the feeling that this motorhome is made for adventure and family exploration, not hanging around watching the tube.

Photos: Bob Livingston and Scott Hinko

The couch is a real “sleeper” in more than one way. It offers good support as a lounge and jackknives into a 41-by-72-inch bed using common motions. As a bed it’s better than most we’ve slept on, but this one is pretty nifty. Flip the bed up against the wall, lock it in place and push a button and a full-length table rotates into place propelled by an electric motor. Outta sight when you want it to be; ready for additional place settings or craft projects in seconds.

Need more sleeping? Push another button and a platform motors down from the cockpit ceiling and turns into a 38-by-89-inch bed. Access is via a ladder that can be hooked onto the edge of the

is limited, but a large flip-up extension helps with food prep. While the overall space relegated to the galley seems rather compact, well-placed cabinets and a closet absorb stored items with little complaint. There’s even a cooktop and oven in case the microwave is too modern for those practicing retro livability.

At 6 cubic feet, the refrigerator will likely be full for families, but it’s well-placed below a cubbyhole that can be used to store entertainment components. Sorry, no nostalgia here; the hookups are HDMI only, but it’s really OK to add a Blu-ray player. A deep, multi-shelf cabinet/pantry next to the refrigerator will handle a lot of stuff.

WHAT'S HOT

Mello Yellow paint scheme, iconic eyebrow, versatile floorplan with transforming couch, sliding cabinet doors, fun factor

WHAT'S NOT

Segmented main bed, smallish refrigerator, shower curtain



Large rear storage trunk is one of three compartments, including a pass through in front of the entry door. Captain’s chair adds versatility to dining table. The round table can be set up in front.



bed frame. Presto, four kids now have a place to sleep in the front section of the motorhome — and mom and dad can still hang loose at the dinette.

The overhead cabinets above the dinette and couch are really cool. Sliding frosted-glass panels of yesteryear offer exceptional access and there’s plenty of space to store personal items. Décor continues the simplistic theme and the aforementioned large windows have minimal valances that blend in nicely, and are fitted with MCD blackout shades, which class up the place substantially. No black lights in this motorhome, just plenty of LED fixtures to keep the interior bright, if desired, when the shades are down or during nighttime hours.

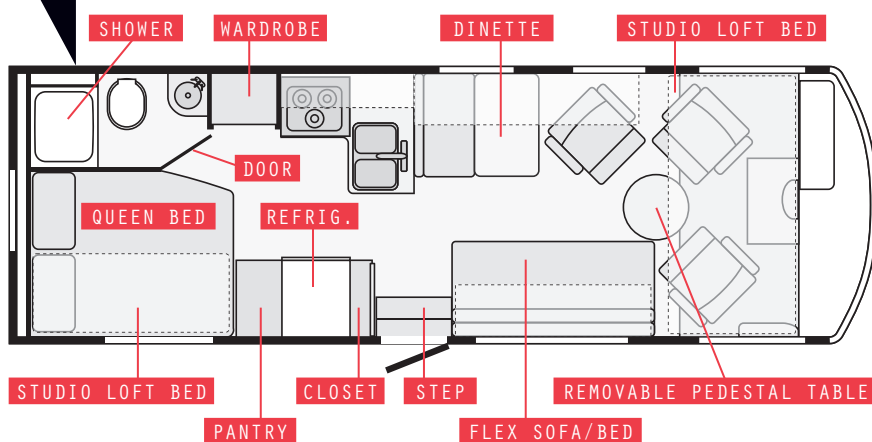
The galley is the first thing you see when entering the Brave and the gnarly faucet is a real attention-getter. The spring-enhanced high-rise neck can separate for closer work in the double stainless-steel sinks and it’s much more practical than it looks. Counterspace

The setup in the back is a corner-bed-adjacent-bathroom arrangement with a number of twists. A sectional mattress allows the bed platform to fold out of the way for additional floor space, which visually and physically opens up the rear area tremendously. The concept is great

and the almost-true-queen-size mattress (60 by 77 inches) makes it sized right for two; removing the sheets and blanket every day and remaking the bed to fold it out of the way will likely get old. A sack bedding system is certainly in order here.

While we were stoked about the versatility of the rear sleeping accommodations, getting a good night’s sleep was not easy. Gaps in the mattress were not kind on our backs. We added a padded mattress pad, but it only helped slightly. What’s really neat is the 29-by-72-inch bunk that comes down electrically adding another sleeping location or a place to store bulky items; clothing can be stored in the rear cabinet with the same sliding doors. Well-placed windows ward off any claustrophobia caused by the confined master bed.

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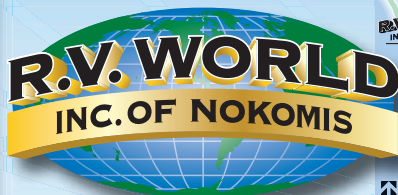
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Rear mattress folds to allow for additional floor space. Studio Loft Bed extends from the ceiling using electric motor. Bed is almost queen size, but mattress seams impact sleeping comfort.



Opening a solid door reveals a bathroom that's bigger than expected. The shower is roomy and closed off by the standard-type curtain, which could benefit from one of those rods that fold out to keep the curtain from attacking our bodies. A smallish stainless oval sink in

the lavatory structure does the job and there are no issues using the residential-size plastic toilet. Bathroom cabinet space is not abundant, but suitable for the intended use of the motorhome.

Driving the Brave is as much fun as living in it. The Ford **(continued on pg. 75)**

Specifications

Chassis

Model	Brave 26A
Engine	Ford 6.8-liter V-10
Sae Hp	362 @ 4,750 rpm
Torque	457 lb-ft @ 3,250 rpm
Transmission	5-speed auto
Axle Ratio	4.30:1
Front Tires	245/70R19.5 G
Rear Tires	245/70R19.5 G
Wheelbase	158"
Brakes	disc
Suspension	front I-beam/leaf spring; rear leaf spring
Fuel Capacity	80 gal
Fuel Economy	7.45 mpg
Warranty	3 years/36,000 miles bumper-to-bumper; 5 years/60,000 miles powertrain

Coach

Exterior Length	27' 8"
Exterior Width	8' 5.5"
Exterior Height	11' 8.5" with A/C
Interior Width	8' 0.5"
Interior Height	6' 9"
Construction	aluminum/steel frame with interlocking joints, laminated side walls with block foam and fiberglass insulation, fiberglass roof
Freshwater Capacity	40 gal
Black-Water Capacity	42 gal
Gray-Water Capacity	42 gal
Water-Heater Capacity	6 gal
LP-Gas Capacity	18 gal
Air Conditioner	15,000 Btu
Furnace	30,000 Btu
Refrigerator	6.3 cubic foot
Converter/Charger	45 amp
Battery	(1) 12-volt chassis, (2) 12-volt coach
AC Generator	4 kW
MSRP	\$95,199
MSRP as Tested	\$96,710
Warranty	1 year/15,000-mile basic; 3 years/36,000-mile structure; 10 years roof skin

Wet Weight

(Water and Heater, Fuel, LP-Gas Tanks Full; No Supplies or Passengers)

Front Axle	5,400 lbs
Rear Axle	8,620 lbs
Total	14,020 lbs

Chassis Ratings

GAWR, F/R	6,500/11,000 lbs
GVWR/GCWR	16,000/23,000 lbs
ROCCC	1,980 lbs (deduct weight of passengers for net cargo capacity)
GAWR	Gross Axle Weight Rating
GVWR	Gross Vehicle Weight Rating
GCWR	Gross Combination Weight Rating
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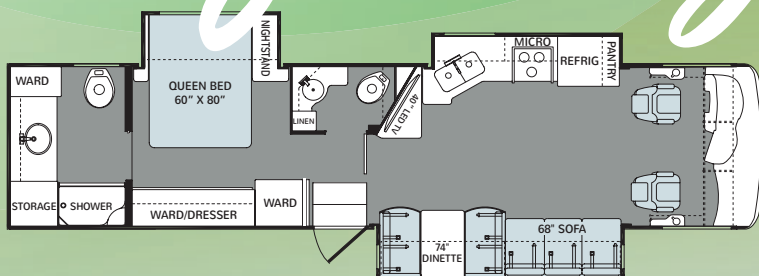
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By E. Don Smith

SAFE & SECURE

How to protect your sticks-and-bricks home before heading out on the road

We can probably all agree that traveling in a motorhome is the best way to take a vacation, and whether it's for a long weekend or an entire season, getting away and going to new places and seeing exciting things is what fuels our desire to travel. But, what happens to your house while you are away? Many RVers have a traditional (sticks-and-bricks) house that sits unused when they are on the road in their motorhome, and that house can become a source of worry during a trip.

Leaving your house for extended periods of time exposes so many forms of risk that it can be enough to worry yourself into not having a good time. Theft, fire and water damage are just a few of the things that can ruin a trip. Thankfully, preparing your house before you head out on the road is fairly easy, and if you do it right you can enjoy your trip without having to worry about your house and its condition when you return.

We are going to break this topic down into three categories aimed at the main threats to an unoccupied home: theft, fire and water damage. Since theft is the most commonly discussed, we will start there.



▲ Inexpensive timers can be used to turn interior lights on/off and give your house a “lived-in” look while you are traveling. Combined with energy-efficient LED bulbs, they are a low-cost option that really works.



Theft

These days, theft means more than property damage; it also includes identity theft, so the first thing you need to do is stop your mail/newspaper or arrange for someone to collect it daily. This stops a thief from getting your personal information and thereby “stealing your identity” and it prevents the telltale sign that nobody is home — an overstuffed mailbox.

Other things you can do to make your house look lived in are to make sure your lawn is mowed while you are away and to use timers on the inside lights and motion-activated lights outside. If

someone is watching your house or brave enough to walk around it, you will want to scare them off with light. Since crooks prefer to operate in the cover of darkness, a well-lit house may be enough to send them somewhere else. If you are like most people, and worried about the power consumption, use bulbs that are either fluorescent or, better yet, LED. An LED bulb of 13 watts can replace a 75-watt bulb and they last for more than 20 years. LEDs also operate much cooler than an incandescent bulb so therefore are safer as well.

Another part of your theft-prevention

program should be a monitored alarm system. These can be as elaborate as you wish with coverage for heat, fire, smoke, glass breakage, window/door openings as well as infrared motion detectors. Also post signs on your doors and driveway notifying the burglar that your house is protected with an alarm. If you really want to keep an eye on things, consider a camera-based system such as the Vuezone by Netgear (www.vuezone.com). It is Wi-Fi-based, super easy to install and easy to expand. The cameras are even battery-operated. A basic four-camera system can be purchased at Best Buy for \$350 and you can have it up and running in about 30 minutes. Using a smartphone or

▼ Outside lights, such as this LED floodlight, can operate in “dusk-to-dawn” mode or as a motion-activated unit. Burglars avoid light, so keeping the outside of your house well-lit will discourage them from lurking around your home. An in-house wireless camera system, such as this one from www.Vuezone.com, is another great tool for keeping an eye on things while you are gone. Some models feature infrared lighting ability and motion-activated cameras. When you are home they also double as a pet or baby camera. Since they are Wi-Fi-based, installation is fast and easy and you can even watch from your smartphone.



► A monitored security system featuring heat, smoke, water, glass breakage, infrared motion detectors and all doors/windows is an important part of any security plan.

tablet, you can actually see inside your house at any time and the motion-activated cameras can be programmed to email you a video file if it detects any movement. When you are not traveling, it can serve duty as a pet cam.

If your phone company allows call forwarding, that is another way you can make your house feel lived in. If you have neighbors, make sure one or more has your cellphone number so they can contact you if needed, and of course let them know you will be away so they can also help watch.

These days everyone loves social media, but nothing tells the world you are away from home more than your own posts on Facebook, Twitter, etc. You should really minimize these

activities until you return home, or make sure the circle of people reading your posts is very small. Most social media sites allow you to restrict who sees your posts but Web forums are wide open for anyone to read, so keep that in mind.

Finally, if you have anything that is very expensive or important — such as jewelry, fine art, passports, deeds, bank records, etc. — they should be stored in a fire/theft safe while you are gone. If you don't already have a home safe, consider one large enough to accommodate your valuables. You can also rent a safe deposit box at a local bank to store vital records.

▼ Nothing protects valuables like a high-quality fire-rated home safe. If you are going to buy a safe, make sure it is UL-listed and big/heavy enough to meet your needs. This Premium 20 model from www.Libertysafe.com is fire-rated for 75 minutes and weighs 590 pounds.



Fire

Fire prevention/detection should be another part of your away-from-home plan. As mentioned above, the monitored alarm is a key part of fire detection because in-house fire and smoke detectors are of no value if you are not there to hear the alarm. So make sure you have hardwired alarms for fire, heat, and smoke and are subscribed to a monitoring service. If you live in an area where water is an issue or you have a sump pump, you should also consider a water alarm in your main security system. Another thing you can do is unplug as many electrical devices as possible while you are away. Devices that are unused while you are away — such as TVs, audio equipment, computers, small appliances, etc. —

PREPARING YOUR HOUSE BEFORE YOU HEAD OUT ON THE ROAD IS FAIRLY EASY



should all be unplugged. Remember to keep your alarm, Wi-Fi, sump pump, HVAC condensate pump or anything else related to your security system operating.

An often-overlooked item is the water heater, which should be turned off at the breaker panel if you have an electric model; if you have a gas water heater, put it in “vacation” mode. While you are at the breaker panel you may as well turn off the washer, dryer, dishwasher, microwave and electric stove. Just make sure you don’t switch

▲ A programmable thermostat, such as this Honeywell model, allows you to program the HVAC unit. Not only will it save you money while you are away, you can even set your house to a normal temperature for when you return. If you have one or more cars you leave behind when you travel for extended periods of time, invest in a battery-maintenance charger for each one. They are fairly inexpensive and will ensure that the battery is not dead when you return home.

off the refrigerator or freezer. You will, however, want to rid the refrigerator — as well as your entire house — of any perishable food.

Thermostats have come a long way in the last 10 years starting with programmable models that allow you to maintain ideal temperatures while you are away. If you are traveling during the summer, you can significantly raise

the thermostat to 80 to 85 degrees Fahrenheit, which will save on your power bill, yet still keep things cool enough to prevent any damage to your house. If you want complete control, get one of the new Wi-Fi-based thermostats, such as the NEST or the Honeywell unit, that allows you to control it via a tablet or smartphone. These are widely available at most home improvement stores.

♦ Access to the electrical panel, and having it properly labeled, will make it easier to turn off unneeded circuits such as the water heater, washer/dryer, oven, etc., while you are away.



Water

Water damage is something that we don’t typically think about, but it is perhaps the most common problem that occurs inside a house and the damage can be just as bad as fire. Something as simple as a frozen or split water line could result in thousands of gallons of water being released into your home. If you are in an area that is subject to extreme cold, make sure you select a temperature for your house that prevents water pipes from freezing. In most cases, 55 degrees is warm enough to prevent interior pipes from freezing.

The worst part about a water pipe failure is that it often goes unnoticed until you return home. The best way to prevent this is to completely shut off the water to your house. Usually there is a cutoff at the water meter or where the water line enters

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▲ A whole-house water cutoff valve is the best option for preventing leaks while you're away. However, if you have systems that require water — such as a sprinkler or a swimming pool — consider installing multiple cutoffs throughout the house that only allow water to flow to critical areas. If you do not have water-line cutoffs in your main plumbing supply lines, go to every sink, toilet, dishwasher, icemaker, clothes washer, etc., and turn the water off there. Those supply lines, which are sometimes plastic, are the most likely lines to fail in your entire house.

the house. If for some reason you do not have this option, or need to leave water on for lawn watering, etc., you will need to turn off as many other potential water leaks as possible. This means going to every sink and toilet, the clothes washer, dishwasher, icemaker, and water heater and turning them off. If you don't have cutoffs then we strongly urge you to hire a plumber and pay the small fee to install a whole-house cutoff. Nothing "rains" on your parade more than coming home to a split water line that has been running for two weeks.

One more thing to consider is what to do about any automobiles you leave behind. To prevent the battery from dying on a short trip of a week or two, simply

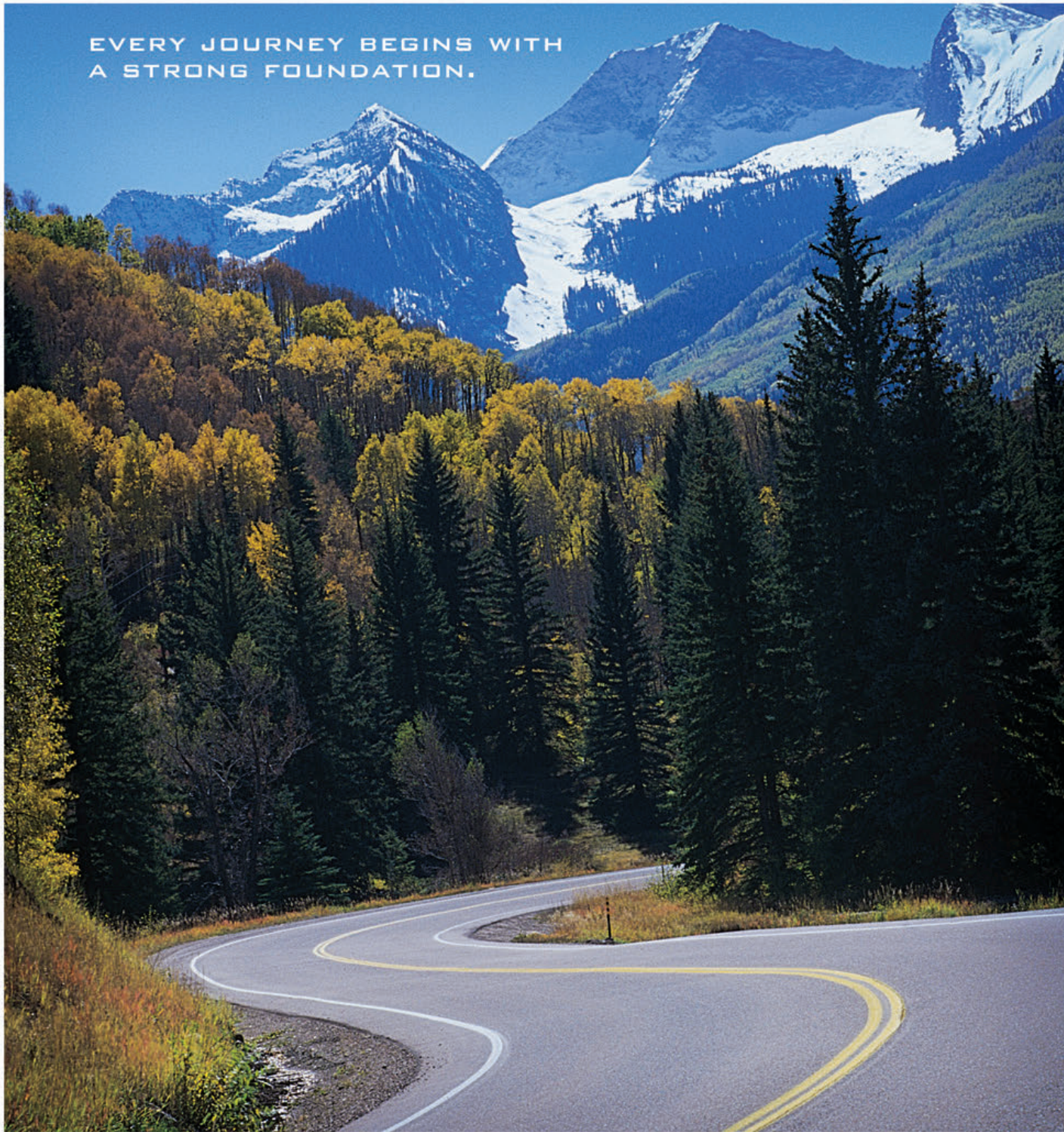
use your key fob and lock the doors. This puts the car in sleep mode and disables many of the features that drain battery power. For longer trips you may need to get a battery-maintenance charger and keep it connected to the car while you are gone.

Even though we haven't covered every possible scenario here, if you follow our tips you will greatly reduce your chance of problems and greatly increase your chance of returning to a well-protected home that is just as good as the day you left. Hopefully, these tips will save you from potential threats and allow you to enjoy your trip without worrying about your home. After all, motorhome travel is supposed to be fun. **M**

☒ Predeparture Checklist

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Stop mail or have someone pick it up daily | <input type="checkbox"/> Activate call forwarding on home phone |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Stop newspaper delivery | <input type="checkbox"/> Don't post on social media about your vacation |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Have the lawn mowed while you're away on long trips | <input type="checkbox"/> Unplug unused electrical devices |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Put lights on timers | <input type="checkbox"/> Turn off the water heater (or put in "vacation" mode if gas) and other unused appliances at breaker panel |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Use dusk-to-dawn outside lights | <input type="checkbox"/> Turn off main water line or each sink, toilet, etc. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Use a monitored alarm system for fire/security | <input type="checkbox"/> Set programmable thermostat |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Post security company signs on all doors and in the front yard | <input type="checkbox"/> Use key fob to lock all cars left behind |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lock valuables in a safe | <input type="checkbox"/> Consider a battery-maintenance charger for cars during a long trip |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Install a camera inside the house | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Remove perishable food from house | |

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Class C's On the

A look at what's new from Coachmen, Fleetwood RV, Holiday Rambler, Jayco, Thor M

A recent morning at the Coachmen RV manufacturing facility in Middlebury, Indiana — specifically in the building where the company's Concorde, Freelander, Leprechaun and Prism are built — is a picture of busyness. Hundreds of employees are installing cabinets, sanding glue seams, caulking corners and performing all other various activities to produce the Class C motorhomes with the Coachmen name on them.

"We're keeping pretty busy," said Mike Bear, Class C general manager for Coachmen. The employees are producing up to 15 motorhomes each day — "not as many as others," Bear admitted, but a good clip for them all the same.

Class C manufacturers are all pretty busy these days. Wholesale shipments of Class C's were up 18.7 percent year to date compared to the same time period last year, according to statistics from the Recreation Vehicle Industry Association.

Built on a truck or van frame attached to the original cab section, Class C motorhomes have long been popular due to their ample living space and easy drivability. Class C's occupy a comfortable middle ground in the motorized RV segment; larger than the van-sized Class

B's, yet smaller than Class A coaches. A key distinction of most Class C's is their over-the-cab area, a space that is most often a bed destined for the kids.

The vast majority of Class C motorhomes are built on a chassis from Ford or Chevrolet, and to a lesser extent from Freightliner and International, and paired with a V-8 or V-10 gas or diesel engine. But a new development is the introduction to the Class C segment of the Ram ProMaster chassis from Chrysler. It's more often found on Class B's, and at least one manufacturer is excited at the ProMaster's potential.

"The Chrysler ProMaster chassis puts us into a new category. It's a front-wheel drive with a V-6 engine and a six-speed transmission," said Russ Garfin, Class B and C product manager for Winnebago, adding the ProMaster is featured on the Itasca Viva! and Winnebago Trend. "The models with this chassis also come with a host of safety and entertainment features, including six air bags, a tire-pressure monitoring system and a TomTom voice-activated navigation system.

The ProMaster features a 3.6-liter Pentastar V-6 (280 horsepower) or 3.0-liter Ecodiesel I-4 (174 horsepower) engine. The Ford Class C motorhome chassis features a five-speed automatic transmission, 5.4-liter Triton V-8 (255 horsepower) or 6.8-liter V-10 (305 horsepower) gasoline engines. The Chevrolet Express 4500 Cutaway offers three available wheelbases, and a Vortec 6.0-liter V-8 (342 horsepower) or 6.6-liter V-8 Duramax turbodiesel (260

"People who buy a Class C are usually first-time motorhome owners or seasoned RVers looking to downsize."



2015 Greyhawks come with a JRide package, which includes Bilstein shocks, Hellwig helper springs, rubber isolation body mounts and stabilizer bar.

e Rise

Motor Coach and Winnebago

horsepower) engine.

The ProMaster is less powerful than nearly all its Class C brethren, but Garfin said this allows Winnebago to offer a smaller Class C that will appeal to buyers not interested in the larger units.

"Probably the biggest thing, though, is the front-wheel drive, which means it drives much like a minivan," Garfin said. "And it also means no doghouse between the front seats, so now the cab is part of the motorhome. There's no step up and you just swivel the seats around."

Coachmen RV also offers a smaller

Class C with its Prism. Available in three floorplans, the Prism is built on the popular Mercedes-Benz diesel chassis more often found on Class B's. According to Coachmen, the Prism jumps to the Class C segment, though, and is a "luxurious, easy-to-drive multiuse touring vehicle that provides unique styling and amenities."

While Winnebago and Coachmen, among others, are going smaller, others are going bigger — if not bigger, then more accommodating for Class C RVers with children. Ashley Lehman, marketing director for Jayco, said her company is seeing a trend toward families and not retired couples.

"We're including options such as bunk beds in several models whereas before we'd only have a queen-size bed. Families are looking for more space for the kids to sleep," said Lehman.

People who buy a Class C are usually first-time motorhome owners or seasoned RVers looking to downsize from their Class A coach. Many ultimately decide on a

shorter Class C because their travels will take them places where longer RVs are either not welcome due to size restrictions or not practical due to terrain and other conditions.

"The other thing is having two cab doors, which makes getting in and out of the RV easier," Garfin added.

Another trend in the Class C segment, and certainly among all RVs, is the move toward a more residential feel for the interior. To achieve that, manufacturers are incorporating name-brand appliances, electronics and other items you would find in your home as well as cutting-edge technology, such as Bluetooth connectivity and integrated LED lighting. Features previously only found on more luxurious Class A coaches, such as queen-size beds, have made their way into Class C motorhomes.

"Everything's on them; there's nothing you have to give up," Garfin said.

Here's a look at select 2015 Class C models:

THOR Outlaw 29H Toy Hauler



THOR MOTOR COACH'S Outlaw 29H Toy Hauler — a 35SG Super C diesel also is available — is one of the most affordable Class C's with a garage on the market. Built on a Ford E-350 chassis with a 6.8-liter Triton V-10 engine (305 horsepower and 420 lb-ft torque), its frame is a tubular steel floor system with a fully welded aluminum roof and side-wall cage construction.

The Outlaw 29H is definitely self-contained — it has a Cummins Onan RV QG 4000 gas generator, a 30-amp shorepower cord and convenient features such as an automatic shoreline-to-generator transfer switch, battery-disconnect switch, dual house batteries and a 1,000-watt inverter.

Inside the 29H, residential vinyl flooring is featured throughout, along with LED ceiling lights, raised-panel cabinet doors with nickel hardware and beautiful interior fabrics. Outside the motorhome, you can choose from two HD-MAX exteriors, Thor's exclusive premium gelcoat finish, and the Outlaw has a power patio awning with integrated LED lighting.

Bluetooth technology in the radio system in the garage offers wireless communication to devices such as smartphones or MP3 players. A Power Charging Center allows all electronics to be charged in one area. Thor also exclusively offers Rapid Camp



Wireless Control System, which allows users to control and monitor the progress of the slides, patio awning, exterior patio light, leveling jacks and generator with a remote up to 50 feet away. The cabover has a 32-inch LED TV and DVD player.

The 29H is great for RVers who need extra space, and the multifunctionality of the garage features a 24-inch LED TV and DVD player as well as patio railing when the door is down and being used as a party deck. Options for the garage include two jackknife sofas and a 5,000-Btu air conditioner.

Other options available are automatic leveling jacks, a six-way power driver's seat and holding tanks with heat pads. MSRP for the Outlaw 29H is \$104,850.

Thor Motor Coach Outlaw, 800-860-5658, www.outlawrv.com

HOLIDAY RAMBLER

Augusta 31M

AFTER PREVIOUSLY BEING LABELED a Class B-plus, the Holiday Rambler Augusta moves into the Class C segment for 2015. Available in four models, the 31M is the company's most spacious floorplan and is built on a Ford E-450 chassis paired with a 6.8-liter Triton V-10 (305 horsepower and 420 lb-ft torque) and a five-speed automatic transmission.

Standard features on all Augusta models include hardwood cabinet doors, LED TVs, a high-gloss smooth fiberglass exterior, one-piece molded fiberglass front-end cap, a full basement exterior and pass-through storage compartments.

Available options on the 31M include a 19-inch LED TV in the rear, exterior entertainment center, three-burner range with oven and a 28-inch LED TV up front.

In addition, the 31M has an overall length of 32 feet 5.5 inches, and an exterior height (with A/C) of 11 feet 6 inches and a width of 8 feet 6 inches. The interior height reaches 6 feet 8 inches and a width of 8 feet. The patio awning is 14 feet long, and its combined interior and exterior storage is 223 cubic feet. The 31M also features a 60-gallon freshwater holding tank, 35-gallon



gray-water holding tank and a 35-gallon black-water holding tank. The LP-gas tank can hold 14 gallons, and it comes with a standard 6-gallon water heater. MSRP is \$81,795.

Holiday Rambler, 877-466-6226, www.holidayrambler.com

FLEETWOOD

Tioga Ranger 31D



THE TIOGA LINE has been a mainstay for Fleetwood RV for a number of years. With its durable construction, comfortable conveniences and superb quality of enjoyment, the 2015 Tioga Ranger 31D looks to further that reputation.

The Ranger 31D, one of 13 different Tioga floorplans at a variety of price points, features two slideouts, one on each side. One holds a sofa and the cooktop-overhead microwave, while the other carries bunk beds and the closet for the rear bedroom.

The 31D is built on the Ford E-450 chassis featuring a 6.8-liter Triton V-10 (305 horsepower and 420 lb-ft torque) and

five-speed automatic transmission. Exterior length, height and width reaches 31 feet 8.5 inches, 11 feet 6 inches and 8 feet 6 inches, respectively.

A 10-foot awning and a combined interior and exterior storage of 214 cubic feet provide ample shade and cargo space. The Ranger 31D also features a 60-gallon freshwater holding tank, 35-gallon gray-water holding tank, 35-gallon black-water holding tank, 14-gallon LP-gas tank and 6-gallon water heater. Fuel capacity is 55 gallons.

Other Ranger 31D features include hardwood cabinet doors with hidden hinges, LED TV, bunk bed-and-breakfast feature on select models, one-piece molded front cap, high-gloss exterior fiberglass, full basement storage, Flexsteel furniture and a radius roof with ducted air conditioning.

The Tioga interior features comfortable furniture, wood cabinetry and many other details to make it feel like home. The family-friendly galley is stocked with extras such as a spice rack, sink covers, silverware drawer, cutting board and more.

Like other Fleetwood models, the Ranger 31D features Fleetwood's Tuff-Ply Roofing Technology, which resists radiation by reflecting sunlight to reduce chalking, and Tuffpex Plumbing, which runs throughout each vehicle creating a durable seal on all internal tubing. In addition, Fleetwood uses one seamless, solid piece of exclusive Tuff-Coat fiberglass composite for each outer wall. MSRP is \$95,970.

Fleetwood RV, 800-854-1344, www.fleetwoodrv.com





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COACHMEN Leprechaun 319D



FOR SHEER VARIETY, it's hard to top the venerable Coachmen Leprechaun. Available on a Ford E-350, Ford E-450 or Chevrolet 4500 chassis, the Leprechaun has no less than eight different floorplans, each with a wide range of options.

For 2015, the Leprechaun comes with a 50th anniversary "mandatory option," featuring a lengthy list of amenities including a backup camera and monitor, power awning, upgraded sofa, and color-infused fiberglass running boards and fender skirts.

Generations of Leprechaun owners appreciate its long list of safety and convenience features, including night shades, raised-panel hardwood cabinet doors and upgraded flooring and furniture. In addition, the Leprechaun's non-basement construction means a smooth transition from cab to living area.

The Leprechaun 319DS model is one of Coachmen's best-selling units and features two slideouts on the driver's side. The first, located in the living area, holds a large U-shaped dinette and a sofa or a pair of comfortable recliner chairs. The second slideout is the large closet for the rear bedroom, which features a true queen bed.

The 319DS is built on the Ford E-450 chassis, with its 305-



horsepower Triton V-10 engine. The exterior length is 32 feet 11 inches, height is 10 feet 10 inches and width is 8 feet 4 inches. The interior height, at 6 feet 11 inches, should accommodate most NBA players. The freshwater, gray-water and black-water capacities are 50, 32 and 29 gallons, respectively. Since both slideouts are on the driver's side, the awning is a massive 21 feet long. MSRP starts at \$91,500.

Coachmen RV, 800-353-7383, www.coachmenrv.com

JAYCO Greyhawk 31FS



THE 2015 JAYCO GREYHAWK 31FS addresses the trend toward Class C's appealing more to families, as one of its two slides features bunk beds. The same slide also houses a wardrobe for the rear bedroom, which features a Denver mattress on its queen-size bed. The second slide, on the driver's side in the living area, hosts a three-burner cooktop with microwave above as well as a sofa and overhead cabinet. The 31FS sleeps seven to nine people.

The 31FS is built on the Ford E-450 chassis and its 305-horsepower Triton V-10 engine. At 32 feet 5 inches long, 8 feet 4 inches wide and 11 feet 6 inches tall, the 31FS is plenty big enough for everyone in the family. With an interior height of 7 feet, chances are you'll never test the padded vinyl ceiling. An extended stay in the 31FS is made easier with freshwater, gray- and black-water holding tank capacities coming in at 32.75, 40 and 32 gallons, respectively.

The Customer Value Package [CVP] is available on the Greyhawk 31FS, as it is with the other Jayco Class C models. Among its lengthy list of conveniences and amenities is Jayco's JRide handling package, which includes additional sway bars,



rubber-isolation mounts, Hellwig springs and Bilstein shock absorbers. The JRide package promises more stability and a smoother ride, according to the company.

The CVP also features dark-tinted frameless windows and a touch-screen in-dash infotainment system, backup and side-view cameras with monitor and remote control, and heated side-view mirrors. MSRP for the Greyhawk 31FS is \$103,176.

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ITASCA 2015 Viva! 23B



MANUFACTURED BY WINNEBAGO INDUSTRIES, the 2015 Itasca Viva!, like the Winnebago Trend, is built on the Ram ProMaster chassis with a 3.6-liter Pentastar V-6 gas engine and six-speed automatic transmission. The Viva! is 24 feet long, 7 feet 6.5 inches wide and 10 feet 1 inch tall; interior height is 6 feet 7 inches. It has a 15-foot awning and there is 15.8 cubic feet of exterior storage on the 23B. Holding-tank capacities are 27 (freshwater), 40 (black) and 32 gallons (gray), with an instantaneous water heater. A 24-gallon fuel tank will keep you on the road for miles.

Despite the smaller stature, the Viva! comes loaded with all the comforts of home and makes the most of the available space, including a StudioLoft bed, situated over the living area, with a power lift so it is easily stowed up and out of the way when not needed. It is also the first motorhome in the industry with three-point seat belts in the dinette.

The 23B offers front swivel cab seats, a sofa bed and dinette, a large full-featured, mid-coach galley and rear bath. Two large sleeping spaces provide comfortable sleeping for four adults with the front StudioLoft with electric lift and a king-size Flex Bed System.



Available in two floorplans, the Viva! features easy swivel-in-place adjustable cab seats, Ultraleather interior, retractable self-cleaning shower door, automatic entrance step, LED lights inside and out, and a U-Connect 5.0 Infotainment Center with touch screen, voice command, steering wheel controls, hands-free Bluetooth, iPod/iPhone audio integration, speed-adjusted audio levels, compass, and integrated GPS with navigation.

Among available options are a drainage system with heated electric pad for each holding tank, pipe wraps and lighted on/off switch near the monitor panel. MSRP is \$89,096.

Itasca, 641-585-3535, www.goitasca.com

WINNEBAGO Minnie Winnie 31H



THE POPULAR MINNIE WINNIE returns

to the Winnebago lineup, loaded with amenities. The 31H/31HP features two slideout rooms. A great private bedroom in the rear of the unit features a queen-size bed and a large slideout with wardrobe and dresser, and the kids will love the bunk beds just forward of the bedroom. A full galley and front lounge have even more sleeping options with a sofa bed, a dinette that converts to a bed, and an overhead bed over the cab.

If the 31H/31HP is not your first choice, there's a total of five Minnie Winnie and three Minnie Winnie Premier floorplans to choose from. All offer a variety of sleeping spaces that families will appreciate, a roomy living area with an available HDTV and DVD player, and storage needs are covered with plenty of compartments so you can bring along all of your gear.

Traveling families will appreciate having sleeping flexibility including a private bedroom in most models and cabover bed. A roomy living area provides a great place to relax after a day of fun and relaxation.

The 31H/31HP is 32 feet 7 inches long, 11 feet 1 inch high and 8 feet 5.5 inches wide. Inside, the unit has a maximum ceiling height of 6 feet 10 inches. Outside, there's a 14-foot



awning. The motorhome features a 44-gallon freshwater tank, 34-gallon black-water tank and 30-gallon gray-water tank.

Optional features include: Minnie Winnie Comfort and Safety Package, Minnie Winnie Convenience and Appearance Package, and the Minnie Winnie Premier Package with Convenience and Appearance, as well as a Comfort and Safety Package with upgraded features and amenities. MSRP for the Minnie Winnie 31H starts at \$80,766. **M**

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By Bill Yancey

BUDGET BACKUP

Adding another element of safety for **less than \$150**

Backing a motorhome can be a challenge, requiring patience and sometimes a helper to make sure your path is clear. As a result, most large coaches built within the last 10 years or so either come standard with a backup camera display, or offer one as an option. But what if you own an older rig, or recently purchased a used coach that didn't come with one? An aftermarket backup camera system is one solution, but these can retail for \$600-\$1,200, which is a budget buster for many owners. However, we recently came across a product that, while not technically designed as a backup camera for a motorhome, works just fine for that purpose — and costs less than \$150.

The Smart Hitch Camera and Sensor System by Hopkins Towing Solutions was originally designed to help car and truck owners hitch up a trailer, but after taking a close look at this product, it appeared that it could work for seeing behind a motorhome as well. The kit features a wide-angle, color videocamera, two ultrasonic detectors and a 3.5-inch monitor that has a clear picture. We contacted Hopkins for two 5-foot cable extensions.

The first step was deciding where to put the camera on the project motorhome, a 2007 Roadtrek. This camera is designed for use on a tow vehicle, not a motorhome, so it comes with a bracket that mounts behind the vehicle's license plate. This bracket supports the camera, sensors and related electronics. On most trucks/SUVs, the license plate is located directly over the hitch ball, but on the Roadtrek, that's where the access to the LP-gas tank is, so this wouldn't work. The second possible option was to place it where the Roadtrek license plate is located, on the right rear door. The license plate light made that

impossible, and even if it didn't, we would have had to remove the door panel and follow the license plate wires through the rubber tube into the vehicle's fiberglass body.

The third choice was to mount the camera up high on the grille of the roof air-conditioning unit, and point it down toward the rear of the vehicle, which is what we ended up doing. There were some initial concerns over whether the camera would get too hot or cold when the air conditioner or heat pump are in use, but considering the amount of airflow around the unit, and the fact that it is designed to be mounted outdoors in the elements, we figured this shouldn't be a problem.

To install the camera, we first removed the air



It's easy to keep tabs on a dinghy vehicle using a simple backup monitor designed for do-it-yourself installation.

conditioner access panel, centered the camera and drilled starter holes through a horizontal support. The screws provided worked well.

If you have a standard seven-blade trailer wiring plug receptacle, connecting to power is simple — just plug the bypass connector into the receptacle and the unit plugs into the harness. Without the standard trailer connector, it's a little more complicated. The plug is removed, leaving the wires only. Power is tapped into the wire to the backup lights and is activated when the vehicle is in reverse with either method. It would be possible to use a switch to power the camera and monitor anytime the vehicle is running, to check out the dinghy vehicle, but we don't know what the life of the camera and monitor would be under those conditions, so it's probably best not to leave it on continuously.

The power wires, red for hot and black for ground, had to go to the left taillight assembly. We drilled a hole through the fiberglass panel on top of the metal door frame. Once through the panel, it was a simple matter of threading the power wires down the empty space next to the door and to the light assembly. Two screws hold the access cover to the light. The green wire is the power to the backup light. The black wire is the ground wire for the assembly. Yellow (brake) and brown (taillight) are left alone.

The trickiest step was drilling through the fiberglass body to the left of the air-conditioning unit. We were concerned about accidentally cutting the wires to the air conditioner, or end

[1] The Smart Hitch bracket fits nicely on the grille of the air conditioner, and provides a good view of the rear of the motorhome and/or the dinghy vehicle. [2] The air conditioner access panel was removed, and the camera centered on the panel. Two starter holes were drilled through a horizontal support, and the camera mounted with the screws provided. [3] Here you can see the video cable from the camera going into the driver's side wall to the left of the air conditioner condenser (A) and the power wires going down to the taillight assembly.

➔ INSTALLATION TIP

Plan wisely. Custom modifications usually require cutting and/or drilling, which can lead to costly repairs if mistakes are made.



[4] The power wires, red for hot and black for ground, had to go to the left taillight assembly. A hole was drilled through the fiberglass panel on top of the metal door frame. Once through the panel, it was a simple matter of threading the power wires down the empty space next to the door to the light assembly. The red wire (from video) and green (from backup light) were spliced, and the black wire (from video) and the black wire (ground for taillights) were spliced. Yellow (brake) and brown (taillight) were left alone. [5] A long 1/2-inch bit was used to drill into the cabinet on the driver's side of the vehicle next to the air conditioner and the video cable was inserted. [6] From there, the cable was routed toward the front of the motorhome through the forward cabinets.



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BACKUP CAMERA & MONITOR INSTALLATION



[7] A single hole was drilled through the base of the video monitor mount and the monitor mounted above the driver. [8] Enough slack was left in the cable to allow the cabinet door to open and close naturally without crimping it. [9] The monitor provides a crystal-clear view of the back of the motorhome when shifted into reverse.

up with a space in which we could not connect to the interior. Using a 1-inch-diameter circular drill bit, we cut into the fiberglass about 4 inches behind the air conditioner wires. The hole was far enough back from the wires that we felt they would be safe. The hole was also large enough to see into and also feel with a finger for any wires that may have been cut in the process. Fortunately, we missed them all.

With that done, we used a long ½-inch bit to drill through the 1-inch hole into the cabinet on the driver's side of the vehicle, next to the air conditioner. From there, we worked our way forward. Once past the cabinet closest to the driver, we were able to hide the wire behind fabric panels and end up in the storage space in front of the driver. Both the hole through the panel on the door frame and through the fiberglass body near the air conditioner were sealed using GE Premium

Waterproof Silicone. It set up overnight and is resistant to freezing and UV rays.

Next, we drilled a single hole through the base of the video monitor mount (not trusting the dual-sided tape to hold forever) and mounted the monitor above eye level. We left enough slack in the cable to allow the door to open and close naturally without crimping it.

Of course, every motorhome is different, so you'll need to decide on the best mounting options on your own motorhome. But with a little time, patience and right around \$150, it's possible to create a backup monitor solution that is affordable and effective. **M**

Source

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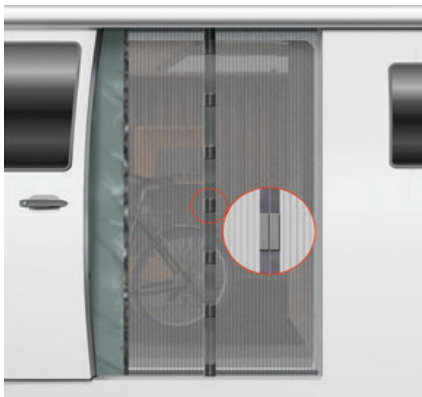
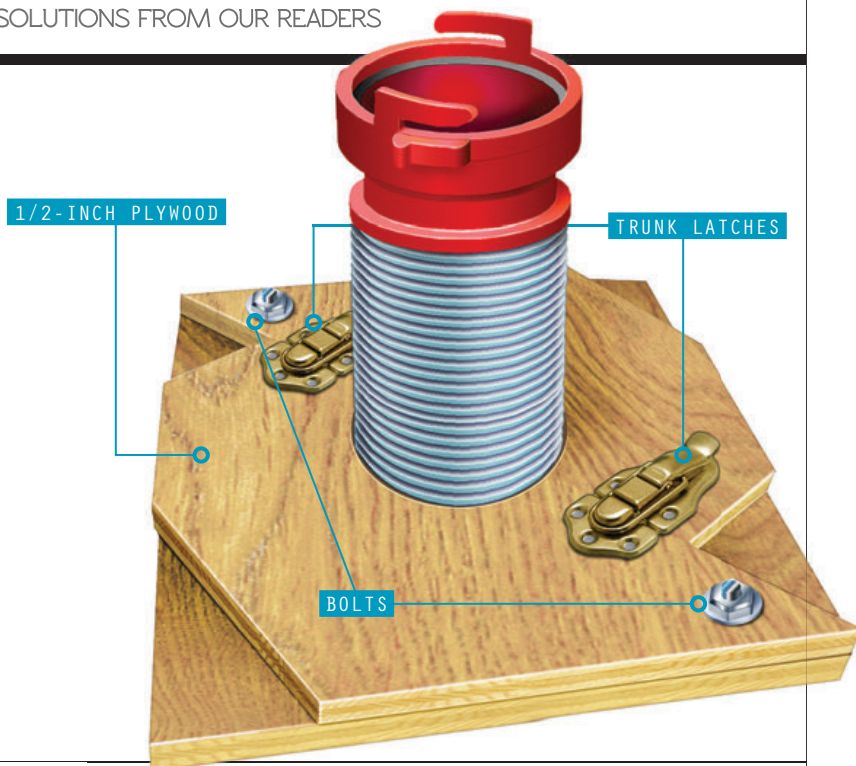
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Keep Critters Out

We used to dry camp within 200 miles of home and only dumped our black-water tank when we returned. With just the two of us, we can do two weeks on the black tank easily in our 1999 Fleetwood Flair 34D. For gray water, we have an on-board two-stage filtration and disinfection package so that was never an issue.

In June, we retired and hit the road, staying in RV parks where sewer hookup is routine. I was concerned about mice getting into the motorhome via the opening for the sewer hose. I fashioned a simple shield out of 1/2-inch plywood, two bolts and two old-fashioned trunk latches. The shield surrounds the hatch in the compartment and pinches down around the sewer hose. The project took me about an hour to complete.

Walter A. Baumgartner | Boise, Idaho



Portable Screen Door

Our Roadtrek on the Mercedes-Benz chassis has a large sliding door that lets in swarms of bugs whenever we opened it. There was no product we could find to solve that problem, so we came up with our own.

We started with a magnetic-closing screen door built for a standard residential door. It was too long and too narrow for the motorhome opening, so we cut off the bottom and hemmed it to hold a small chain, which added weight to help it close. We added fabric, which matches the interior of the RV, to the side of the screen and attached it with a strip of hook-and-loop fastener along the top. We then attached common hardware in the motorhome to snap it into place along the sides. When camping pre- or post-bug season, we just remove it and store it away.

Rhonda van Heyst | Edmonton, Alberta, Canada



Charge It!

To keep the batteries charged in my 2003 Winnebago Journey, I purchased a Deltran Battery Tender designed to handle the dual 12-volt starting batteries in my diesel pusher. I then mounted the Battery Tender on the wall of a storage bay, which has a 120-volt AC outlet, and used the optional Deltran extension harness to reach the battery area.

Now, whenever I'm connected to shorepower, or use my generator, the engine batteries automatically charge.

Jim Rogers | Cottonwood, California



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. 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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Super Socket

Replacing a standard 120-volt AC, 15-amp outlet with one that provides USB charging for two devices ends charging clutter

By Kevin Livingston

ELECTRICAL

Cost: \$30

Time: 30 minutes

Difficulty: 3/10

In the current era (pun intended), personal electronic equipment is a big part of everyone's lives — even while traveling in a motorhome. Whether it's a cellphone, a GPS, a tablet or a laptop, just about everyone is using some type of compact electronic device. Of course, charging these devices is also a big part of the electronic experience, which means a plethora of power cords is needed to keep the batteries fully charged. The most common plug used for charging nearly every device inserts into a USB port in a power converter that plugs into the standard 120-volt AC electrical receptacle.

Limiting clutter is a big thing in a motorhome and it's easy to install your own charging station by utilizing existing space: one of the convenient 120-volt AC outlets in the coach. A number of companies that supply standard household electrical outlets to the housing market have added USB power connections alongside the normal three-prong receptacle, and Leviton, a name common in the household building industry, is one of these companies.

The Leviton T5630 is a specialized outlet that replaces an existing standard 15-amp unit and adds two 5-volt DC-powered USB ports. The right port is designed for the higher power needs of items like laptops, tablets, Blackberry smartphones or gaming devices, while the left port is suitable for smaller-battery devices like iPhones, MP3 players and e-readers. Two devices, supported by USB 2.0, can be charged at one time; a smart chip recognizes the devices and provides an optimal charge rate. The outlet offers 2.1-amp overall current; most device chargers are converted to 5 volts.

The Leviton 15-amp wall outlet with dual USB connections replaces the standard 120-volt AC receptacles found in all motorhomes.



Installation is a simple process of swapping out an existing receptacle. After disconnecting all power to the coach (turn off the AC generator, disconnect the inverter and unplug the shorepower), remove the cover plate of the existing outlet. Then remove the two screws holding the socket to the box or the wall. Before touching any wires, ensure that there is no electricity by using a multimeter. Now with all the wiring exposed and accessible, note how the outlet is wired and the color of the wires. Color coding is marked on the back of the new Leviton receptacle (white is neutral, black is hot and green is ground). Make sure there is at least 3/4-inch of insulation stripped back, and all the wires can be secured to the new outlet just as they were to the old outlet. If the wires were just inserted in the clip holes in the back of the old outlet and not connected under the old outlet's screws, it's best to connect the wires under the new outlet's screws for the most secure installation.

The only caveat to this project is to make sure there's enough depth in the wall to accept the new outlet. For our installation, the wall had to be modified to fit the box. Even so, the swap took only 30 minutes. The Leviton outlet was \$20 at a home improvement store and total expense was less than \$30 with the modifications. **M**

Leviton Manufacturing Co., www.leviton.com



[1] After the original outlet was removed, the wall opening was modified slightly to fit the new box. Color coding makes wiring the Leviton outlet a simple process. **[2]** The new outlet has two USB connections for a total of 2.1 amps at 5 volts. The USB slot on the right is marked with an "H" and is capable of charging larger devices like an iPad.



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Window Woes

Unhappy with the way his dual-pane windows were behaving, a reader turned to Hot Line for help in resolving his dilemma. He wrote:

“ I am an avid reader of *MotorHome* and especially enjoy reading the Hot Line section. Now I am hoping you have an answer for my problem. I have a 2006 Fleetwood Southwind 32V motorhome. When not in use, it is stored in an enclosed building. I love the motorhome, but one by one the Thermopane windows are getting “milky” between the panes. I can only guess that the seals were faulty or not installed properly, which allowed moisture to enter. At least five of the windows have been affected, and I can’t see traffic through to the rearview mirror on the passenger side.

I contacted Fleetwood and asked for the name of the company that made the windows and was told Fleetwood does its own windows at the factory. I just wanted the name of a person working in that department who might be able to tell me where I could get the windows replaced or if Fleetwood would be willing to give me some kind of a break. I was told that the company that made those windows is out of business and Fleetwood RV is no longer contracting with them.

Can Hot Line please help me?

Rex Bennett | West Haven, Utah

Hot Line’s letter of inquiry to Fleetwood RV elicited the following reply:

This is in response to Hot Line’s letter regarding Rex Bennett. Fleetwood Motor Homes of California, once a division of Fleetwood Enterprises Inc., manufactured Bennett’s motorhome. On July 17, 2009, Fleetwood Motor Homes ceased operations and subsequently went out of business in July 2009. Since Fleetwood RV Inc. did not manufacture this motorhome, there is no compensation we are obligated to offer. However, in the interest of Bennett’s satisfaction, we extended an offer to sell the windows

to him at a reduced cost. Bennett was satisfied with that decision and ordered the windows he needed.

Bryan Gaughan
Dispute Resolution Administrator
Fleetwood RV
Decatur, Indiana

Tow-Bar Trouble


Believing a problem with his tow bar was related to a flaw in its assembly, a reader turned to Hot Line for assistance when his efforts to obtain reimbursement for its repair was delayed. He wrote:

“ In July 2011, I purchased a Blue Ox Aventa LX BX7445 tow bar to use with my motorhome. After towing my dinghy vehicle, I noticed the lock mechanism for adjusting the length of the tow bar when hooking up was not working. I then stored the motorhome for a year before taking the tow bar back to my local dealer to be fixed. According to the dealer, there was no warranty on the tow bar because nothing was broken. The lock mechanism in the box on the bar had been assembled incorrectly and therefore came apart. I then contacted Blue Ox and spoke with a representative who told me a three-year warranty was still in effect and it would take care of the \$57 payment I made to the dealer for the repair. To date, I have not received payment. I am asking Hot Line to help collect my reimbursement.

Mel Krug | Columbus, Montana

Hot Line contacted Blue Ox on Krug’s behalf. We received a brief but positive response from a Blue Ox representative that closed the case. It read:

Blue Ox received Hot Line’s letter and has issued Mr. Krug a check in the amount of \$57. I hope this clears up any issues. Thank you for your contact.

Deanna Wendte
Blue Ox Towing Division
Pender, Nebraska 

Take Action Contact Hot Line For Help

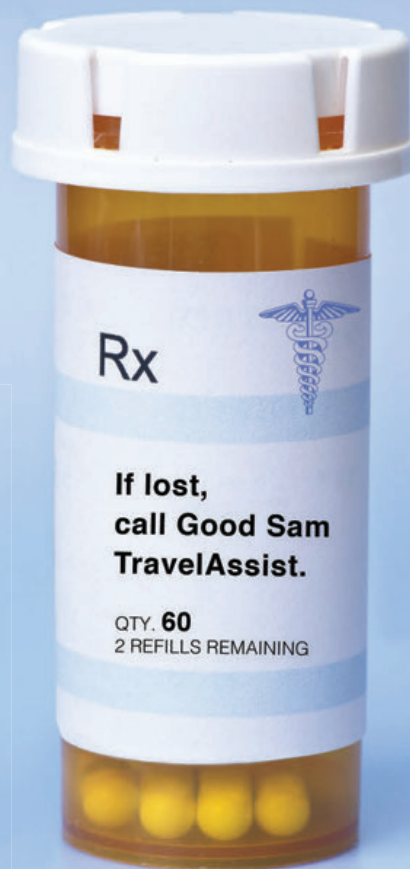
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By Ken Freund

Speedometer Fluctuates

Q I have a 1996 National RV Dolphin on a Ford chassis with a 7.5-liter V-8 and a Power Gear jack system with four jacks. My problem is that the speedometer significantly fluctuates when the jacks are raised or lowered, but it doesn't happen all the time. I had it checked by electric-type service technicians to no avail. They can't troubleshoot something that is not happening at the time. The only way to stop the fluctuating is to release the emergency brake and then shut the engine off. If the engine is not shut off, and I try to drive away, it keeps fluctuating for 5 or 6 miles. Also, it will not shift correctly, although I can shift it manually without a problem. The speedometer works perfectly otherwise. I changed out the speed sensor on the transmission, but that didn't help.

I emailed Power Gear, but the company just sent me a manual (which I appreciated). I did change out the emergency contact switch last year. The wiring goes from the ignition switch through the emergency switch to the jack panel. The system worked great until August, then the random problems began.

I've checked the wiring for connections and for cracks, and everything appears OK. I think I am getting feedback



(noise) to the ignition switch (the dash and speedometer voltage come from the ignition switch).

I tried to locate the cause by lowering the left side, then the right side, then the front and finally the back. Even though the switch is new, could the switch contacts be causing the random issues? I am at a loss as to what to try next.

Gordon Eno | Via email

A This seems like a classic case of an intermittent faulty ground connection. Check, clean and tighten the ground connection on the Power Gear motor unit and controls. Also check under your dash for ground connections and clean and tighten as needed. You could also try running a temporary ground using a wire with alligator clips to verify the solution.

HWH Jacks Problem

Q I was camping on the shores of Lake Superior, and as I was leveling the motorhome I needed to lower one set of jacks. All I got was a click from the relay. I pulled out the HWH info that came with the coach, a 2003 Winnebago Adventurer, and it suggested to release the four T-handle valves on the jack solenoids. That did nothing. I then called HWH for help and was told their technicians were busy and would call back.

I went online and Googled "HWH jacks won't retract." Judging from the results on many forums, this is a common problem. I found a link to an HWH Web page that instructed me to remove any one of the four check valve caps on the top of the jack manifold and replace it immediately. They look like bolt heads. This allowed me to

electrically stow the jacks and saved a very expensive service call.

Further, if this doesn't work, it recommended removal of the small U-shaped pipe on top of the manifold and then removing the shuttle valve, and using something to gently push the plunger back into the valve. Replace the valve and pipe and the jacks will retract.

As it seems to be a frequent problem, HWH should include this information in the owner's manual. Anyway, it seems a new shuttle valve is called for. It turned out to be an easy DIY repair by using basic wrenches and buying a \$57 part. If you can get the part on the road, it can be done anywhere in 20 minutes.

Steve Mackey | Woodbury Minnesota

A Thanks for writing and sharing your experience and tips. This is sure to help some of our readers. Often an

Internet search will yield the solution. Hopefully HWH will read this and pay more attention to problems in the field.

Cold-Weather Diesel Storage

Q I live in a cold-weather climate and have a Caterpillar diesel-powered motorhome on a Freightliner chassis. I put the coach into winter storage from late October until mid-May and remove the batteries to keep them charged during this period. Since the motorhome is not started during this period, I would like your recommendation concerning diesel fuel treatment. I fill the fuel tank to the full level (100 gallons).

Should I use Sta-Bil diesel fuel additive to avoid fuel breakdown and gum buildup in the fuel system? Or should I use Power Service diesel additive, which prevents the fuel line and filter from

plugging with ice and wax, and prevents fuel from gelling? If I use both products, could some type of adverse reaction occur that would result in more harm to the fuel system than good?

Ken Gajewski | Woodhaven, Michigan

A I recommend using a diesel fuel storage additive that also prevents the growth of microbes in the fuel (although this isn't as big of a concern in cold climates as warmer ones). Since you won't be running the engine until the weather warms up, there's no reason to add a product that helps prevent the fuel from waxing and gelling.

Unresponsive Cold Cummins

Q I have a 2008 Tiffin Phaeton with a Cummins ISC 360 engine. It has about 35,000 miles. This time last year, on cold start-ups only, it would not idle up to normal rpm and would not respond to any throttle input. If I turned the engine off, waited for 30 seconds, then restarted it, it would run normally. This was a sporadic problem that has become more frequent. Once the motorhome has been driven and the engine is up to temperature, the problem does not occur. My local Cummins shop could not find a problem, though they did replicate the issue, but said it did not put out an error code. Their technician disconnected, cleaned and reconnected all the ECM terminals. That was July 2013, and I had had no issues until about a month ago. It is now beginning to do it again.

I contacted the Tiffin people and they suggested it could be a sticking or failing throttle sensor on the throttle pedal. When I relayed that information to Cummins, the technician said that would be a starting point if the issue returns. Now that it has, I would like your feedback before returning to Cummins. Am I looking at a new ECM?

Chuck Vermillion | Spring Valley, California

A No, if the engine runs normally sometimes, I doubt if the ECM is bad. Your engine has a Holset variable geometry turbocharger. These tend to get a buildup of crud and stick in one

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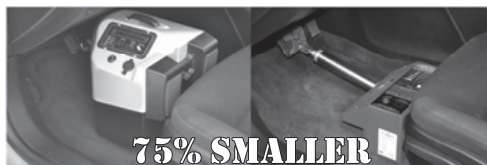
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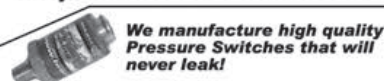


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While every effort is made to maintain accuracy and completeness, last-minute changes may occasionally result in omissions or errors.

(continued from pg. 46)

chassis is certainly not retro and the light-weight stature of the motorhome contributes to its spirited get-up-and-go and good road manners. No one will miss the underpinnings of the 1960s, which rode and handled more like a bread truck.

A large windshield and side windows provide a near-panoramic view. Instrumentation and controls are standard Ford chassis fare and are easy to negotiate. What makes the dash hip is the backup monitor/GPS mounted on a specially designed track that allows the screen to slide between the driver and co-pilot. Open the passenger workstation and the co-pilot can stay busy while on the road or when in camp.

While the Brave was one of the tightest prototypes we've tested, we had to report a whistling noise while driving at highway speeds and sideview mirrors that were mounted too low. The noise was created by a small gap between the window and edge molding; we covered it with painter's tape and it silenced the ride. But don't flip your wig; Winnebago engineers have since fixed the molding and moved the mirrors on production models in response to our findings.

If you're a retro fan looking for modern appliances and systems and a structure that meets current standards for safety and reliability, the Brave will fit the bill nicely. Construction methods are the same found in any Winnebago, which means the front section will be reinforced with steel and the laminated-wall superstructure will take care of the rest. There's even a one-piece fiberglass roof.

It's hard not to fall in love with the Brave. The eyebrow and flying W decal on the sides bring back memories of a decade that had a gigantic impact on the social direction of our country. It also keeps alive the good times everyone had when camping was a lot less complicated. As we sat around the campfire watching the light dance on the side of the Brave, it was evident that Winnebago has reintroduced a motorhome that will keep owners and onlookers smiling and that's groovy! **M**

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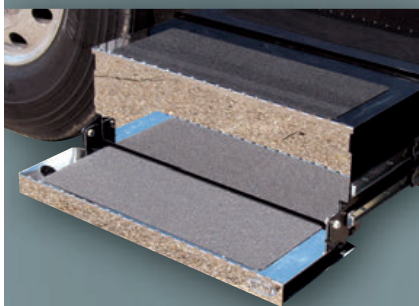
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position. Also, the turbo vane switch can be causing the problem you describe. Have your Cummins dealer check the throttle pedal sensor and check boost and VGT operation.

Side Wall Delamination

Q I have a 20-year-old motorhome that shows signs of delamination on the coach body. Is there any way to contain or repair this problem?

Michael McCann | Cottonwood, Arizona

A Delamination (separation of the fiberglass composite walls) is caused by water intrusion or adhesive failure, although it can also be the result of faulty materials and construction. It's likely that the delamination will spread. It's important to limit further damage by carefully inspecting the coach for leaks and water entry points along the edges of windows, doors, the roof, hatches and vents and where ladders, etc., are mounted through the walls. These points should be sealed. Park your coach at an angle to the sun or a light to help spot wavy or bubbled areas. Press your hands on the fiberglass, and note if it moves or bends. Lightly tap on the side wall with a rubber mallet or hard plastic handle; delaminated areas produce a hollow sound. Make repairs before the problem requires complete side wall replacement, if possible. There are some products designed to help make these repairs. One such kit is sold by Comoset Products LLC, 801-821-0964, www.delamrepair.com. Also try to store your coach under cover, or at least use an RV cover when it is stored.

Tire Balance Comment

Q I have a 2004 Pace Arrow 37C motorhome on a Workhorse chassis. It has Michelin 235/80R22.5 tires. The steering on this rig is unusually sensitive — I have to constantly move the steering wheel back and forth. The coach only has 30,000 miles on it, so I contacted Workhorse and the only thing it could advise was to make sure I had the proper tire pressure. I had considered



Keep Buckets in Place With Simple Tool

Washing and cleaning a motorhome is made a little easier by using a bucket that doesn't slide around. Shurhold Industries' new Bucket Base is a sturdy ring designed to minimize bucket toppling and damage from the bucket scratching the floor. The nonmarking ring won't damage RV surfaces, according to the company, and the pail won't fall over with brushes or mops in them either. Shurhold's Bucket Base fits most 5-gallon pails.

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installing a steering stabilizer kit on it and maybe replacing the factory front shock absorbers with Bilstein shocks, but the Workhorse people said because of low mileage they didn't recommend either.

Recently I noticed a vibration that seemed to be coming from the right front. I pulled the right front wheel and saw that it had no balance weights on the rim. After closer inspection of the rim it looked like it had never been balanced, as there was no evidence of marks on the rim. I took it to a truck tire shop to get it balanced. It was so far out of balance they had to rotate the tire several times on the rim to get it properly balanced.

On the next trip out it drove like a different vehicle. The vibration and the skittish steering issue were gone. I hope you print my letter so other readers will know that even though motorhome tires are considered truck tires, they still need to be balanced. Be prepared to spend some money though, because truck

shops charge high hourly labor rates.

Don Ramsier | Cox's Creek, Kentucky

A Thanks for writing, Don. Tire imbalance usually shows up at speeds faster than 45 mph and can cause severe vibration if one or more tires are significantly out of balance. This can also cause increased wear in shocks and other chassis components.

Intermittent Power-Loss Solution

Q This is in reference to Rodney Nelson's intermittent problem in the June issue. We had basically the same issue with a Georgie Boy with the Caterpillar 3126. The Caterpillar dealer could not locate the problem and Freightliner had no idea, so I started replacing sensors myself. After the temperature sensor, the intake manifold temp sensor and the boost pressure sensor (none of which helped), I replaced the HEUI pump oil pressure sensor and that fixed the problem. This sensor can cause intermittent starting issues also.

Greg Pike | Danville, Alabama

A Generally I don't like the shotgun approach of replacing parts until you find the problem. However, when the "experts" can't find the problem, sometimes that's what you have to do. It can be difficult to test sensors, particularly if you don't have their specifications or a tester.

Converter/Charger Replacement

Q I have a 2012 Winnebago Sightseer 33C with a Schumacher SARVC55 charger, two NAPA 8231 coach batteries and one NAPA 8240 chassis battery. I am planning to change the Schumacher converter to a Xantrex TrueCharge2 (60A) charger. What coach components should I be concerned about if I use the 16-volt DC equalization feature of the Xantrex? Is there any concern if I operate the chassis engine and the Xantrex simultaneously (I currently do this with the Schumacher with no apparent negative effects)? Any concern or special actions needed with

connecting one of the Xantrex charging circuits to the chassis battery? Any recommendations before I begin?

Lynn Eberhardt | Meridian, Idaho

A Most 12-volt DC electronic circuits are designed to handle overvoltage and surges, but to be on the safe side, when you run an equalization, turn off everything and disconnect the circuits

that contain electronic boards, etc., which are connected all the time. You can remove their fuses temporarily. The engine-starting (chassis) battery gets its charge primarily from the alternator, and Winnebagos also come with a Trikl-Start device, which sends charging power from the converter. When running the engine, the charging device with the highest voltage output sort of wins out and this

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determines the charge rate. You may want to disconnect the Trikl-Start if you connect a charging line from the Xantrex to the engine-starting battery. Consult the wiring diagram that is on Winnebago's website before making changes.

Diesel Noises

Q I have a 2013 Fleetwood Excursion 33A diesel pusher that has about 20,000 miles on it. It has air brakes. The last time I returned from a trip and let it idle to cool down, I noticed a shake, heard a rattle noise and then the air was discharged and the shaking stopped. This repeated several times before I shut down the engine. I talked to several RV mechanics, but they could not give me an answer about what the problem might be. The brakes seem to be functioning fine. What do you suggest?

Hugo Lusten | Paulden, Arizona

A Since everything seems to be working normally, I doubt that there's a problem, although something could be loose. The air brakes use a compressor to maintain pressure, which makes noise and there's a pressure regulator that also makes noise when it operates. Without hearing the problem, it's very difficult to determine what it is. You should demonstrate it to a diesel mechanic to be sure, for peace of mind.

Slide Malfunction

Q We have a 2011 Coachmen Concord with triple slides. Recently, one of the slides began moving cockeyed when trying to extend or retract it. Moving it out manually allowed a friend and I to check the underside from the outside. The slide mechanism consists of two rack-and-pinion systems that support the middle and right-hand end (closest to driver), while the end under the stove portion consists of a small roller, which basically lets the floor move over it, without any apparent power source for that half of the room. There is a hole in the floor of the slideout where it rests on the roller, preventing the room from moving smoothly. I wonder if any other RV manufacturers use this type of system, and

if you have heard from readers with a similar problem? What is the fix?

Interesting enough, one year ago the slide stopped working, and the RV repair facility said it was from a broken bolt or sheared pin. I wonder if this problem was also present at an early stage then?

Marietta Kaylor | Via email

A We get a lot of mail regarding slideouts not working properly. Cleaning and lubricating are generally considered owner-type maintenance, but repairs and alignment are beyond the scope of most owners. I suggest you take it to a good RV shop that has experience repairing slideouts. If it gets crooked it probably needs a major adjustment and service.

Swaying Greyhawk Comment

Q This is in regard to Rod Harris' letter "Motorhome Handling" in the August issue. We also had one, a 2009 31-footer. We took it to the front-end alignment shop and it was basically labor that it took to fix the rocking. After they got finished, it drove like a car. The alignment was awful and it was a brand-new unit. It was so bad that my co-pilot was swaying in her seat constantly. Thought I would let you know what just an alignment has done for us.

Martin Termorshuizen | Grimsby, Ontario

A Thanks for writing. It's a good idea to have alignment checked on all coaches, to prevent excessive tire wear. Generally, faulty wheel alignment will result in pulling to one side, or darting from side to side, particularly if the wheels have significant toe-out (they should have toe-in). **M**

Have a Tech Question?

Contact our experts:

Email tech@motorhomemagazine.com or write to *MotorHome*, 2750 Park View Court, Suite 240, Oxnard, CA 93036 (please include your name, city and state). Selected letters will be answered in the magazine, but time does not permit individual responses.



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Ghost Of A Chance

Though few of us will ever experience a paranormal encounter, meeting this New Orleans ghost hunter is probably the next best thing

By Alan Rider

While I've met a lot of people and seen a lot of things in my motorhome travels over the years, there are a few folks who stand out in my memory precisely because of the things they've seen. Things that, in a physical sense at least, weren't really there.

We're talking about real-life ghost stories here friends. And, just in time for Halloween, I thought I'd introduce you to a lady who can tell you tales of spectral encounters that are every bit as spellbinding as any spooky yarn you've ever heard spun around a campfire.

Now, I should make it clear that I'm of two minds on this subject, equal parts skeptical and curious. My doubts stem from my aversion to the largely manufactured melodrama the passel of paranormal "reality" TV shows rely on to keep things interesting. That said, I try to keep an open mind about such things because I've heard enough firsthand accounts from people I consider highly credible sources to dismiss the possibility of meeting these denizens of the spirit world out of hand.

Which may help explain why one of the first things on my agenda after setting up camp at New Orleans' French Quarter RV Resort (504-586-3000, www.fqrv.com) was booking a ghost-themed walking tour. Because I've spent my fair share of time in the Crescent City — a place many believe may be the most haunted town in America — I knew I didn't want one of those excursions led by costumed guides who have always struck me as actors reciting lines from some tired script. In short, I was looking for a tour with a solid

foundation in the admittedly colorful history of New Orleans and enough real-world experience in metaphysical matters that I wouldn't be rolling my eyes at every stop along the way.

After asking around for recommendations, I booked a nighttime tour led by local innkeeper-turned-paranormal-investigator Karen Jeffries (504-940-0943, www.dauphinehouse.com). A vivacious redhead, Karen's sense of humor — not to mention her thoroughly down-to-earth attitude toward otherworldly occurrences that made them seem as natural as a summer thunderstorm — quickly convinced me I'd

found exactly what I was looking for.

While our two-hour stroll through the historic French Quarter followed a winding route with many of the same stops as other ghost tours, Karen's running commentary was embellished with the kind of fascinating details that can only come from someone with a true passion for the subject. The best part of our ramble, however, didn't — couldn't, really — come from any script, as she related some of her personal experiences from the many full-on paranormal investigations she's participated in during the past two decades.

Those stories ran the gamut from wild to mild, starting with her recent confrontation with the especially malevolent spirit of a 19th-century New Orleans socialite — who turned out to be a closet sadist — that became so outraged she plagued Karen's life for weeks afterward. On a lighter note, she fondly recalled the cheery spectral couple dressed in Victorian attire who greeted her at the top of the stairs soon after she bought her 1860 home in the nearby Faubourg Marigny neighborhood.

Since that night, it's occurred to me that meeting Karen was one of those rare travel moments when we're given a glimpse into an intriguing and utterly unfamiliar world. Which, when you come right down to it, is what keeps us all out here exploring The Road Ahead. **M**

“ We're talking about real-life ghost stories here friends. ”

Eerie Encounters ➡

The LaLaurie Mansion is reportedly one of the more haunted locations in New Orleans' French Quarter. Karen Jeffries leads ghost-themed walking tours of the city.



LaLaurie Mansion Photo: Reading Tom

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