

NEW FOR 2016! A SNEAK PEEK AT THE LATEST TRENDS & MODELS

# MotorHome

Travel, Tech, Lifestyle – For the RV Enthusiast

October 2015

## RETURN TO TUSCANY

Touring the Countryside in  
Thor's Diesel Pusher

**WEATHER  
BEATERS**

How to Select  
and Use the Right  
Cover to Protect  
Your Coach

Pg. 52



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Take a road trip filled with fall color and exquisite natural beauty on the Natchez Trace Parkway (see page 26).



Here's a sneak peek at what's hot off the line for 2016, including 12 trendsetting motorhomes. Pg. 60

## 4 ON RAMP

Wild Ride

## 6 P.O. BOX

MotorHome readers share their opinions

## 11 ESCAPES

Road Foodie, Wheels & Gear, Noteworthy, Crossroads

## 68 QUICK TIPS

Handy time- and money-saving tips from fellow RVers

## 70 TECH SAVVY

Hands-On, Hot Line, Coach & Powertrain

## 82 THE ROAD AHEAD

People and places worth the drive

## FEATURES

### Big Adventure in Big Bend ..... 21

With more than 800,000 acres, Big Bend is one of the largest, most remote and least-visited national parks in the Lower 48

### Fall Favorites ..... 26

In addition to being extremely RV-friendly, the 444-mile-long Natchez Trace Parkway is a colorful drive for autumn leaf peeping

### All Points Lead to Adventure ..... 34

Eastern Washington's Yakima County — home to the Yakama Nation — entertains visitors with hiking, fishing, wildlife viewing and sightseeing; Indian casinos and powwows; arboretums, wineries and museums

### MotorHome Photo Contest Winners ..... 41

15 award-winning images from the "Picture This Adventure" photo contest sponsored by Fleetwood RV

### Tuscany 45AT ..... 44

Thor Motor Coach's flagship luxury Class A diesel-pusher motorhome offers high-end amenities, a smooth and quiet ride, and a new push-button start

### Cover Story ..... 52

A step-by-step guide to installing a motorhome cover and a roundup of products available to protect your coach from weather and UV rays

### Here Comes the Boom..... 60

Get the inside scoop on the trends for 2016 as well as a preview of 12 new motorhomes

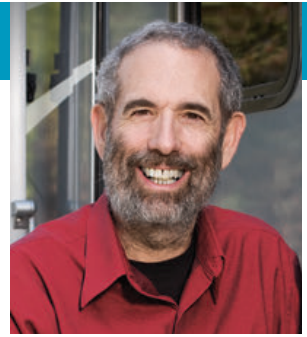
### No Heavy Lifting..... 65

Roadmaster's Spare Tire Carrier serves double duty as a hitch receiver for towing a dinghy vehicle



## ON THE COVER

The Thor Motor Coach Tuscany 45AT, shown here touring through the foothills of Southern California, offers luxury fit for an Italian villa (see test on page 44). Photo by Scott Hirko.



By Bob Livingston

## Wild Ride

**W**e awoke around 5 a.m. to a rattling noise on the patio side of the coach. Rain was pattering on the fiberglass roof, but it was obviously just a light sprinkle.

The previous days at the Winnebago Grand National Rally in Forest City, Iowa, were spectacular, meaning little humidity and moderate temperatures, which, of course, was a departure from the normal high summer heat we've experienced in the past. My wife, Lynne, and I were living in a borrowed coach, enjoying our visit with longtime friends, sitting outside under clear skies until late in the evening.

I assumed the coach was fitted with a wind sensor for the awning, so I left it out, something I rarely do. But lured into complacency due to the great weather — and nary a breeze — my assumption turned into a damaged awning. Once I realized that the awning was not going to retract by itself, I jumped out of bed and ran to the entryway to close the awning. Too late; a big gust snapped the awning arm.

We had to leave the rally grounds that morning for the airport in a rental car, and after receiving a severe weather alert on the TV, we waited until the coast was clear, according to the time given in the warning. The events during the next hour were ones we'll never forget. Unfortunately, the severe weather alert did not lift as predicted. The rain was intense and the windshield wipers were virtually useless. Huge lightning bolts were illu-

minating the sky and the radio and our cell phones were blaring warnings to get off the road and take cover because a potential tornado was forming in the area. I looked at the mile markers and sure enough, we were right there. The sky was ominous and a perfect storm was brewing: The highway was restricted to just one lane each way due to construction, visibility was almost zero and the car was hydroplaning due to the amount of water on the road — and we had no place to take cover.

The last two times I found myself in areas threatened by tornados, I was able to take cover in a shelter; this time was different. You get a

sinking feeling when you lose control of the situation and realize you're a target on the highway with nothing but surrounding open land. While the tornado never materialized, the wind was severe enough that had we been driving a motorhome at the time, we could have easily been pushed into oncoming traffic. We tend to sit out severe weather when in a motorhome, and this "adventure" validated our thinking.

Weather played a big role in last summer's RV travel. We found ourselves in places where temperatures were consistently in triple digits and in one park we had to contend with 108-degree Fahrenheit heat and a nearby brush fire that made the air horrible. Clearly, the case was made to keep appliances like the air conditioner(s) working effectively, and to use a surge protector, especially when traveling in lightning-prone areas. You don't want to make on-location repairs while dealing with Mother Nature.

Fortunately, our wild ride in the Midwest had a happy ending, and we learned a few lessons, to boot. **M**

“ The events during the next hour were ones we'll never forget. ”

### Contributors | October



**David Barber** has logged 120,000 miles on his Winnebago View roaming the West with his wife, Kathy Van Inwegen, their dog, Doodles, and cat, Bogey. When not traveling, they're at home in Colorado.



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



**Jeff Johnston** served as the technical director of *MotorHome* and *Trailer Life* for 18 years and has been an RV enthusiast, mechanic and writer since he could hold a wrench.



**Malia Lane** loves being a solo full-time RVer, which she has done since 2001. Malia has traveled to Alaska, and up and down the East and West coasts in her motorhome.



**Rhonda Ostertag** is a freelance writer of guidebooks and articles who travels and 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.

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## Does your motorhome have frameless windows and, if so, what are the pros and cons?

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



### Get Fresh

It was nice to read about another motorhome owner who hates frameless windows. Having had tilt-out windows on our previous RV and wanting more fresh air, we made sure our first Class A coach had sliders. This year, looking to move up to a newer model from our 2000 Bounder, I was frustrated at only seeing frameless windows on the newer RVs.

The salespeople tried to sell me on how nice the windows look and could not understand that fresh air (and lots of it) was a higher priority for me. We mainly use our RV at dog shows and we dry camp often, so good windows that opened were at the top of my list. I also had to have a window on the ends of the living-room slide for more airflow and found that most RVs had no

windows there at all.

We eventually found the perfect motorhome — a 2015 Fleetwood Bounder— that has those lovely slider windows. I compromised on having a window on only one end of the slide, as the pantry on the other end was a good alternative. I love being able to set up camp and slide all the windows wide open for that lovely fresh air and I feel sorry for those who are stuck with tiny windows that don't offer the same.

**Pat Saito | Mississauga, Ontario, Canada**

### Go Frameless ...

We bought a 2015 Jayco with frameless windows and we love it. We've always had the sliding kind of windows and for security purposes had to install dowels when we were parked to keep thieves out. The frameless windows don't have

that problem. They crank out, making it possible to leave the windows open when it's raining.

**Don Fuller | Via email**

### ... Or Not

I passed on a great deal for a new motorhome because of its frameless windows. I like the big sliding windows that provide nice ventilation and offer the ability to slide open the screen for some great views.

Our first coach only had one small window in the bedroom. There was no air circulation and it was like sleeping in a cave! We learned from that experience and now have several windows in the bedroom so we get fresh air and can hear the surf at night.

Hope RV manufacturers get the word.  
**Jack and Karen Bowden | Mescal, Arizona**

## Featured Letter

### Slide Rules

We had slider windows on our first motorhome. We now have a Forest River Solera with frameless windows. We miss the sliders. Besides not getting much of a breeze from the frameless, we miss being able to hand things out the window when barbecuing. Also, when driving, the frameless windows need to be closed. We had one of the frameless windows fail when the outer frame came loose and broke off. It was a side window located over the cab and had never been opened. Thank goodness for duct tape, as it got us home. Now we have to replace the window.

**Walter and Joyce Nelson | Oak Harbor, Washington**



### Joker's Wild

We were looking at new motorhomes recently. One of the units we were in had large windows, and I was picturing myself sleeping with the cool nighttime air lightly drifting through the coach. Then I cranked one of the windows open and to my dismay it only went out about 3 inches.

I asked the salesperson, "Are you kidding me?" What's the point of having windows so big that don't open? I don't care what kind of windows a motorhome has, they just need to open!

Do motorhome designers think we use the A/C every minute we are in the unit? News flash! We camp over half the time at state parks or racetracks without electricity. And even with power, in the past 14 years, we have only had to sleep with the A/C on one or two nights a year.

We go camping for the fresh air, not the noise of the air conditioner!

**David Perry | Westbrook, Maine**

### Joker's Still Wild

We picked up our new diesel pusher one month ago. It has the frameless windows, which are pretty to look at but we hate their functionality, or lack thereof. We always had all of our windows open when possible in our previous motorhomes. It is a joke to try to get fresh air with frameless windows.

We particularly liked having the window over the bed open to sleep. A couple of inches does not do much good.

Does anyone know of a modification that can be applied to open these windows wider? I am tempted to remove the knob and hold them open with a stick.

In my book these windows are all cons, no pros.

**Sherry Larson | Eunice, Louisiana**

### Independence Daze

I just read the July article about celebrating July Fourth in Grand Lake, Colorado. We were there several years ago and had a wonderful time. We

stayed at Elk Creek Campground, just outside of town, and a short drive from the main road coming in from Rocky Mountain National Park. We really fell in love with Grand Lake, and are going back soon.

The article reminded me of last year's Fourth of July. We were in Eastport, Maine, which claims to have the largest Fourth of July celebration in Maine, and I believe it. The celebration was great, it seemed everybody who lived close by was there except maybe the mustard museum folks — they were selling mustard and giving tours of the mustard factory.

There was one thing, being from the South — barbecue is a major part of the Fourth, and you know them Yankees can't cook real pit barbecue, but they really know how to do lobster.

We went to bed at Seaview Campground only to be scared out of bed by Hurricane Arthur, with strong winds and sideways rain, falling trees and sinking boats, but we stuck it out. The boats tied to the dock were up on the beach or sunk. Other than that and a few rock pecks on the motorhome everything was good. We had no electricity but the generator worked perfectly.

The worst part of the storm was that the party at the campground had to be canceled causing all of us to miss the dish of the day, "bean hole" beans. These beans are made by being put in a hole in the ground and cooked for a long period, but no beans for the weary. We had to stay another night because of the trees down on the road but our hosts would not think of charging us for the extra time.

I am sure I will always remember July Fourth in Eastport with good memories, not because of the storm but the celebration. It was good to be with hard-working and proud people. I bet they are getting ready for this year's party already. I wonder if I could get some beans, please.

**Montie Matlock | Via email**

### Words to Live By

The name of Alan Rider's column

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Side Winds,  
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("The Road Ahead") and the July title ("Ode to the Road") could not have been more appropriate to the RVers' basic purpose. Hats off to Rider for recognizing the importance of the roads we drive on and the people who make it happen, regardless of their locations and their conditions; as long as there will be roads ahead, there will be places for RVers to discover, explore and benefit from.

And, to complete your message, here are two sayings of the wise.

We spend most of our life looking for the road to happiness, while happiness is ... the road! It's not the destination that counts, it's the ride along the way!

**Yvan Jérôme | Laval, Quebec, Canada**

**Shattered Dreams**

In today's environment of Class A motorhomes with large one-piece windshields, I am looking for suggestions or products that can help to prevent rock chips/cracking. I have had my motorhome for a year and in 7,300 miles I had three chips repaired. Now there's a 32-inch-long crack in the windshield. With all the technology out there why can't someone build a chip-resistant glass and keep the weight and price reasonable? I am not looking forward to paying \$2,500 each year to replace my windshield, and I know that the insurance company isn't either.

It would be nice to know that I'm not the only motorhome owner who is concerned about this issue.

**Skip Wolff | Bennington, Nebraska**

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**Question of the Month**

So, what are your secrets? Have you tried any products or treatments to help prevent damage to your motorhome's windshield? If so, what were the results?

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# ESCAPES

**Virtual Co-pilot** 📶  
Garmin's new RV 660LMT  
GPS warns drivers of bridge  
heights, weight limits and  
sharp curves. **pg. 18**



**12** ROAD FOODIE | **14** WHEELS & GEAR | **16** NOTEWORTHY & NEWS BRIEFS | **18** CROSSROADS



## The High Point of Arkansas

Mount Magazine offers expansive views of deep canyons and broad river valleys

By James Richardson

**O**verlooking Arkansas' Petit Jean Valley and Blue Mountain Lake, Mount Magazine State Park sits atop the state's highest point at 2,753 feet. Mount Magazine features 2,234 acres of outdoor adventure and recreation. There are 14 miles of trails for hiking and biking through the park and the surrounding Ozark National Forest. Wildflowers, waterfalls and wildlife are popular findings along the trails. For more extreme adventures, visitors can rappel, rock-climb or even hang-glide.

Camping is available at the park's Cameron Bluff Campground, which offers 18 sites with full hookups, a bathhouse with hot showers and flush toilets, and a dump station. The lodge, with its excellent restaurant, provides visitors with beautiful views of the valley below.

Mount Magazine is located northwest of Little Rock and 19 miles south of Paris. And, as the saying goes, it's worth the drive. For more information, call 479-963-8502 or log on to [www.mountmagazinestatepark.com](http://www.mountmagazinestatepark.com).

By Bobbie Hasselbring

# Pass the Poutine

**F**all is a fabulous time to explore the beauty of Canada, especially the backroads and quaint villages of the province of Quebec. While Quebec is well-known for highbrow French cuisine like duck confit (duck basted with duck fat) and foie gras (duck or goose liver pate), it's also the birthplace of poutine, a simple dish of french fries, cheese curds and brown gravy that's Canada's signature fast food.

While combining fried potatoes, squeaky cheese curds and gravy might sound awful, poutine from the right café, food cart or restaurant, is a delicious, fun and inexpensive meal. It's also a reputed hangover remedy!

Poutine (pronounced "poo-teen" in English or "poot-sin" in French) began in rural Quebec in the 1950s. Today, several towns claim they invented it. One story says at the Café Ideal (now The Laughing Elf or Le Lutin Qui Rit) in Warwick, Quebec, a customer asked for cheese curds with his fries. The chef called it "a damned mess" or *maudite* poutine. The dish proved so popular they added it to the menu.

In Drummondville, Quebec, Jean-Paul Roy, owner of a drive-in, claims to have added cheese curds to his popular patate-sauce (potatoes and gravy) and called it Ti-Pout or poutine. Today, the drive-in offers 19 types of poutine and Drummondville holds an annual Poutine Festival. (All of Canada celebrates this humble fast food with La Poutine Week, held in February, where more than 100 restaurants in cities like Montreal, Quebec City, Toronto and Ottawa are challenged to make creative poutine dishes.)



## Canadian Fast Food

The best-tasting poutine features hand-cut, freshly fried potatoes, fresh cheese curds and light brown gravy added just before serving.



Photo: Anne Weaver



From above top: While Quebec is the birthplace of poutine, you can get tasty poutine elsewhere like at The Sugar Shack in 70 Mile House, British Columbia. Chefs are adding all kinds of ingredients to elevate basic poutine to haute cuisine.

Some restaurants elevate poutine to haute cuisine by adding ingredients like lobster, truffles, salmon roe, pork belly and duck breast or duck confit. But french fries, cheese curds and gravy still define the dish.

How do you find great poutine? Avoid most chain fast-food versions. Places like Tim Hortons, McDonald's, KFC, Burger King, A&W, Pizza Hut, Popeyes and Harvey's all offer poutine.

Look for hand-cut potatoes like russets fried up fresh right before serving. Some chefs leave the skins on the potatoes; others do not. Poutine should be made with fresh cheese curds, solids formed during cheese-making. It should never be made with the liquid cheese used in stadium nachos. And, finally, look for light, thin brown gravy (made from beef, turkey, pork, chicken or mushroom stock), served piping hot so that it semi-melts the cheese curds and is added right before serving.

## Where is your favorite spot for poutine?

Email Bobbie at [bobbie@realfoodtraveler.com](mailto:bobbie@realfoodtraveler.com)



**ROAD FOODIE  
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**La Banquise**, Montreal, Quebec. One of many restaurants in Montreal that serve basic and elevated poutine (bacon, grilled onions and peppers anyone?), 514-525-2415, <http://labanquise.com>

**Poutine Festival**, Drummondville, Quebec. The biggest celebration of poutine in Canada, [www.festivaldelapoutine.com](http://www.festivaldelapoutine.com)

**The Sugar Shack**, 70 Mile House, British Columbia. The best poutine served west of Quebec whipped up by Robert Cinq-Mars, a transplanted Quebecker, 855-698-2805, [www.thesugarshack.sfboc.com](http://www.thesugarshack.sfboc.com)

Photos: Bobbie Hasselbring

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## Made in the Shade

We all love sunshine, but there can be too much of a good thing — particularly when it's beating down on your motorhome's interior. The Magne Shade System by Hunckler Fabrication applies to the windshield using strong magnets, so snaps or suction cups aren't necessary. The system's installation rod means you don't need a ladder, which makes Magne Shade safer, easier and faster than traditional exterior shade systems, according to the company. Customers can choose from several colors of shade fabric, even personalize the shade with a custom digital print (shown). Not only is Magne Shade easy to use, it dramatically reduces the amount of heat entering the RV through the windshield — and the company also offers covers for the side glass and tires too. Price varies depending on application. **Magne Shade, 336-753-0905, [www.magneshade.com](http://www.magneshade.com)**



## A.C.E. of the Class

Thor's A.C.E. Class A motorhome continues to evolve this year with meaningful improvements from stem to stern. Outside, a new automotive-style front cap and integrated LED driving lights add to its modern appearance. Inside, the driver and front passenger benefit from leatherette captain's chairs, touch-screen dash radio, and a foldout workstation with 12-volt DC and 120-volt AC electrical outlets nearby. Aft of the front seats, all A.C.E. motorhomes feature the Better Homes and Gardens RV Fabric collection and leatherette sofa, while the kitchen offers a gas cooktop and oven, microwave and plenty of countertop space, plus ample drawers/cabinets. On the curbside, the fixed dinette offers plenty of elbow room for four adults, and the rear bedroom features a Denver Mattress and designer headboard. The Thor A.C.E. starts at \$104,850. **Thor Motor Coach, 574-266-1111, [thormotorcoach.com](http://thormotorcoach.com)**

## Virtual Co-Pilot

Garmin has introduced the RV 660LMT, a navigation unit with a 6-inch screen packed with RV-specific features. Road warnings inform drivers of bridge heights, weight limits and sharp curves, while custom routing takes into account the size and weight of an RV to prepare the most convenient route. In addition to a comprehensive directory of RV parks and services, a new Elevation Profile displays possible steep grades along the way. The Easy Route Shaping feature allows RV users to change their routes to include preferred roads or cities, and the Up Ahead feature displays a constant stream of nearby places like fuel services, rest areas and campsites alongside the map. Other handy features include voice-activated commands, Bluetooth phone capability and much more. Plus, the RV 660LMT is compatible with the Garmin BC 30 Wireless Backup Camera (sold separately). MSRP: \$329.99. **Garmin, [www.garmin.com](http://www.garmin.com)**



## Deco-Rate the Entry Door

If you've seen one entry door, you've seen them all — but if you'd like to add a personal touch to yours, Designer Glass Solutions may have the perfect solution with its RV Deco Glass. Each RV Deco Glass is handmade in the U.S. using tempered safety glass to assure a quality, long-lasting entry-door window. And, while most RV entry-door windows don't let you see out, RV Deco Glass is designed to provide privacy while letting you see the great outdoors. Each unit comes in a new frame, ready to install in about 20-30 minutes, according to the company. Backed by more than 14 years of experience manufacturing decorative glass for the residential and commercial industries, Designer Glass Solutions offers 20 RV Deco Glass designs to choose from. MSRP: \$175-\$220. **Designer Glass Solutions, 317-223-7569, [www.indyartglass.com](http://www.indyartglass.com)**



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Coach House's patented one-piece hand-laid fiberglass shell



**PLATINUM**  
Ford E-450 Super Duty chassis



**PLATINUM II**  
Mercedes Sprinter chassis

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Our one-piece shell is more costly and difficult to make, but we wouldn't have it any other way. Nor would our loyal customers, some of whom are now driving their fourth or even fifth Coach House motorhome!

Beyond the unique one-piece shell, here are some of the other factors that make the downsized Platinum and Platinum II your best motorhome value:

- More standard features than any other motorhome in their class.

- Professionally decorated interiors with solid-surface countertops, porcelain toilets, name-brand appliances, 32-inch HDTV, and more.

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



### PLATINUM



### PLATINUM II



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## America's 23rd World Heritage Site



The World Heritage Committee of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) has designated a group of five Spanish colonial missions in the San Antonio, Texas, area — including most of San Antonio Missions National Historical Park and the Alamo — as a World Heritage Site. The site is the 23rd World Heritage Site in the United States out of more than a thousand inscribed worldwide.

UNESCO's World Heritage Committee agreed to inscribe the missions on the World Heritage List by consensus at its 39th session in Bonn, Germany, in July.

The group of former missions includes active churches, farmlands, living quarters, granaries, kilns, a cattle ranch and irrigation systems that are still functioning after hundreds of years. These achievements were possible through the combined efforts of the Spanish and indigenous peoples living in the missions.

The San Antonio Missions site now joins a list that includes cultural and natural sites of universal importance such as the Grand Canyon in Arizona, the Taj Mahal in India and the Great Barrier Reef in Australia.

## Triple E Unity Line Offering Leisure Lounge Plus



Winkler, Manitoba-based Triple E Recreational Vehicles has launched a redesigned interior seating plan to its 2016 Leisure Travel Vans Unity U24MB. The patent-pending Leisure Lounge Plus, created by Italian designer Angelo Natuzzi, combines functionality with comfort.

The U24MB Leisure Lounge Plus boasts dual oversize Ultraleather swivel chairs with power recliners for multiple seating configurations. Integrated head- and footrests and pop-up armrests allow additional customization, creating an area for relaxing, lounging and dining. The Leisure Lounge Plus also features a 68-by-74-inch Murphy bed, an innovative drop-down dining-room table, integrated USB receptacles and a 39-inch pop-up LED TV with secondary drop-down-glass viewing area.

All models are built on the Mercedes-Benz Sprinter 3500 dual rear-wheel chassis powered by a 3-liter V-6 BlueTEC turbodiesel with 188 horsepower, and boasts an estimated 16-19 MPG. The Unity U24MB starts at \$127,465 plus \$2,600 for the Leisure Lounge Plus option.

## NEWS BRIEFS

### Camping World Sponsor For Independence Bowl

► Independence Bowl Foundation officials announced Camping World as the title sponsor of the Independence Bowl. The game is scheduled for Dec. 26 at Independence Stadium in Shreveport, Louisiana, and will be known as the Camping World Independence Bowl. "We are excited to begin our partnership of the Independence Bowl and this is a great event to kick off our yearlong celebration honoring the 50th anniversary of our businesses," said Marcus Lemonis, CEO and chairman of Camping World and Good Sam Enterprises, and host of CNBC's "The Profit." "Our customers enjoy the thrill of competitive sports along with the bonding that comes from tailgating. As a company, we have a great appreciation for the tradition of college football and look forward to the fan experience."

### Educating RVers

► The RV Safety & Education Foundation (RVSEF) is planning five days of consumer RV training May 15-19, 2016, in Elizabethtown, Kentucky. Walter Cannon, the foundation's director, said, "This is a pure learning opportunity for the RV enthusiast, new or potentially new RV owners and seasoned RV veterans who want to know more about everything RV." Described as an "RV college," the conference will feature 60-plus seminars focusing on safety, operation and lifestyle. Presenters include Recreation Vehicle Industry Association award winners, technical training experts and authors.

RVSEF, 321-453-7673, [www.rvsafety.com](http://www.rvsafety.com)

## RV SHOWS | OCTOBER



**Oct. 1-3, Colorado Springs, Colorado** | The Great American RV Show-Colorado Springs, [www.gsevents.com](http://www.gsevents.com)

**Oct. 9-11, Atlantic City, New Jersey** | The Great American RV Show-Atlantic City, [www.gsevents.com](http://www.gsevents.com)

**Oct. 9-18, Pomona, California** | 63rd Annual California RV Show, <http://thebestrvshow.com>

**Oct. 16-18, Mississauga, Ontario, Canada** | Toronto Fall RV Show, [www.rvshowfalltoronto.ca](http://www.rvshowfalltoronto.ca)

**Oct. 30-Nov. 1, Austin, Texas** | Austin RV Super Sale, [www.austinrvexpo.com](http://www.austinrvexpo.com)





# PICTURE THIS ADVENTURE

## PHOTO CONTEST

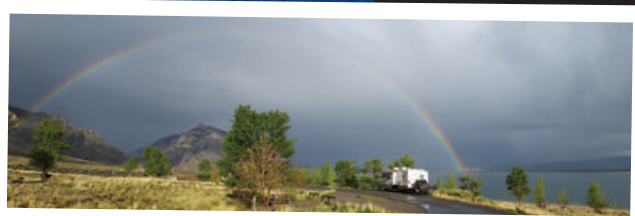
**GRAND PRIZE:** Mark Manfredi will receive one Truma AquaGo® Comfort model water heater system with installation and a 960 watt Go Power! Solar Kit. Value: \$6,000

**RUNNERS UP PRIZE:** Runner up winners Nicolette Porte & Jeanne Hanes will receive a \$500 Fleetwood and \$500 Truma "Couple's" Gift Package. Value: \$1,000

**HONORABLE MENTIONS:** Twelve winners will receive one Truma hand-held propane level checker and one 1986 die-cast Bounder replica motorhome collectible commemorating Bounder's 30th anniversary. Value: \$90



Mark Manfredi **GRAND PRIZE WINNER**



Nicolette Porte **RUNNER UP WINNER**



Jeanne Hanes **RUNNER UP WINNER**

## HONORABLE MENTIONS

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Tessa & Philip Miller

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Photo: James Richardson

Lake Cumberland, Kentucky

## Motorhomes and Houseboats

Located in southeastern Kentucky, near the town of Jamestown, you'll find Lake Cumberland State Resort Park. At a normal level of more than 52,000 acres of water and 1,225 miles of shoreline, it is a true paradise for the water-sports enthusiast. A marina offers rental fishing boats, pontoon boats, houseboats and ski boats. The park's 129-site campground with hookups is open April through October. Campground reservations can be made at 888-459-7275.

Activities here include hiking; horseback riding; bird-watching; and fishing for largemouth, smallmouth, white and Kentucky bass, plus bluegill, crappie and walleye. This region has been designated the "Houseboat Capital of the World," as the majority of American-built houseboats are manufactured in the counties surrounding Lake Cumberland.

**For more information**, call 270-343-3111 or visit <http://parks.ky.gov/parks/resortparks/lake-cumberland> — James Richardson

Asheville, North Carolina

## Deep Roots in North Carolina

The North Carolina Arboretum near Asheville is a 434-acre natural treasure. Walk through 65 acres of cultivated gardens or hike/bike 10 miles of forested trails at the arboretum, which is surrounded by the southern Appalachians. There are also more than 40 miles of Bent Creek trails in the adjacent Pisgah National Forest.

Located off milepost 393 along the scenic Blue Ridge Parkway, the setting showcases the trees, shrubs and groundcovers of this area. The many gardens highlight the plants as a Forest Meadow, a Heritage Garden with medicinal herbs and craft materials, a National Azalea Collection Garden and a unique bonsai collection.

RV camping is available in the Pisgah National Forest at Lake Powhatan Recreation Area, with many big-rig sites and full hookups available. Lake Powhatan is also a short walk or bike ride to the arboretum.

The North Carolina Arboretum is located on State Route 191/ Brevard Road, just south of Interstate 26. Admission is free, but there is a parking fee.


**For more information**, call 828-665-2492 or go to [www.ncarboretum.org](http://www.ncarboretum.org) — Morey Edelman 

Photo: Morey Edelman



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GCR40585 - 0515



# Big Adventure in Big Bend

Vast and isolated, this Texas national park offers more than 800,000 acres of mountain, canyon and desert scenery

By David Barber

It was a cold morning as my friend, Mellow Mike, and I drove south from Colorado heading for Texas — and Big Bend National Park — in search of a warm-weather adventure. During our trip, Mellow Mike, so-called because of his relaxed approach to life, was going to teach me how to slow down.

The Rio Grande makes a 90-degree turn deep in the heart of southwest Texas as it defines the border between the United States and Mexico on its way to the Gulf. It's called the Big Bend, and Big Bend National Park sits inside the turn, 1,200 square miles encompassing the Chisos Mountains, a lofty oasis in the desert.

We spent our second day driving from Las Cruces, New Mexico, across west Texas on Interstate 10, which runs in a straight line from El Paso. Leaving Interstate 10 at Van Horn, and heading south on U.S. Highway 90, the green sign reads "Big Bend NP — 200 miles." There's a reason Big Bend is one of the least visited national parks

A 1.4-mile round-trip trail leads hikers to the Rio Grande in Boquillas Canyon in the eastern section of Big Bend.

(314,102 visitors in 2014). Even for Texas, it's a long way from anywhere.

Arriving at Study Butte, near the west entrance of the park, I was fueling my diesel motorhome when a gentle afternoon breeze quickly became a dust storm to be reckoned with — the desert was asserting itself. Seeking shelter in the lee of a nearby building, we battened down the hatches and spent the night buffeted but comfortable in our little Winnebago View.

Following our Texas-size breakfast at a local diner, we entered the park and headed toward Chisos Basin, 30 miles and a few ecosystems away, in the heart of the park. After an hour at the Panther Junction Visitor Center, we backtracked 3 miles to Chisos Mountains Basin Junction and traversed the mini-pass into the basin. (Note: This 6-mile stretch of road to Chisos Basin is not recommended for RVs longer than 24 feet.)

## Getting Here ➔

Big Bend National Park is located in southwest Texas and is a considerable distance from cities such as El Paso and San Antonio. Several highways lead to Big Bend National Park from Interstate 10. From the west, at Van Horn, take U.S. Highway 90 south; from the north, at Fort Stockton, take U.S. Highway 385 south.



# GETAWAY

## BIG BEND NATIONAL PARK

The transition from desert floor to mountain basin happens too quickly to appreciate it the first time. Even my traveling companion, Mellow Mike, was eager to see the campground, so we didn't pause on our descent into the basin. After we had set up camp, which in our case means parking and extending the slide, we pulled out the camp chairs and had our customary arrival brew. It was then we realized we were at the bottom of a bowl surrounded by mountains. It's strange looking up in all directions at the landscape — in sharp contrast to the infinite desert we had traveled through to get here.

The park has three developed campgrounds: Chisos Basin, Cottonwood and Rio Grande Village. The concession-operated Rio Grande Village RV Campground (with the only full hookups in the park) is also located at Rio Grande Village. Chisos Basin Campground has 60 dry-camping sites

**Use caution on the moderately difficult Window Trail. At the top of the Window is slick rock with no railings, and the return hike is uphill.**

for RVs up to 24 feet long, flush toilets, running water, grills, picnic tables and a dump station.

The Chisos Basin environment is a lush, high (5,400 feet) mountain refuge. It is drained by Oak Creek, which flows down to "the Window," then exits the basin through a small crack and cascades to the desert floor below. Were it not for the Window there would be a lake at the low point. Our first day in the park (once I got Mike started), we hiked the 5-mile round-trip trail to the Window. Noon is Mike's normal time to actually maybe think about possibly doing something. I had a lot to learn, since I am usually up and ready to go before first light.

The hike descends 500 feet, following the creek bed, which had no water in it when we were there. At the Window the creek flows across a slick rock to the



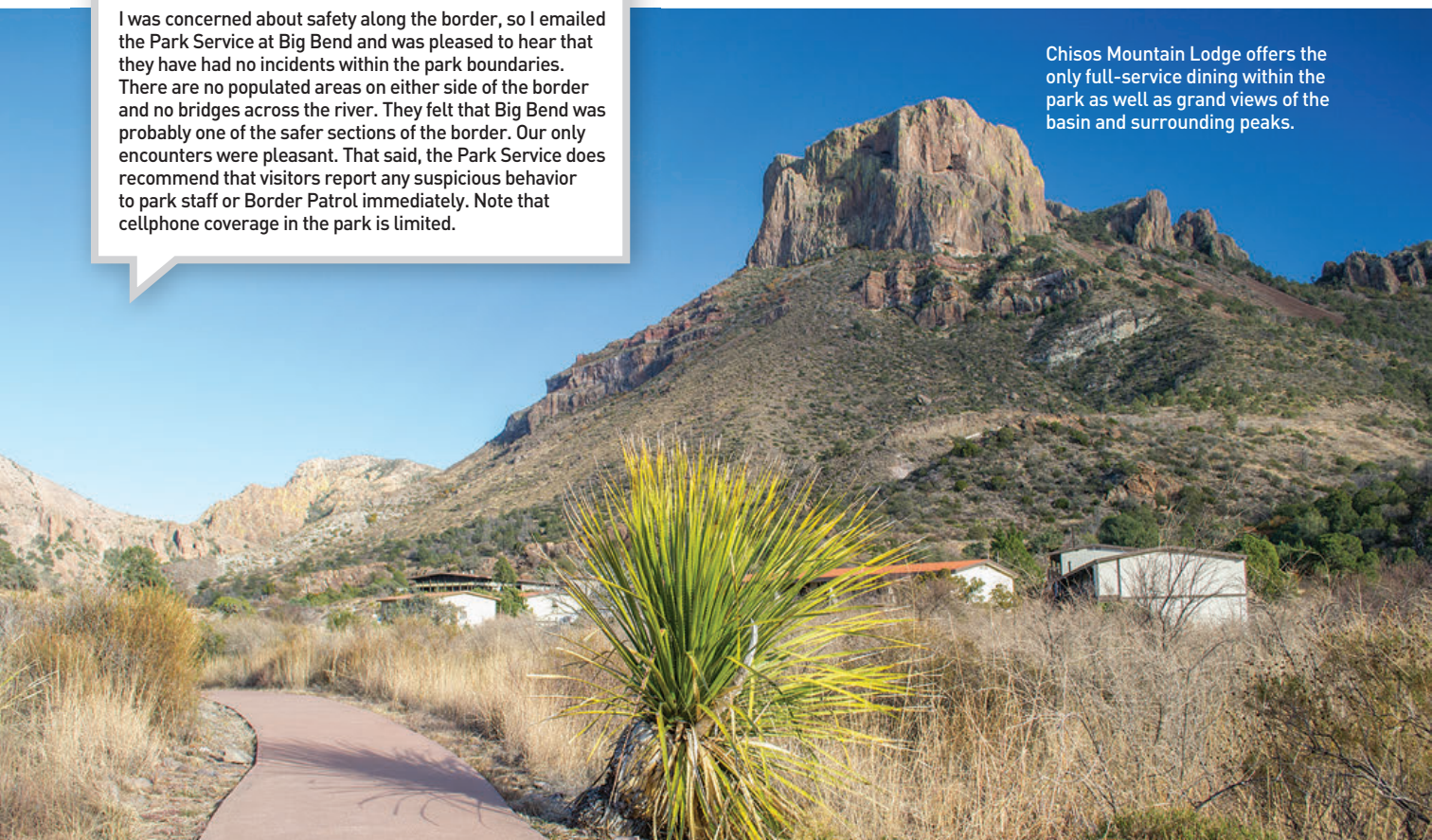
outfall then disappears over the side of the mountain. Hiking back up to the camp we watched the setting sun track up the mountains on the east side of the basin.

That evening the collared peccaries (commonly called javelinas), hooved piglike creatures with small curved tusks, paid a visit to our campground. They wander at will, rooting and snorting, as if they own the place.

### SAFETY TIPS

I was concerned about safety along the border, so I emailed the Park Service at Big Bend and was pleased to hear that they have had no incidents within the park boundaries. There are no populated areas on either side of the border and no bridges across the river. They felt that Big Bend was probably one of the safer sections of the border. Our only encounters were pleasant. That said, the Park Service does recommend that visitors report any suspicious behavior to park staff or Border Patrol immediately. Note that cellphone coverage in the park is limited.

Chisos Mountain Lodge offers the only full-service dining within the park as well as grand views of the basin and surrounding peaks.



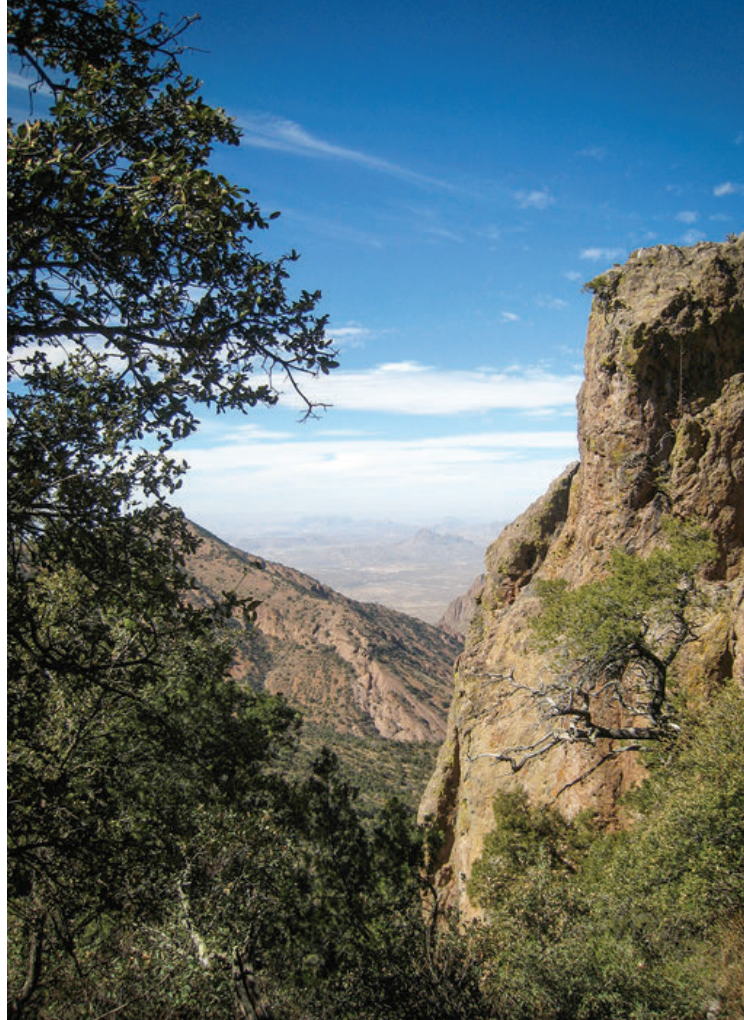
It's a strenuous 10-mile hike up to the top of Mount Emory, the highest point in the park at 7,825 feet.

Later, a herd of white-tailed deer grazed by. Although we did not see any, mountain lions and bears inhabit the basin, preying on the javelina and deer. It's a geologically self-contained ecosystem.

The next day we made a 10-mile hike to the summit of Emory Peak, the highest point in the park at an elevation of 7,825 feet. I was training a companion dog at the time and the park ranger gave me permission to take the dog with us on the trail. Augie, a yellow Labrador, probably wished he could stay home, as our hike was warm, dry and uphill.

Another feature of my human traveling companion, Mellow Mike, is his propensity to get lost, which is not easy to do on well-marked, heavily traveled national park trails. His technique involves taking unmarked trails to more unmarked trails (the word "shortcut" is frequently mentioned) until we have no idea where we are. Then he gets his adrenaline flowing and we find our way home bushwhacking-style, feeling like we have survived a harrowing experience. Are we not men? This time we arrived back at camp after dark, tired and thirsty. One thing I don't plan on learning from Mike is hiking navigation. Relaxation maybe, not navigation.

To celebrate our victory over death we had a banquet at the Chisos Mountains Lodge near the campground. The lodge — with the only full-service restaurant in the park —



is a simple stone building with a red roof. The rooms are in small outbuildings; there's a dining room, bar and gift shop. It is the only national park lodge I have seen that does not have a fireplace or a lobby. Many of the visitors we met at the lodge have been coming to Big Bend for years and think of it as their "secret" national park. Secret no more.

The next day we went to the river. We broke camp, which means we retracted the slide, and headed to Boquillas Canyon, 33 miles east, where the Rio Grande leaves the park. As we descended from the overlook parking area to the canyon floor we were serenaded by a guitar player on the other side of the river. He stood in a hollow next to the river, a natural amphitheater for his performance, quietly

From above left: The 1956 movie "Giant" was filmed in Marfa, 126 miles northwest of Big Bend. Cottonwood Campground has 24 dry-camping sites in a quiet, shady desert setting located between Castolon Historic District and Santa Elena Canyon. Javelinas have bristly hair and weigh between 40–60 pounds. They resemble pigs, but are not closely related.

strumming his guitar as he sang a beautiful Spanish tune. We waved and said gracias and were rewarded with a smile from across the border. The nearby Boquillas Crossing Port of Entry is the gateway to Mexico for those who wish to cross the border (passports required).

Rio Grande Village RV Campground, a 25-site, full-hookup campground and visitor center near Boquillas

**“ Experiencing the vivid sky here puts the universe and our place in it in perspective. I am small, the universe is big. ”**

Canyon, was inviting, but the more rustic Cottonwood Campground on the other side of the park was our destination for the night. It's 60 miles from Boquillas Canyon to Cottonwood, near the historic ghost town of Castolon. Cottonwood Campground has a shady riverside setting with 24 dry-camping sites, quite different from our previous Chisos Basin camp. We explored Castolon, hiked along the river and ventured up a nearby hill for a view of the area. Augie enjoyed a swim in the irrigation canal next to the campground. The river is wild and difficult to access through the dense shoreline vegetation. Wildlife is abundant — in addition to the javelinas and deer, it is populated by human birders (birdus lookinguptis) with their binoculars and guidebooks, staring up at the trees.

Mike was teaching me how to relax and I found it easy to do at Cottonwood Campground — no hookups or generators means quiet. It is also dark

at night — very dark. The night sky is like few places on earth. Because Big Bend has very little light pollution it has been designated an International Dark-Sky Park. You can see the Milky Way just by looking up. Experiencing the vivid sky here puts the universe and our place in it in perspective. I am small, the universe is big.

Our visit to nearby Santa Elena Canyon, where the Rio Grande enters the park, completed our stay at Big Bend. More dramatic than Boquillas Canyon downstream, Santa Elena Canyon abruptly ends as the river leaves the cool, shaded canyon and continues into the desert. Instant ecosystem transformation.

On our return trip home, we spent a day in Marfa, a small town 126 miles northwest of Big Bend. Marfa is home to a historical arts community and is also a noteworthy movie set, famous for the filming of "Giant" in 1956 and, more recently, "No Country For Old Men" (2007). The Hotel Paisano is a historical

gem at the center of town, with a charming outdoor courtyard typical of the southwestern Texas style. Before leaving Marfa the next morning, we had breakfast in a small converted house. As we handed our credit card to the waiter, he said, "Sorry, cash or check only." We didn't have enough cash with us so the server said, "No problem, send us a check when you get home." Now that's Texas-style hospitality.

Big Bend is one of the more isolated national parks I have visited (the other is Great Basin National Park in Nevada), and this adds a special feeling to the place, like it's my secret national park. Don't tell anybody, but it's worth the trip. And I am more laid-back now for the time spent with Mike, my mellowness mentor. I may sleep in until 6 a.m. someday. **M**

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# FALL FAVORITES

A leaf-peeping tour takes a backseat to the beauty and wonder of the Natchez Trace Parkway

**A** drive along the Natchez Trace Parkway is exactly the kind of trip I envisioned when I first started RVing — a well-maintained road with no billboards or advertisements to distract from the natural beauty of the countryside. This 444-mile-long drive is something that every motorhome owner should experience at least once.

There are three campgrounds inside the park, which are run by the National Park Service (NPS), and more than a dozen campgrounds just outside of the park. The three NPS campgrounds do not have dump stations, hookups or showers, but they are free, and while no reservations can be made, there are restrooms and water spigots for use within the campgrounds. The spots are on a first-come, first-served basis and do fill up quickly, so stop early in the day and enjoy your campsite.

When I started off in late October heading south from Nashville, Tennessee, my goal was to chase the fall leaf colors and to see every one of the mileposts along the way. The colors were not quite at peak, but there were still some worthy vibrant outbursts here and there. While fall is one of the busiest times on the Trace, there were trails that teased of the promise of spring and how glorious

places like Dogwood Valley would be during its blooming time. I can't imagine there could really be a bad time on the Natchez Trace.

My first sightseeing stop was Birdsong Hollow (milepost 438) and Double Arch Bridge. This bridge is a fascinating first stop since it is the nation's first segmentally constructed concrete arch bridge and the winner of the Presidential Award for Design Excellence the year after it was completed in 1994. There is a pedestrian lane so that you can cross or just get out far enough to see the view from there.

The Trace is very RV-friendly. As far as bridge underpasses, I checked with the visitor center and was told that the maximum height for travel on the Trace is 14 feet, and that all bridges meet those requirements. I saw a few side roads that specified "No RV Turnaround" but I stopped at every other historic pull-off and picnic

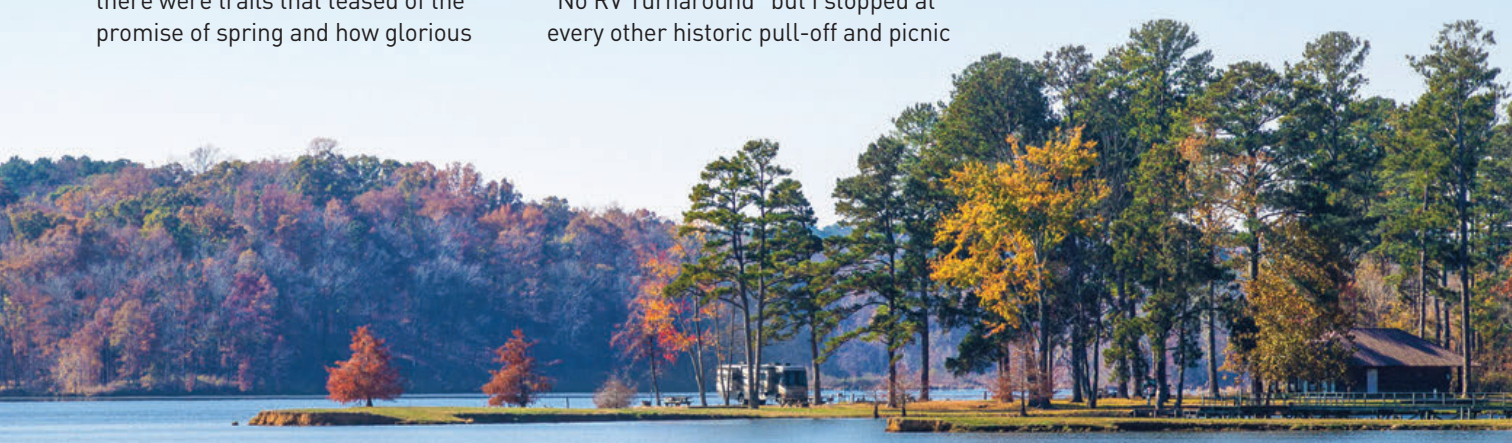
area in my 35-foot motorhome with no problem at all.

Jackson Falls (milepost 404.7) turned out to be one of my favorite hikes in this section. The trail is short and steep, but is paved the whole way and has handrails. The destination makes the journey worthwhile, with an amphitheater effect rimming the falls. It's easy to see why this is one of the most popular walks along the Parkway.

I made it a point to stop for any signs indicating parts of the Old Trace. Many original sections are preserved and you can walk or drive (automobiles only) on portions of it. I enjoyed every one of these paths I took. The peace and quiet and mature shade trees rimming the well-worn trail were calming to my soul, and were always a welcome break from the modern road. The sunken paths make it easy to imagine all the footprints, horses' hooves and wagon wheels that went before. Signs spin interesting tales of people who came before and remind us of when this was a sprawling wilderness "where only Indians, outlaws and wild animals were at home." Sometimes I felt like I could hear the breath of the Native Americans in the breeze. I wondered about the ordeals of the early journeyers — where did they come from and what did they leave behind?

All along the Trace there are many short walks where you can explore remnants and memories of life within

Just 4 miles off the Parkway at milepost 243 is Davis Lake Campground with 24 sites — 14 of which are lakeside — flush toilets and a dump station.





a short distance from the main road. You can see springs bubbling from the ground on Rock Spring Nature Trail (milepost 330.2) and check out the site where an old ferry operated in the 1800s, including the Colbert Ferry famous for charging Andrew Jackson \$75,000 to ferry his army across the Tennessee river.

About 57 miles from the start of the Parkway near Nashville is Meriwether Lewis (milepost 385), the first NPS campground as you head south. I was already settled into nearby Fall Hollow Campground, but I was happy to get to visit some new RVing friends here who did stay for a few nights; I even shared a campfire with them. It's always fun to catch up with fellow travelers and compare notes and travel tales!

The 32 sites here are large and easy to get into, and the roads around the campground are easy to maneuver. There are some pull-through sites, and at least one is handicap-accessible. There is a bathroom building, but no showers.

**From above left: Double Arch Bridge is America's first segmentally constructed concrete arch bridge. Meriwether Lewis, one of three NPS campgrounds in the Parkway, has 32 dry-camping sites.**

The campground host said it fills up early in the day, usually before 1 p.m.

Nearby is the Meriwether Lewis National Monument, where the famous explorer is buried. The sign informs that "Great care was taken to identify the grave ... to make doubly sure, the grave was reopened and the upper portion of the skeleton examined and such evidence found as to leave no doubt of the place of interment." The monument is near the remains of the Grinder's Stand, where Meriwether Lewis met his death on the night of Oct. 11, 1809. While most historians conclude that Lewis' wounds were self-inflicted, some accounts suggest that Lewis may have been murdered and the debate continues to this day.

Around milepost 338, Wichahpi Commemorative Stone Wall was my favorite stop along the Trace, so much so that I visited twice. It is not listed on the official map, so I am thankful to have heard about it from another

traveler. Something meaningful was created here by Tom Hendrix in memorial to his great-great-grandmother, Telahnay, who walked back to her beloved homeland of the singing river after being removed during the Trail of Tears. He lovingly has laid a stone to honor every step it took her and it is estimated he has lifted 27 million pounds of stone over the last 30 years. It is the largest monument to a woman in the U.S., specifically a Native American woman. It is the longest unmortared wall in the U.S. and is cataloged in the Library of Congress. Stats tell nothing of the spirituality and magic found here among these stone walls, the carefully laid Music Circle and Prayer Circle — you've got to see and feel it for yourself. I was honored to meet Tom here and be able to hear some of his ancestral stories.

**Elvis Presley's father built this two-room home, which is now a museum in Tupelo.**



### 444 Miles and 3 States

This route links Natchez with Nashville and crosses through Mississippi, Alabama and Tennessee. The Parkway is RV-friendly: The length restriction for RVs is 55 feet, including a dinghy vehicle, and the height restriction is 14 feet.





From far left: Visitors who want to get a feel for early American life along the Natchez Trace can walk or drive through French Camp Historic District at milepost 181. At milepost 122 is Cypress Swamp, where a half-mile boardwalk trail provides easy access over the swamp and through the water tupelo and bald cypress trees.

Passing into Alabama, just off the Trace is the town of Tuscumbia, the birthplace of Helen Keller. Here you can tour her home and learn more about her inspiring example. Cold Water Falls is the world’s largest man-made natural stone waterfall, and there is also the “Sacred Tears” monument there to commemorate the role Tuscumbia played in the Trail of Tears in 1827.

The Trace holds historical

remnants from the Civil War as well. At milepost 269, you can take a 5-minute walk down a portion of the Old Trace that takes you to the gravesites of 13 unknown Confederate soldiers. It’s a beautiful path and even though I knew what was coming, I still had to catch my breath when I came upon the sight of the rather forlorn looking markers and flags. The information sign asks more questions than provides answers:

“ My goal was to chase the fall leaf colors and to see every one of the mileposts along the way. ”

“Were they some of Shiloh’s wounded who retreated here in 1862 to die beside the Natchez Trace? Did they serve under the daring Gen. Nathan Forest who passed this way in 1864? Or were they guarding the Tupelo headquarters of J.B. Hood’s Army of Tennessee near the end of the Civil War? We may never know.”

Farther south, you’ll come to the main headquarters and visitor center in Tupelo, Mississippi. Let the short film and exhibits introduce you to the people who lived around or traveled the Old Trace, its interesting history and uses up to present day.

And of course, Tupelo is world-famous as the birthplace of Elvis Presley and is now home to the museum honoring him. Here you can tour the two-room shotgun house built by his father where Elvis was born in 1935, attend a Pentecostal church service where Elvis fell in love with gospel music, review important milestones in his life and read memories from people who knew him when and before when.

While exploring this area, I stayed at the U.S. Forest Service campground at Davis Lake in the Tombigbee National Forest. Even though it is 4 miles off the main road and 20 miles past Tupelo, it turned out to be my favorite place to stay. Anytime I can get waterfront property with water and electric hookups, and a discounted rate for seniors, I’m the happiest of campers.

At milepost 193 is Jeff Busby Campground, another NPS facility, and the smallest one with only 18 sites. But again, even though heavily wooded, the campground is easy enough



## Fall Foliage

According to the NPS, these are some of the top sites to view fall color along the Parkway.

Little Mountain Overlook in the Jeff Busby Campground ...	milepost 193.1
Natchez Trace National Scenic Trail from:	
Old Town Overlook Trailhead.....	milepost 263.9
Beech Springs Trailhead .....	milepost 266
Garrison Creek Trailhead .....	milepost 427.6
Old Trace Trailhead .....	milepost 426.3
Freedom Hills Overlook .....	milepost 317
Old Trace Drive .....	milepost 375.8
Metal Ford .....	milepost 382.8
Meriwether Lewis .....	milepost 385.9
Fall Hollow.....	milepost 391.9
Swan View Overlook.....	milepost 392.5



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to maneuver through with large campsites and some pull-throughs.

French Camp Historic District (milepost 181) is nearby and includes a museum where you can tour various historic buildings, stroll among a quaint log cabin village and have lunch at the Council House Café.

There are a couple of easy woodland trails where bald cypress thrive in swampy backwaters and you can see other beautiful trees like the black oak and tulip poplar. My favorite one south of here was Cypress Swamp, maybe because I heeded the invitation on the sign at the entrance:

“You are entering a realm of trees, water and reflections. Its subtle beauty and peaceful setting can soothe a tired soul. The trail is easily walked in 20 minutes, but a relaxed pace improves the likelihood of seeing wildlife. Along the way, you may experience the wonderment of discovery. Allow enough time for the magic to work.” Magic indeed — don’t miss this one.

The last NPS campground heading south on the Trace is Rocky Springs (milepost 54). I stayed here a couple of nights and really enjoyed the exquisite, quiet darkness at night and the massive sites, many of which can fit two RVs on one pad. I met a group from Canada who make an annual trip down the Trace and we swapped “must-sees,” each being able to tell the other of sights we shouldn’t miss, another great thing about RVing. The campground is close to the trail that leads to the ruins of the town of Rocky Springs, which was once occupied by Ulysses S. Grant during the Civil War. Settled in the late 1790s, it was once a thriving farming community until the Civil War, yellow fever and crop insects left it desolate and deserted. However, a church built in 1837 is preserved and you can also meander along another section of the Old Natchez Trace.

The section of the original road near here is called The Sunken Trace (milepost 41.5) and is said to be the

most photographed part. It really is quite fascinating to see how the heavy traffic wore the road down when in the late 1700s and early 1800s, it was simply known as the “Path to the Choctaw Nation.”

Coming to the end of my journey on the Parkway at the beautiful city of Natchez, Mississippi, I was sorry I didn’t have more time to explore Natchez’s historic buildings and old plantations. I had spent a little more than a month on the Parkway and my advice to other RVers is not to hurry along — take your time to soak it all in, stop at all of the pull-offs, learn a little about the history of the area, walk the scenic paths, tour the historic buildings and let yourself get a little lost in time. It’s definitely a worthwhile, unforgettable trip. **M**

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# ALL POINTS LEAD TO

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**C**entral Washington's Yakima County, home to the Yakama Nation (yes, two different spellings), rolls out an inviting canvas for motorhome travel, fulfilling interests from outdoor to urban and from restful to rip-roaring. The Native imprint on the land remains strong, with a sizable chunk of reservation land, pictographs, petroglyphs, contemporary art, powwows, an Indian Cultural Heritage museum and a popular casino. The same land that sustained the Yakamas for centuries wins the loyalty and admiration of modern travelers as well.

As the first people did, visitors travel between the Cascade Mountains and the Yakima and Columbia rivers. Rising 12,307 feet, Pahto (Mount Adams) earns its Native American name, meaning "standing high," and was the provider of gifts to the Yakama people — clean water, edible plants and wildlife, plus

the shelter and bounty of the canyons, forests and valley below.

The town of Yakima is urban central for the region and despite its northern location it boasts a remarkable growing belt, favorable for all kinds of cereal grains, vegetables, seeds, fruits and grapes. More than 100 wineries dot the

Yakima Valley, with some of the wines winning recognition at competitive and recreational tastings.

Other enticements of town are the agricultural museums, arboretum and a fine network of recreation trails associated with its Yakima River location. Within the 65,000-square-foot Yakima Valley Museum operates an authentic art deco soda fountain.

The Old North Yakima National Historic District and Track 29 echo to the glory years of railroading and attract with bygone charm and shops, including those in authentic rail cars and a restored 1912 railroad depot. Food establishments feature local wines and locally grown products, as well as

The white bluffs along the Columbia River are nearly 2 miles wide within Hanford Reach National Monument, which is rustic and wild.



# ADVENTURE

its surrounding area are sure to delight



## Getting Here

Driving time to the Yakima Valley is approximately two hours (143 miles) from Seattle, and three hours (185 miles) from Portland, Oregon. The main highways to the valley are Interstate 90 and Interstate 82.

the spicy cuisine of Mexico. Farmers markets and stands allow cooks to add valley tastes to meals prepped in the motorhome galley.

A year-round calendar of events pumps celebration into the streets. The Yakima Sportsman State Park campground and private facilities offer overnight bases right in town.

Within about an hour's drive of Yakima, side trips introduce the smaller towns of Ellensburg, Toppenish, Prosser and Othello and serve up opportunities for hiking, fishing, wildlife-viewing and sightseeing. Yakima is also an eastern gateway to Mount Rainier National Park. When traveling by the compass needle, views change dramatically and frequently.

## North

An alternative to Interstate 82/U.S. Highway 97, the Yakima River Canyon Scenic Byway (State Route 821) offers an 18-mile-long picturesque river passage between Yakima and Ellensburg. The twisting high-cliff canyon prescribes slow travel; turnouts

suggest leisurely views. Although you may encounter a trucker now and again, most haulers avoid the route, opting for the freeway. Twice each spring, the road is closed to traffic for a carefree family bike ride or marathon.

Each byway bend holds a new prospect. Midway, suitable Bureau of Land Management campgrounds suggest drawing out the stay and sitting out under a starry night. Blue-ribbon catch-and-release trout fishing and hiking are popular, as are relaxing and photo-taking.

A pedestrian suspension bridge over the river at Umtanum Creek Recreation Area launches a hike up the thin side canyon of Umtanum Creek, where bighorn sheep occupy the heights. A keen eye and binoculars or scope are required. Search for curved horns against the skyline. Peregrine falcon, deer, elk, mountain lion and rattlesnake also favor the wild realm.

At the northern end of the byway sits Ellensburg, a charming cowboy town in the heart of timothy hay country, which fashions its celebrations around quilts

and rodeos. The town, home to Central Washington University, features some beautiful, old brick buildings, including the 1890 Davidson Building. The brick district traces to the town's early bid to become the state capital.

Elsewhere, turn-back-the-clock establishments hark back to the 1950s, when road travel was king and diners were the call of the roadside. For cycling, the 250-mile-long John Wayne Pioneer Trail (a rail trail) strings past Ellensburg.

By driving Interstate 90 east from Ellensburg to Vantage on the Columbia River, you follow tales of geology and

From below left: Catch-and-release trout fishing is very popular on the Yakima River. Mather Memorial Parkway, State Route 410, leads to spectacular views of Mount Rainier. The Yakama Nation Treaty, which was signed June 9, 1855, is celebrated each year at the Yakama Nation Treaty Day Commemoration in Toppenish.



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ALL POINTS LEAD TO ADVENTURE



From above: The Fort Simcoe Historical State Park site was a Native American trading center prior to 1850. The 1890 Davidson Building is one of the landmarks in the town of Ellensburg.



hydrology, passing from verdant to parched habitats, from green to dusky palettes. At Ginkgo Petrified Forest State Park, logs of stone reveal the forest diversity of long ago: ginkgo, redwood, gum, sycamore, walnut, elm and fir. Petroglyphs rescued from the dam-raised Columbia River feature hunters, wildlife, and geometric and celestial forms.

Study the I-90 skyline for the silhouette sculpture "Grandfather Cuts Loose the Ponies." Linked to Native American legend, the artwork can be seen from I-90 viewpoints, about 2 miles east of the Vantage Bridge over the Columbia River.

En route to or from Vantage, the pioneer era beckons at Olmstead Place State Park. This day-use park

welcomes picnicking and strolls through the old farmstead with its barn, log cabin, farmhouse, historic tools and gardens. Old-time events may extend the acquaintance.

## South

South on U.S. 97, in the middle of the Yakama Indian Nation, Toppenish is home to the Yakama Nation Cultural Heritage Center museum, one of the oldest Native American museums in the U.S. It is also home to the tribal casino, Yakama Nation RV Park and wall-to-wall murals.

Each June, at least one new mural joins the outdoor gallery. More than 75 — some up to 100 feet long — tilt heads.

Olmstead Place Historical State Park, a day-use site in Ellensburg, is filled with pioneer artifacts.



The art depicts the Old West, years 1850 to 1920, with everything from blanket-trading to hops-harvesting to roundups. Viewing is self-guided or by narrated horse-drawn wagon tour (for a fee). Shops peddle Western wear and art, and the Western theme continues with summer rodeos.

In the tradition of Native American oral history, the heritage center museum tells the Yakama story from their perspective (a voice that is not often heard in early historical accounts) and includes amazing artifacts, photographs, dioramas and exhibits. The story flows from pre-settlement through the reservation-

Indian-agent era to today.

Powwows throughout the year bring together the Yakama people. In traditional regalia, they carry on the customs of family, community, music, dance, honor and generosity. Visitors are welcome at the parades, the powwows' grand entries and drum and dance competitions, and the rodeos.

Elders and warriors hold places of honor in the grand entry. Beautiful beadwork, sacred eagle feathers and fringed leather garments passed down from generation to generation earn awe. Every little girl is a princess in her finery. Dances, both freestyle-and-whirling and methodical-and-slow-

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Up to 30 hot-air balloons take off during the annual Great Prosser Balloon Rally in late September.



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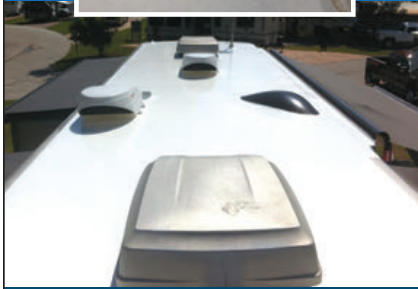
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stepping, pair to the beat of the drums. June marks Treaty Days, the annual celebration of the Treaty of 1855, which established a permanent homeland and secured tribal hunting and fishing rights. The parade takes place in Toppenish, while the powwow and rodeo take place in White Swan to the west.

A lonesome road southwest from White Swan leads to Fort Simcoe Historical State Park in a spring-fed oak grove. The military here had both peacekeeper and enforcement roles, which included preventing encroachment on reservation land. Visitors find a crisp white row of officers' housing and plain wooden structures. Interpretive panels explain fort life.

The marsh-wetland and arid-shrub flat of Toppenish National Wildlife Refuge, southeast of Toppenish, attracts birders with waterfowl, swallows and songbirds, all of whose migrations are constantly swelling in ranks.

Southeast of Yakima off I-82, below Horse Heaven Hills, Prosser invites with wine and the annual Great Prosser Balloon Rally in late September, drawing up to 30 hot-air balloonists. Views from sky and ground are stunning, with the long rim of Horse Heaven Hills, golden slopes, verdant valley and glistening Yakima River. When you add in a rainbow-colored balloon, what's not to love?

At tastings, developed (and developing) palates can weigh subtle differences in the Yakima Valley wines, as well as enjoy regional food pairings. For the less spirited, Chukar Cherries wins over guests with its signature dried fruit and other delicacies.

## East

To the east sits Hanford Reach National Monument and Othello. Hanford Reach owes its start to atomic energy and the production of plutonium. Reactor B sits just outside the monument, which is largely a do-it-yourself, undeveloped or rustic-access wild land. It's a place for white pelicans and golden eagles and for spectacular scenery: white bluffs, arid expanses and the free-flowing arc of the Columbia River. Fishing for

salmon, steelhead, walleye, bass and sturgeon is popular here. Historically, this was an important Native American fishing ground.

Othello, off State Route 26 near Columbia National Wildlife Refuge, is birding central on the Washington scablands — an arid, rocky terrain shaped by ice age floods and interspersed with agricultural land and wetlands, great for birds. Sandhill cranes are celebrated each spring at the Sandhill Crane Festival. Look for the bird's elegant extended-neck-and-feet profile at sunrise and sunset and listen for their chortling calls.

## West

This direction holds the forested and alpine heights of the Cascade Mountains and two of its volcano peaks: Mount Adams and Mount Rainier. The former occupies the heart of the Yakama beliefs, with much of its eastern flank within reservation boundaries. While the mountain huckleberries belong to the Yakama people, they generously open their trails to hikers, permit required. Elsewhere, U.S. Forest Service lands offer access.

Mount Rainier National Park applauds the tallest volcano in the Cascade Range and is world-renown for outdoor recreation and sightseeing. Just getting there you have the beauty and attractions of the Naches and Tieton rivers and Wenatchee National Forest.

When next in Yakima, see where the compass takes you. **M**

## For More Information

### Yakama Nation

509-865-5121, [www.yakamanation-nsn.gov](http://www.yakamanation-nsn.gov)

### Yakima Valley Tourism

800-221-0751, [www.visityakima.com](http://www.visityakima.com)

### Area RV Parks

#### Suntides RV Park & Golf Course

509-966-7883, [www.suntidesgolf.com](http://www.suntidesgolf.com)

#### Trailer Inns of Yakima

800-659-4784, [www.trailerinnsv.com](http://www.trailerinnsv.com)

#### Wine Country RV Park

800-726-4969, [www.winecountryrvpark.com](http://www.winecountryrvpark.com)

#### Yakima Nation RV Park

800-874-3087, [www.ynrv.com](http://www.ynrv.com)

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Forest River Sunseeker MBS



Winnebago Travato (Nokomis only)



Roadtrek E-Trek



Winnebago Trend (Nokomis only)



Coachmen Prism



Winnebago ERA (Nokomis only)



Great West Legend



Evergreen Imperial



Renegade Villagio



Roadtrek 170 Popular



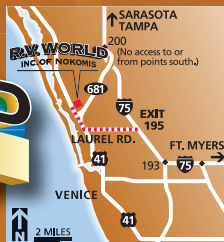
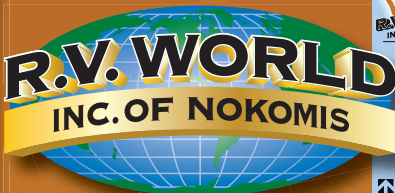
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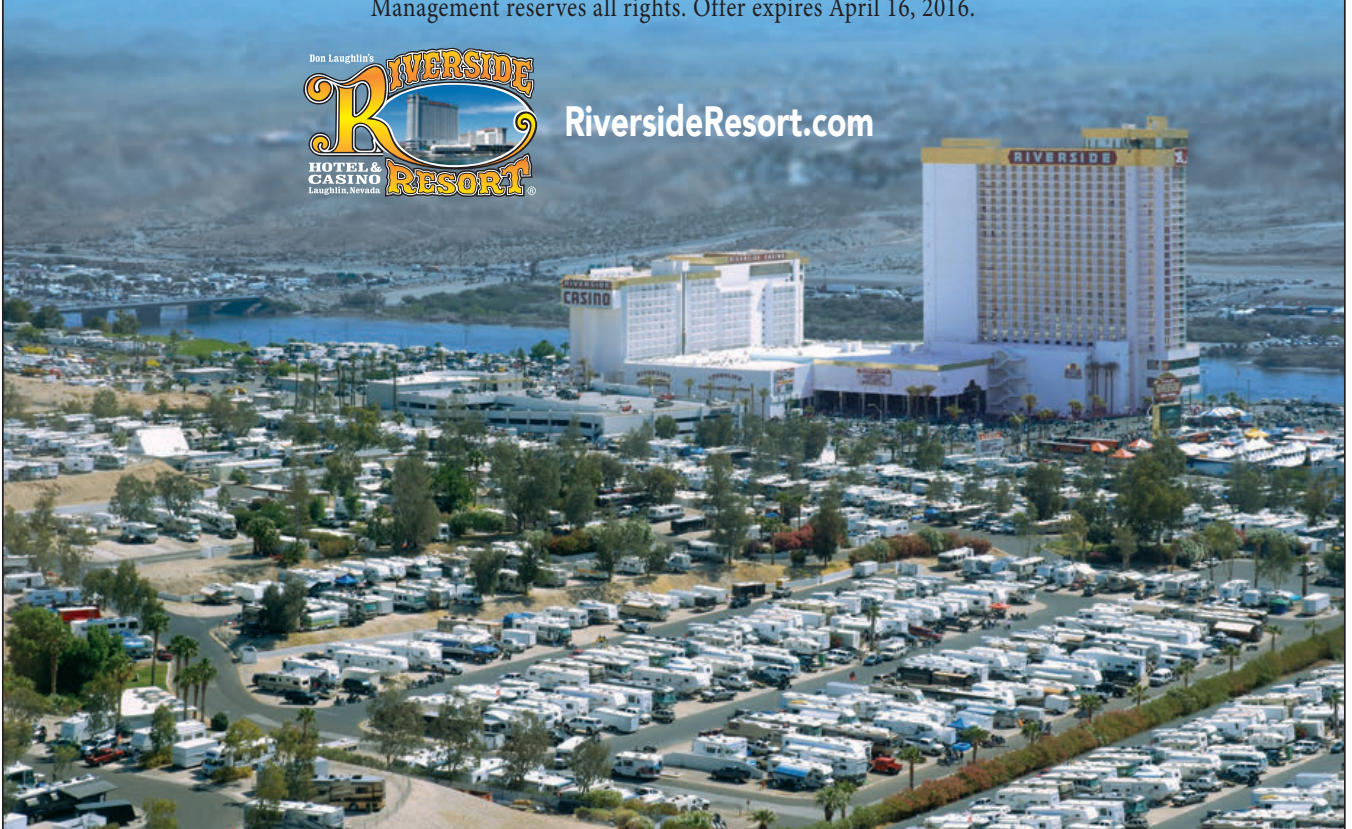
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# MOTORHOME PHOTO CONTEST

## W I N N E R S

In the June issue of *MotorHome*, we announced the Picture This Adventure photo contest, sponsored by Fleetwood RV, and invited readers to snap scenic photos of motorhomes and share them with us. The contest was open May 1-June 30, 2015, and the winners were chosen July 1, 2015. Thank you to all of our entrants and congratulations to the following finalists and winners.

### GRAND PRIZE

Truma AquaGo Comfort model water-heater system with installation and a 960-watt Go Power! Solar Kit. Value \$6,000



**MARK MANFREDI**, DeBary, Florida, Making memories at Stone Mountain, Georgia

**RUNNERS-UP**

\$500 Fleetwood and \$500 Truma "Couple's" Gift Package. Value \$1,000



**JEANNE HANES**, Arlington, Virginia, Home with a view at Hatteras, North Carolina

**HONORABLE MENTIONS**

Truma propane level checker and a 1986 die-cast Boulder replica motorhome collectible. Value \$90



**RICHARD ANDREWS**  
Box Elder, South Dakota  
The joy is *on* the Journey



**LESLIE APLIN GAGNON**  
Lake Orion, Michigan  
Wilson Arch, Moab, Utah



**DAVE AND PAM GAYER**  
Glastonbury, Connecticut  
Devils Tower National Monument,  
Wyoming



**GRANT AND PAT HARRIS**  
Skiatook, Oklahoma  
Zion National Park, Utah



**TOM HIRST**  
Indian Rocks Beach, Florida  
Cold and foggy camping at Calhoun Falls  
State Park, South Carolina



**JILL LAGIGLIA**  
Montrose, Colorado  
A foggy afternoon on top of McClure  
Pass, Colorado



**NICOLETTE PORTE**, La Cañada Flintridge, California, Double rainbow at Buffalo State Park, Cody, Wyoming



**PAULA LOUIS**

Barstow, California

An unexpected camping guest near Grand Canyon National Park, Arizona



**GREG MILLER**

Madison, South Dakota

Enjoying the Sierra Nevada in the Alabama Hills, California



**TESSA AND PHILIP MILLER**

Scottsdale, Arizona

Cruising Red Mountain Pass between Ouray and Silverton, Colorado



**DARLENE AND STEVE MUNNELL**

DeLand, Florida

Late afternoon at Beverly Beach, Florida



**JANET REID**


Tempe, Arizona

Death Valley National Park, California/  
Nevada



**JASON STROFFOLENO**

Devens, Massachusetts

Hello St. Louis! 



# Tuscany 45AT

Thor Motor Coach responds to customer feedback and pulls out all the stops in its 2016 luxury motorhome line By Bob Livingston

**W**hen Thor Motor Coach took over the reigns for building the Tuscany, the brand was under the Damon banner. At its inception, the Tuscany was positioned as a higher-end coach, but it could be argued that some of the features were not upper-echelon. Indeed, buyers got a lot for their money, but not without a few sessions at the dealer for debugging. During the last few years, Thor has put a lot of time and effort into smoothing out the wrinkles and its efforts have paid off. The introduction of the 2016 Tuscany represents a lineup of luxury coaches that give discriminating buyers an opportunity to indulge in high-end diesel-

pusher ownership without breaking the bank.

What does \$400,000 buy? How about a 45-foot coach with a tag axle, built on a Freightliner XCR chassis that's powered by a 450-horsepower Cummins engine and packed with luxury features often only found in coaches with much higher sticker prices?

For Thor to be building and marketing a luxury coach at the maximum end of the length limit seems like an anomaly. The company's bread-and-butter business is predicated on mass marketing travel trailers and fifth-wheels, which keeps Thor at the top end of the heap in the

RV industry. Building high-end coaches is a different animal, and the company banked on its extensive experience as an RV builder and listened carefully to its customers, resulting in a highly refined flagship coach for 2016, dubbed the model 45AT.

Working with nearly 45 feet of interior real estate — expanded by a slide on the curbside that's a better part of the full wall and two other slides on the streetside — makes it pretty easy to be feature-rich. It's almost unheard of to have a 45-footer without two bathrooms, and this coach is no exception. When expanded, the visual aura is embellished by smartly upholstered furniture, stately cabinetry and a polished porcelain-tile floor that just exudes luxury. Closed up for

**ABOVE:** The Tuscany 45AT, shown above in the Oasis full-body paint scheme, has handsome graphics and a sleek appearance that exudes luxury.

travel, access to the rear bathroom is restricted by the bed but it's easy to get to the second bathroom as well as the kitchen counter and refrigerator.

First entering the coach, most people head straight for the back. I think that has to do with the fact that the inside seems so long that human curiosity drives onlookers to find out where the living area ends. In the Tuscany, it's the master bathroom, which is pretty common in coaches this size. Here, extensive use of mirrors, copious high-gloss, hardwood cabinetry and the dual sinks are the focal points. The countertop is perfect for spreading out toiletries that can easily be stashed in the surrounding cabinets. There's plenty of room around the vacuum-type porcelain toilet, but the shower is somewhat understated for a motorhome of this caliber. On the plus side, the full-height shower is plenty big to luxuriate in a long steam of on-demand hot water supplied by the Aqua-Hot hydronic comfort and water-heating system.

Once the decorative sliding door closes off the bathroom, the bedroom takes on a different look, promising coziness offered by the king-size bed and gorgeous — and practical — opposing cabinet structure. The 32-inch LED HDTV takes center stage in a network of drawers on a dual-level landing that's topped with solid-surface countertops. Crown-type molding and additional closet space are built around a large window that's covered

**BELOW:** The galley features double sinks, an electric induction cooktop and a pullout cabinet for additional prep space that is adjacent to the expanding L-shaped sofa with air bed.



with pull-down shades. This window augments the two others on the sides of the bed when it's time to brighten the room with ambient light. Small nightstands are obviously designed for a book, phone or glasses, etc., and the padded headboard adds a touch of class to the room. The ceiling fan is a nice addition that does a good job of circulating air, especially in hot weather.

A second sliding door in the front portion of the master bedroom completely closes off the room from the rest of the coach. Doing this transforms the rear of the coach into a master suite with plenty of room for

priming and dressing. The transitional space leading to the galley and living room is devoted to the second bathroom, opposing washer/dryer and residential refrigerator. From here, the galley counter on the streetside starts with a curved section that houses the double sinks with high-rise faucet and continues until it meets up with the couch. It's pretty roomy as is, but once the pullout cabinet is extended, the prep area becomes suitable for fixing large meals or entertaining. An electric induction cooktop is paired with the convection oven/microwave for cooking duties, and once the chef uses the induction surface, he/she will

Below from left: A desk is built into the TV cabinet next to the optional Dream Dinette. The bedroom has a sliding door that leads to the rear bathroom.



PHOTOS: SCOTT HIRKO



be hooked. It's fast and clean, but does require cookware that can attract a magnet on the bottom. For the more conventional cooks, an optional three-burner LP-gas cooktop is offered. If that's chosen, the coach goes from an all-electric motorhome to one with a 12-gallon LP-gas tank.

Owners will not want for cabinet and drawer space to store utensils



The master bathroom features twin sinks, plenty of cabinets and lots of counterspace.

and foodstuffs. In the cabinet above the sinks is a metal storage rack that slides out for easy access to items that can be packed tightly in the area — and certainly an appreciated use of space. This and the raised countertop extension on the back wall of the galley cater to the sensibilities of owners wanting to get the most out of every nook and cranny in the coach, even if it's 45 feet long. To add convenience to the galley, there's even a drawer-type dishwasher.

One of the very few options for this coach is the proprietary Dream Dinette in place of the buffet table and chairs. It's cleverly designed to convert into a bed with virtually no effort by releasing a handle and pushing the table down, taking all the frustration out of converting a dinette. The booth-type

seating is eye-appealing and very comfortable, but since the bed is not that big, we might consider passing on this option, although it would be hard to give up the stylish look, which complements the décor in the neighboring living room. It's a matter of personal preference; that's why options are offered. A large picture window adjacent to the dinette offers a commanding view of the outside.

Up front, the living area has relaxation written all over it. The partially curved couch expands by pulling out the section closest to the galley counter. As a couch, it easily seats four people and can be converted into a queen-size (60-by-80-inch) air bed, should owners elect to share the coach with family and friends.

Across from the couch is the focal point of the living room. A 60-inch LED Smart HDTV occupies a big portion of the rounded structure and sits stately next to a window, which wards off claustrophobia in this area during the day. Visibility to the screen is excellent from the couch and pretty good from the rear dinette cushion. The TV is also visible from the driver's cockpit seat which, along with the passenger seat, join the living room when swiveled around.

A Euro chair is tucked into an opening in the TV cabinet that serves as a desk. When it's pulled out and swiveled toward the center, the living room can seat seven people, transforming the coach into a very entertainment-friendly environment. Add places for four more guests at

**WHAT'S HOT**

Push-button start, ergonomic controls, smooth and quiet ride, seating in living area

**WHAT'S NOT**

Rear bathroom access when in travel mode, shower design



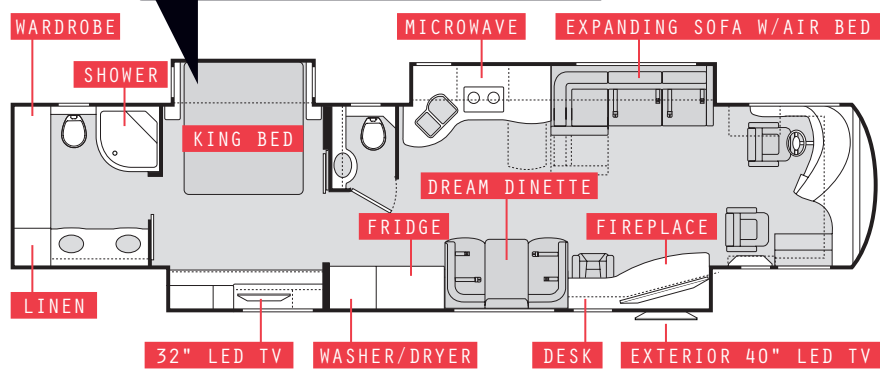
the dinette, which essentially is an extension of the living room, and it's party central in this coach. A large electric fireplace below the TV adds to the ambience.

Just in case TV fans can't get enough from the 60-inch screen in the living room, an optional TV can be placed above the cockpit dashboard. And a 40-inch TV behind an exterior cabinet door provides patio viewing.

Outside, the expected array of storage compartments will not disappoint those who subscribe to the "more is better" philosophy of packing. Side-opening aluminum compartment doors with electronic locks provide clear access, and there's even a sliding storage tray to organize stuff that's normally hard to reach. All the compartments are lighted and gas pistons hold the doors open.

Handsome graphics integrated into the fully painted body sets the theme for the coach, which exudes luxury. This coach has a naturally big

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# Specifications

## Chassis

Model	Freightliner XCR Tag Axle
Engine	Cummins ISL
SAE Hp	450 hp @ 2,100 rpm
Torque	1,250 lb-ft @ 1,300 rpm
Transmission	6-speed Allison
Axle Ratio	4.78:1
Front Tires	295/80R22.5
Rear Tires	295/80R22.5
Tag Axle Tires	295/80R22.5
Wheelbase	287"
Brakes	Air, front disc/rear drum
Suspension	Air, ZF front independent
Fuel Capacity	150 gal
Fuel Economy	8.3 mpg
Warranty	3 years/50,000 miles

## Coach

Exterior Length	44' 10"
Exterior Width	8' 5"
Exterior Height	12' 9" with A/C
Interior Width	8'
Interior Height	7' 1"
Construction	Fully welded tubular steel and aluminum/laminated walls, fiberglass roof
Freshwater Cap	91 gal
Black-Water Cap	51 gal
Gray-Water Cap	51 gal
Water-Heater Cap	Aqua-Hot on demand
LP-Gas Cap	N/A (Test Coach All-Electric)
Air Conditioner (3)	15,000 Btu w/heat pump
Furnace	65,000 Btu
Refrigerator	19.7-cu-ft residential
Inverter/Charger	2,000 watts/100 amps
Batteries	(2) 12-volt chassis, (4) 6-volt coach
AC Generator	10 kW
MSRP	\$414,412.50
MSRP as Tested	\$414,630.50
Warranty	1 year/15,000 miles, limited

## Wet Weight

(Water & Heater, Fuel, LP-gas Tanks Full; No Supplies or Passengers)

Front Axle	13,720 lbs
Rear with Tag Axle	23,480 lbs
Total	37,200 lbs

## Chassis Ratings

GAWR, F/R/TAG	14,600/20,000/10,000 lbs
GVWR/GCWR	44,600/59,600 lbs
ROCCC	7,400 lbs (Deduct Weight of Passengers For Net Cargo Capacity)
GAWR	Gross Axle Weight Rating
GVWR	Gross Vehicle Weight Rating
GCWR	Gross Combination Weight Rating
ROCCC	Realistic Occupant and Cargo Carrying Capacity (Full Water, No Passengers)



Above from left: The cockpit seats join the living room when swiveled around. A washer/dryer is housed next to the 19.7-cubic-foot residential refrigerator with in-door ice and water dispenser.

profile and the exterior accessories like the patio and window awnings, metal-wrapped slideout toppers, triple air-conditioner shrouds and the Winegard TRAV'LER HD satellite antenna flow nicely with the exterior lines. Black frameless dual-pane windows contribute to the sleekness of the shiny painted surface.

Under the skin is a network of welded tubular side wall and roof framing tied to a welded tubular steel floor. The framing is wrapped and vacuum-bonded and the roof has a domed fiberglass cap. The entire structure is mounted on a Freightliner raised-rail chassis that is perfectly matched for this coach. All this relates to a super-smooth and quiet ride with very few extraneous noises to disturb the peacefulness of the drive.

The big 450-horsepower Cummins diesel makes short work of hill climbing and the weight of the coach contributes greatly to its road-hugging attributes. Of course, the air suspension (independent front), robust shocks and 60-degree wheel cut keep the driver smiling. The general consensus on first look is that this 45-footer is hard to maneuver, but once you get behind the wheel, you'll quickly change your mind as the wheel cut guides the coach into amazingly tight spots.

Plunking one's self into the plush captain's seat sends an immediate message to the driver that the coach controls are ergonomic (and nicely arranged) and that the visibility out the huge windshield will make the on-the-road experience fun. Long stints behind the wheel are nonfatiguing and

the adjustable brake and accelerator pedals help the driver settle in with no complaint.

Cockpit electronics play an important role in keeping the driver informed and entertained. A 10-inch touch screen delivers navigation information with software loaded by Rand McNally, while images from the three cameras placed on the sides and rear of the coach provide extra elements of safety. A smart steering wheel gives the driver touch controls without losing attention and, of course, no self-respecting big motorhome pilot could live without the air horns.

New for 2016 is a trendsetting keyless start system, which mimics the direction of the auto industry. As long as the key fob is in the vicinity, the engine can be started and shut down using the big green button in the dash. If you lose the key fob, the engine can be started with the traditional key.

By now it's pretty obvious that Thor Motor Coach has pulled out all the stops in developing the new Tuscany. The standard equipment list is extensive and for the test coach there was only \$218 in options, which illustrates the direction the company is going with this coach. Our return visit with the Tuscany was a refreshing experience and our hats are off to Thor Motor Coach for responding so positively to making improvements and changes that easily position this coach as a true contender in the high-end motorcoach arena. **M**

**Thor Motor Coach**

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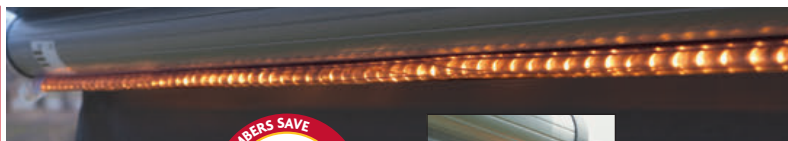
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By E. Don Smith

# COVER STORY

Streamline the process of installing a motorhome cover with these simple tips



If it weren't for pesky things like a budget, homeowner's association rules, time and space, we would all likely have our own motorhome garage at our residence to protect our coach. Unless you live in a rural area free of homeowner's associations and have lots of property, it's unlikely that you will ever be allowed to construct an RV garage on your property. Many owners rely on offsite storage and in some cases those facilities offer covered storage, but of course the cost is much higher than just storing the coach in an uncovered lot. In our case, we have a motorhome driveway at home but do not enjoy the benefits of a full garage; therefore, the use of a motorhome cover is necessary.

For most of us, a motorhome is a major financial investment not only in the initial purchase, but also the maintenance and upkeep. Covering the coach helps protect its appearance and resale value, and it also helps

lower monthly maintenance costs. By protecting the coach with a cover, the roof's caulk joints, acrylic roof vents and skylights, as well as the tires and paint, stay looking new. It's a small price to pay to keep your coach looking

good for as long as possible.

In most cases, for the price of covered storage for a few months you can purchase your own cover and keep your motorhome protected all the time. For some reason there is a misconception that motorhome covers are hard to use or can damage the coach's finish, but our experience is just the opposite. Covers such as the all-new Elements brand that we used here are very soft and do not damage the coach, plus they offer a lot of protection from UV rays and weather. This particular cover is sold at Camping World at a regular price of \$546.99 (for our Tiffin



[1] First we installed the ADCO tire covers from Camping World. It's a lot easier to put the tire covers on before positioning the motorhome cover. [2] It's a good idea to cover the mirrors and wiper blades as well. We use these whether the coach is covered or not, and, as you see in the photo, it might be necessary to fold the mirrors in to allow the cover to fit tightly against the motorhome. These covers are also available from Camping World.

Phaeton), but can be found for as little as \$436.99 when on sale. It comes with a manufacturer's 2-year warranty, but living in the southeastern U.S., in our experience we get between 3 and 4 years' use out of one before a replacement is needed. That is about \$100 a year, which we consider a bargain. Tire covers can be found on sale for \$62.43 a pair depending on the size your coach requires.

This Elements cover is different from other major brands and it offers several major advantages. When compared to other brands, the sides are made from a heavier material to ensure it lasts longer. It also has a heavy-duty Tyvek roof panel that is 10 percent stronger than other brands you may have used in the past. Another major advantage is that the front- and rear-cap fabric is reinforced with elastic inserts. This elastic really makes a big difference in keeping a tight fit. It also has an integral inner panel sewn into the backside of the cover to help prevent it from wearing on the front and rear bumper area. Another advantage we noticed is that the sides extend completely down below the cargo bay doors so the coach is 100 percent covered. For those who need in-and-out entry into the coach while it is covered, the Elements brand has an answer for that. On the entry side there are two full-length zipper panels to allow easy in-and-out privileges. I have used motorhome covers for more than 10 years and this is by far the best one I have ever used.

This particular motorhome is 8 years old and when not in use it is covered about 70 to 80 percent of the time, including the tires. Though the coach is not new, most of the people we meet while traveling think it is. We credit that to taking good care of it with regular washing and waxing and keeping it covered when not in use. UV damage is a factor for anything that is exposed to the sun and your coach is no exception. If you look at the condition of a motorhome that is kept outside and uncovered you will see



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[3] Next you need to climb on the roof and make sure it is clear of debris. Then remove or fold down any antennas. You will need to make sure there is nothing left on the roof that can tear or rip the cover once it is installed. After removing the antennas, simply lay them on the roof next to an air conditioner or satellite dome for safekeeping until the next time you use the coach. [4] Next you will unroll the cover behind the coach in preparation for pulling it up the ladder. The cover is rolled up and folded on itself several times in both directions, so make sure you get it completely open. [5] When unrolling the cover look for the large sewn-in tag labeled FRONT. This is the part that you will carry with you up the ladder and to the front of the coach. [6] Once you completely unroll the cover and properly position the FRONT tag, it helps if you fold the sides of the cover "inside out" back on to the white part of the cover (the top). This makes the cover narrower for an easier trip up the ladder, and it makes draping the sides of the cover off the roof easier as well.

signs of UV damage. The rubber around the windows starts to get chalky, the tires will show cracks around the sidewall area, and even the paint and trim on the coach will start to deteriorate in just a few years if left unprotected.

Of course if you are a full-timer, covering up is not an option for you, but for those of us who store our coach part of the year, covering them makes a lot of sense. The Elements cover shown here blocks 99.8 percent of UV rays and features three-layer construction to help make it last. Unlike tarps or poly sheets, the fabric in this cover actually breathes to let moisture pass through the material, which eliminates trapped moisture. It also has vented sections on the front, rear and both sides to improve airflow, which will virtually eliminate mold and mildew even when stored for long periods of time. This particular cover also has handy tie-down straps that go under the motorhome to help prevent the cover from flapping in the wind or being blown off during storms.

Another big concern of most owners is getting the cover on the roof and installing it properly. We found that most people who can climb on the roof can also install a cover, so long as they follow the right steps. Climbing a ladder always has risks, so proceed with caution and make sure you have a helper with you in case you need assistance. All you really need is some self-confidence, a good pair of shoes (no flip flops or slip-on shoes) and the desire to protect your coach from the forces of weather.

Installing a cover can usually be done with two people in about 30-45 minutes after you get the process down pat. Follow along as we show you some tips that will make installing a cover a much easier process.



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[7] Pull the entire cover close to the coach to make it easier and safer to climb up the ladder. Be sure to keep one hand securely on the ladder at all times. Notice the FRONT logo is going up first. [8] Once you get on the roof, pull the balance of the cover all the way to the front of the coach. Your helper can assist by “feeding” the cover to you as you walk toward the front of the coach. Watch carefully to make sure you do not step on any vents, skylights or antennas, etc., as you pull the cover forward. [9] Now that you have the entire cover on the roof, you need to make sure the white Tyvek roof portion of the cover is all the way to the end of the front cap and positioned evenly between the left and right sides of the coach.



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[10] This particular motorhome doesn't have extended gutter downspouts but if it did, you would need to cover them as shown in this photo before dropping the cover down each side of the coach. [11] Starting first at the front of the coach and then moving down both sides, drape the sides of the cover off the roof and make sure they clear any obstacles such as the awnings and slide toppers. If you have any particularly sharp corners, cover them with a towel or a piece of foam to prevent tears in the cover. We also found that it is easiest to get the front of the cover to drop over the mirrors and front cap if you first unzip the front access panel. This gives you more slack for the cover to clear those obstacles. [12] After you have the front and both sides of the cover draped off the roof, make your way to the rear. We also opened the rear zipper to give the cover some

slack before pulling it over the rear cap. If you can utilize one person on the roof and one on the ground it makes this entire process much easier. [13] After the opposite corner is over the rear cap of the coach, move to the ladder side and start climbing down while pulling the remaining corner of the cover with you. [14] As you near the bottom of the ladder make sure the cover is completely free and clear of any obstacles and descend the ladder carefully while always keeping one hand securely on the ladder. [15] On the front and rear of the cover are two straps that help tighten and secure the cover. Snap both of them in and pull the straps until they are just snug. If you unzipped the front and rear access panel of the cover, make sure you zip them up before tightening the straps. Here you can see the use of a noncorrosive poly reinforcing grommet.

**➔ A HELPING HAND**

Stretching the cover out on a clean surface behind the motorhome and making sure it's facing the correct direction will make it easier to bring it to the rooftop. Help from a second person is always preferred.



[16] After the straps are properly buckled it should look like this. Don't worry if the ladder causes the cover to be uneven, this is normal. [17] After the cover is installed properly it should appear like this. Now your coach is completely covered and it will be clean and ready for use next time without the harmful UV damage that often occurs on uncovered motorhomes.

## UNDER WRAPS

Help fend off the damaging effects of weather by selecting the right cover for your coach By Kristopher Bunker

**I**n a perfect world, we could all live in our RVs full time, roaming from RV park to RV park. However, in the real world, many times that's simply not possible, as work, funds, family matters and all types of outside influences require us to store the motorhome. And although some of us are lucky enough to have a garage, covered concrete pad or other facility, the rest of us should consider purchasing an RV cover to protect the motorhome from the worst Mother Nature can throw at it, from searing heat to damaging UV rays to rain, sleet, hail and even heavy snowfall.

Selecting the right cover is akin to selecting the proper type of sunscreen for your skin; that is, be sure you get the proper level of protection for the amount of exposure to the elements. Just as SPF 10 will do little to no good when you're working all day in a field in direct sunlight, a lightweight, universal-fit cover may not suffice for a million-dollar coach in an arctic ice storm. It's important to know the differences between the materials used in manufacturing the covers, and to prepare for the worst (weather) when deciding on which level of protection to buy.

The following are some of the RV cover offerings on the market; they offer all levels of protection at reasonable prices, and most are designed specifically for a wide range of ambient temperatures and weather conditions.



### ADCO

There are few barometers for success that resonate as effectively as longevity, so the fact that ADCO is celebrating its 60th year manufacturing RV covers is no small feat. Offering a wide assortment of cover applica-

tions, from all sizes of motorhomes to tire covers and more, ADCO provides consumers with enough choices to select exactly the right cover for their specific motorhome situation.

For short-term RV storage in moderate climates, the SFS AquaShed is designed to offer three times the protection of a standard cover. The cover beads water on contact, which offers a high resistance to overly humid climates, in addition to superior protection from UV rays. The

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## RV COVERS

breathable fabric is also resistant to ice buildup, mold and mildew, which can all be extremely harsh on the motorhome's outer skin and interior. SFS AquaShed is available in contour-fit (universal) covers only. Also available is a Designer Series, which includes the triple-layer AquaShed top panel and triple-layered, two-toned gray polypropylene sides. Prices range from \$75-\$160 for the standard AquaShed, and start at \$200 for the Designer Series.

ADCO's Tyvek Designer Covers are manufactured for more intense climates, and offer an effective shield from the sun with their white fabric designed to reflect infrared heat and block nearly 99 percent of the sun's damaging UV rays. The covers are "backed" with a layer of polypropylene for increased durability, and are available in custom and contour-fit configurations. In addition to the unique side walls, the Tyvek Wind Designer Series is currently the only cover on the market with a new, patent-pending wind-resistant technology, which ADCO is so confident will improve wind-protection that the company has upped the warranty to 3 years; buyers even get a set of four free Tyre Gards in the box to help protect the tires. Tyvek Designer covers start between \$250-\$300; Custom Tyvek Covers start at \$29.99 per linear foot.

At the top of ADCO's product line is the custom-fit Sunbrella fabric line of covers, which are designed for all climates. Sunbrella is well-known for its durable outdoor fabrics, and the soft, highly breathable material combats water damage and mildew, while the secure fit (custom applications only) offers superior protection from wind damage. Prices start at \$34.95 per linear foot.

ADCO has also recently introduced RV roof covers with straps that don't actually come into contact with the side walls, which helps reduce the possibility of damage, while protecting the roof equipment, substrate and helping eliminate black streaks. As of press time, ADCO is set to introduce

Winnebago-brand RV covers, offering multilayer protection from the elements and featuring retro graphics, the Flying W logo and even the famous Winnebago "brow." Prices will start around \$200.

ADCO Products, [www.adcoprod.com](http://www.adcoprod.com)



## Calmark Cover Co.

All Calmark custom and semicustom made RV covers are made to the specific length, width and height of your particular motorhome and include a full 6-year warranty. They are manufactured using Sunbrella fabric for protection from intense sun and harsh weather conditions. Calmark covers also feature Fabric Stress Reinforcing technology, which offers 1,000-pound tensile strength for added durability. The covers are water-resistant, breathable, mold- and mildew-resistant and are 100 percent non-abrasive. The covers feature zippered doors, tie-down grommets and friction-reducer tie straps. And, the 6-year warranty is proof that Calmark truly stands behind its products, even offering after-the-sale assistance. Contact the company for pricing.

Calmark Cover Co.,  
[www.calmarkcovers.com](http://www.calmarkcovers.com)



## Camco Manufacturing

Camco ULTRAGuard covers are designed for most RV types to provide reliable protection during storage.



ULTRAGuard covers are ideal for more extreme climates, including cold, snowy regions and feature a triple-layer SFS top panel that beads water on contact, offering increased resistance to rainfall and snow. The covers also utilize tough, interlocking seams and a heavy-duty polypropylene fabric around the sides for maximum protection. Vented flaps help reduce wind lofting and moisture, and work in combination with a fully breathable design to help resist mold and mildew growth. ULTRAGuard covers utilize an integrated, self-adjusting hold-down system that the company says is guaranteed to keep the cover in place. Camco ULTRAGuard covers carry a 2-year limited warranty, applicable to the original purchaser when used under normal operating conditions. A storage bag is included. Prices range from about \$100-\$275.

**Camco Manufacturing, [www.camco.net](http://www.camco.net)**



### Classic Accessories

Classic Accessories offers three different lines available for each type of RV. The most advanced line is called PermaPRO. This material is made from treated polyester using rip-stop technology (much like a parachute), and is also treated to keep rain from penetrating the fabric. These covers are backed by a lifetime warranty. Prices range from \$499.95-\$799.95.

The middle-grade line is called PolyPRO 3, which is made of polypropylene and is three layers thick on the top of the motorhome, where most of the UV rays hit. The additional layers at the top prevent moisture from damaging a motorhome's roof, and the material is designed so that it won't fade or discolor due to sun damage. PolyPRO 3

covers have a 3-year warranty. Prices range from \$199.95-\$499.95.

Classic's entry-level cover is the PolyPRO 1, which is constructed using a single layer of polypropylene. It will still absorb UV radiation and prevent rain damage, and comes with a 2-year warranty. Prices range from \$99.95-\$209.95.

**Classic Accessories, <http://classicaccessories.com/rv>**



### Covercraft

Covercraft Covers are custom-designed with long-term storage in mind. These covers are manufactured using customer-supplied specifications, which are then input into a CAD system to develop a unique, custom pattern. One zippered entry and a polycotton storage bag are included. Additional entries or storage bags made from the cover fabric may be ordered at an additional charge.

There are three fabric options available for custom covers:

WeatherShield HD fabric, developed primarily for intense sun environments and long-term storage, offers protection for extreme UV, water repellency, dust and other environmental hazards.

Ultra'tect RV fabric retains its color and strength in extended outdoor exposure while still providing a high degree of water resistance and UV protection at a reasonable price.

Covercraft's top-of-the-line covers are made from Sunbrella fabric, preferred by many RV owners in the Sunbelt because the acrylic fibers provide almost 100 percent UV opacity to protect the vehicle from the damaging rays of the sun.

For prices, visit the company's website to start the custom process.

**Covercraft, [www.covercraftrv.com](http://www.covercraftrv.com)**

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**CoverQuest**

In addition to the ADCO and Classic Accessories covers mentioned previously, CoverQuest offers Carver Industries covers and products.

The Carver line of RV products includes full covers for all styles and sizes of motorhomes. These covers are made in the United States. All Carver covers are double-stitched and folded four-ply, leaving no raw edges. Carver RV covers are offered in a marine-grade 8-ounce polyester, which the company calls Performance Poly-Guard. This material is available in the color Haze Gray.

The Performance Poly-Guard fabric is a true loom-woven polyester, offering the strongest tear strength available and is highly UV- and fade-resistant. It is also extremely water-repellant and mildew-resistant, while remaining breathable to allow moisture to escape. All Carver motorhome covers come with hold-down straps, a storage bag and reinforcement kit to strengthen any areas of high wear. Carver motorhome covers carry a 5-year warranty, and range in price from \$150 to \$950 depending on the style and size of the unit.

CoverQuest, [www.coverquest.com](http://www.coverquest.com)



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- Craig H., Fort Meyers, FL

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**Evelle Covers**

Evelle has 25 years of experience manufacturing a number of universal RV covers. The company's rugged Expedition S2 is Evelle's midrange product, and is made of lightweight polypropylene. Three breathable layers of X-Strength fabric offer superior protection, according to the company. The S2s feature straps, roof vents and zippered panels. Expedition covers carry a 3-year warranty, and prices range from about \$249-\$599.

The top-of-the-line Goldline (\$399-\$899) covers are constantly being updated, and this year's version is no different. New Goldline covers are made of a marine fabric and offer all the features of the Expedition, plus more. Goldline covers are coated with Durapel rain finish as well as a UV inhibitor, in addition to an antimicrobial finish, all of which help make it UV- and mildew-resistant.

Evelle, [www.evelle.com](http://www.evelle.com)

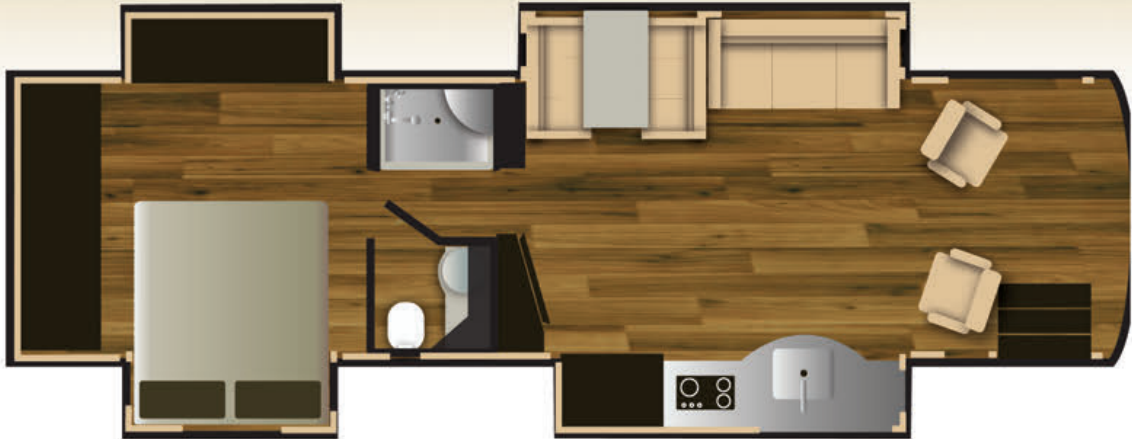


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# HERE COMES THE BOOM!

Class A motorhomes are leading the charge with new and exciting changes for 2016; makers of Class C's and Class B's are also adding new models and appealing features

**While the RV industry** has not only been on the rebound but actually flirting with all-time record sales for the last few years, data from groups like Statistical Surveys Inc. (SSI) also shows that the Class A segment has been the last to fully recover. That said, Class A sales and model proliferation have blossomed as of late, with manufacturers either reviving shelved Class A's, expanding their current floorplan offerings or designing entirely new models. There's still a lot of movement and development in the Class B and C segments, and in addition to celebrating the full-throttle return of Class A's, we're excited to take an early look at what's new for models throughout the motorized spectrum.



## American Coach Allegiance

With the 25th anniversary of the American Coach brand in 2016, its parent company, Allied Recreation Group (ARG), has been busy with new releases, including the 2016 Allegiance, which is making its first appearance since 2011. The Allegiance was discontinued after two years due to the recession, so there is a lot of excitement at ARG in seeing it reborn.

"We've been taking American Coach in a more contemporary design direction and this coach is a reflection of that, although we also offer a few graphic designs and interior options that are more traditional," said ARG Director of Marketing Steve Hileman.

The Allegiance has a base MSRP of \$431,250 and is offered in three floorplans from 40 to 43 feet. The coach is built on American Coach's Liberty chassis with a 450-HP Cummins ISL9 and a side radiator.

Some of the differences between the new Allegiance and its predecessors include roof-mounted Girard Nova series integrated awnings with LED lights, heated porcelain-tile flooring,

a low-profile automotive-style dash, a 450D Aqua-Hot heating system and a king-size Serenity MAX adjustable bed with heat/massage functions.

Other features include an electric fireplace, power roller shades and blinds, Tecma Silence Plus porcelain toilets, a multiplex wiring system, a residential refrigerator, dishwasher and stackable washer/dryer.

**American Coach, 800-854-1344,  
www.americancoach.com**



## Born Free Imperial

The 2016 Imperial is the newest Class C from Born Free, in more ways than one. "This is our biggest and roomiest Born Free yet," said Product Manager Brandon Dodgen. "It's for people who want a lot of room and also the power and handling of the Ford F-550 chassis."

This model is the first Born Free to offer two slides, and in addition to the

new bedroom slide, the company has expanded the width and height of the living-room slide.

"We're also featuring an outside entertainment center for the first time and we've redesigned the outside storage to double the capacity," Dodgen said.

The 33-foot Imperial comes in four floorplans and is offered at a base MSRP of \$190,000, which includes features such as automatic leveling jacks, a 4-kW Cummins generator, electric awning and 15,000-Btu ducted A/C. Options include an induction cooktop, an on-demand tankless water heater and electric day/night shades.

The Ford F-550 chassis comes with a standard E85 ethanol-compatible, 385-HP 6.2-L V-8 gas engine, though owners can also opt for a B20 biodiesel-compatible Power Stroke 300-HP 6.7-L V-8 turbodiesel engine.

**Born Free RV, 800-247-1835,  
www.bornfreerv.com**



## Entegra Anthem

With a base MSRP of \$461,151, the Entegra Coach Anthem anchors the middle of the three-model Entegra line, and for 2016, it has received an exterior face-lift with new front and rear caps.

With a gross vehicle weight rating (GVWR) of 49,000 pounds, the coach rides on a Spartan Mountain Master chassis with a Cummins ISL turbocharged 450-HP engine, and is offered in five floorplans ranging from 43 to 45 feet — with the most popular being the 44B.

Standard features for the Anthem include independent front suspension, a 12,500-watt Onan generator, a Tempur-Pedic king-size mattress, MCD American Duo shades, a JBL sound system and a fireplace with LED technology. Window sizes have also been increased in this all-electric motorhome.

Popular options include two, 100-watt solar panels; an exterior freezer with slide-out tray; Winegard TRAV'LER satellite dish with DirecTV; a 100-inch sofa; two ottomans and a sofa bed (select models); and a Vegatouch iPad control center that allows owners to control many interior functions.

**Entegra Coach, 800-517-9137,  
www.entegracoach.com**



### **Fleetwood Bounder**

Early on, Fleetwood's iconic Bounder model was lovingly dubbed the "ugly duckling with the heart of a swan," for the impressive, industry-changing functionality that founder John Crean managed to engineer under that beige, kangaroo-clad exterior. But no one should be judged by the way they looked in the '80s, and each successive generation of Bounders has become decidedly more swanlike. Such is the case for the 2016 Bounder.

At a base MSRP of \$135,905, the Class A gas Bounder with fresh front and rear caps comes in five full-body paint exteriors and three interior décor packages, offering five all-new front-entry floorplans ranging from a 34-foot dual slide to a 37-foot triple slide. They all ride on a Ford chassis with a 362-HP 6.8-L V-10 engine and Fleetwood's proprietary Power Platform structure.

Inside, the ceiling-mounted Hide-A-Loft bed (optional) is the coach's biggest new feature. This bed (74 by 52 inches) stays tucked away above the cockpit until it's needed to provide

extra sleeping room. Other upgrades and new features include a larger 100-gallon freshwater tank, increased exterior storage capacity with multiple pass-through bays and side-swing cargo doors, an IllumaPlex electronic control system, legless awning with LED lighting, a redesigned dash with integrated camera and AV monitors, a co-pilot workstation with drawer and a low-profile doghouse with cup holders.

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



### **Jayco Alante**

There was a time when Class A diesel sales were threatening to outpace Class A gasoline-model sales, but post-recession, the tide has turned back toward gas, with a current sales mix of roughly 65 percent gas and 35 percent diesel, according to SSI. Riding the crest of that surge, Jayco has introduced its newest Class A gas model, the 2016 Alante.

The Alante is now one of two gas Class A's in Jayco's lineup and, with an advertised base retail price of \$79,995, is an attempt to strike a balance between luxury and affordability.

"We are extremely excited about the all-new Alante," said Chuck Lasley, vice president of sales for Jayco Motorized Group. "This entry-level gas Class A gives us more confidence than ever that we can satisfy any coach buyer's needs."

Available in four floorplans from 27 to 32 feet, the Alante rides on a Ford F53 chassis with a GVWR of 16,000 to 18,000 pounds, depending on the floorplan, and a 6.8-L Triton V-10 362-HP engine.

Jayco put special attention on visibility with the Alante, equipping it with one of the largest windshields and narrowest A-pillars in the industry, as well as an entrance door with the largest travel view window available. Other key standard features include a

seamless front cap with LED lighting accents, one-piece fiberglass roof, pass-through storage with slam-latch baggage doors, power awning and an exterior 32-inch LED HDTV.

**Jayco, 574-825-5861, www.jayco.com**



### **Monaco Diplomat**

After ARG (a subsidiary of Allied Specialty Vehicles) purchased Monaco RV assets in 2013, including the Monaco and Holiday Rambler brands and models, the company set about re-releasing some of the most beloved luxury diesel models, starting with the 2015 Dynasty. Now comes the storied brand's second re-entry, the 2016 Diplomat, at a base retail price of \$369,000.

Whereas ARG has taken American Coach in a modern direction regarding design and décor, the company has returned Monaco to its more classic luxury roots. The company is testing the waters with two floorplans. The first is the 43-foot 43DF, a dual-sink rear lavatory bath-and-a-half floorplan with a full-wall streetside slide and two smaller slides on the curbside. The second floorplan is a similar layout with larger rear shower, single rear sink and dual recliners up front.

Chassis and engine changes were two of the concerns voiced by Monaco owners before ARG acquired the brand, and the company believes it has addressed them. The chassis is a proprietary Roadmaster B-series integrating Freightliner components with a few ARG modifications such as electro-coating and larger volumetric air bags, and the engine is a 450-HP Cummins ISL9.

Other features include a standard Aqua-Hot 450D hydronic heating system, heated high-gloss ceramic-tile floors and a 50-inch TV housed in an entertainment center with an electric fireplace.

**Monaco, 800-648-6582,  
www.monacocoach.com**



### Newmar Canyon Star

While luxury diesels are Newmar's traditional mainstay, the company has also been expanding its gas offerings of late. The 2016 Canyon Star 3922 "shed" floorplan is the most recent fruit of those efforts, providing Class A enthusiasts with a toy hauler without going to a full garage. The "shed" portion at the rear of the 40-foot coach features a separate entrance and measures 8 feet wide by just over 4.5 feet long.

"It's a cavernous space with an extra-wide entry door for access and it comes with a standard bicycle ramp," said John Sammut, Newmar's vice president of sales. "So it's great for bikes, but also golf clubs and other sporting equipment."

Inside the compartment is a modular Gladiator storage system with movable cabinets and bins attached to racks, all built from easy-to-clean materials.

The living area offers a full-wall slide on the driver's side and a second, passenger's side slide in the bedroom. The living area has an 87-inch jackknife sofa, booth dinette and pantry. The bedroom features a queen bed, LED TV and a full wardrobe along the rear wall that can house an optional two-piece washer and dryer.

The Canyon Star rides on a Ford F35 chassis with a GVWR of 26,000 pounds, powered by a 362-HP V-10 gas engine. The "shed" floorplan has a base MSRP of \$168,000.



### Newmar Ventana

Despite the surge in sales on the Class A gas front, don't discount the comeback of diesels, especially from the midrange up. That's according to manufacturers like Newmar, which is paying special attention to its midrange diesel offerings by introducing a comprehensive redesign of the Ventana for 2016.

With base MSRPs starting at \$259,275 (for 34-foot and 37-foot models) and \$303,543 (for 40-foot, tag-axle models), the Ventana rides on a Freightliner XCR chassis with

a Cummins ISB 360-HP engine or a Freightliner Tag Axle XCR with a Cummins ISL 400-HP engine.

Sammut said drivability is one of Newmar's top priorities and one of the main selling points for the Ventana, pointing to the standard Comfort Drive Steering feature, as well as the standard passive steerable tag axle on 40-foot and longer models.

The meat of the Ventana's redesign is in its looks, as the coach features new front and rear caps integrating stainless-steel trim accents and modern styling. Inside, all-new interior packages are being offered, featuring porcelain-tile flooring in the kitchen, bath and living areas, solid-surface countertops and Ultraleather furniture throughout.

**Newmar Corp., 800-731-8300, [www.newmarcorp.com](http://www.newmarcorp.com)**

### Renegade Verona

"We've taken all the Renegade product strengths and made them more family-oriented." That's how Kevin Erdman, Renegade's director of sales and marketing, describes the 2016 Verona model, one of the newest additions to the Renegade product lineup of "Super C" motorhomes.

With a base MSRP of \$275,485, the Verona debuts with two 40-foot floorplans. When it comes to making its product more family-oriented, Renegade has focused on sleeping accommodations, kitchen size and storage.

"The Verona provides comfortable sleeping for up to seven adults," Erdman said. "And we've created a huge kitchen area, as well as outstanding interior and exterior storage space."

In addition to the standard king-size 72-by-75-inch bed, the Verona provides 80-by-30-inch bunk beds, a queen-size sofa bed and a convertible dinette. The kitchen is outfitted with stainless-steel appliances, solid-surface counters throughout and an 18-cubic-foot french-door residential refrigerator.



For those who have trouble leaving things at home, the Verona provides up to 7,200 pounds of passenger and cargo capacity on its Freightliner M2 chassis as well as a towing capacity of up to 20,000 pounds with a fully loaded motorhome. "With our chassis, the customer is buying the most heavy-duty, durable, long-lasting chassis that they can find," Erdman said. "It has a million-mile life expectancy."

Power comes from a Cummins ISL9 350-HP diesel engine located up front, paired with an Allison six-speed electronic transmission.

Popular options include a stackable washer/dryer, a dinette table with freestanding chairs and Armstrong Luxe plank flooring in the bedroom.

**Renegade, 888-522-1126, [www.renegaderv.com](http://www.renegaderv.com)**



### Roadtrek Zion

The Zion is the first model Roadtrek has built on the new, front-wheel-drive Ram ProMaster chassis with a 280-hp gas 3.6-L Pentastar engine.

With a starting MSRP of \$86,931, Roadtrek is positioning the Zion as a fully loaded, midlevel model “perfect for someone just starting out in the RV lifestyle or someone looking for a less expensive Class B option with all the Class B features,” said Karyn Torcoletti, director of marketing for Roadtrek “It’s a great two-person coach, perfect for couples of all ages who are active in the outdoors.”

That “good for active owners” billing is becoming increasingly popular, and the Zion fits the description by focusing on storage capacity

for large items such as bikes and kayaks. This is especially true for one of the two floorplans offered, which creates a larger rear cargo space through the use of facing sofas and a wide center aisle, rather than a forward-facing sofa at the rear.

Details often make the difference in a field as crowded as the Class B market, and Roadtrek has added several touches to help it stand apart, such as drawer latches that double as D-ring anchors for strapping interior cargo, an optional automatic power step below the front passenger’s side door and an optional sliding screen on the rear passenger’s side door.

Other key features include a roof-mounted awning, 11,000-Btu air conditioner, a 5-cubic-foot refrigerator and fold-open rear cargo doors that lay flat against the sides of the vehicle. Options include a 200-watt solar charging system, underhood 280-amp generator and 22-inch HD flat-screen TV.

**Roadtrek, 888-762-3873,**  
**www.roadtrek.com**



### Winnebago Adventurer

The revamped 2016 Winnebago Adventurer appears to be another product of the gas Class A boom, striving to give RVers the look and styling of a diesel without the price tag.

“The Adventurer offers the comfort and quality of a diesel pusher with the convenience and affordability of a Class A coach,” said Sam Jefson, Winnebago’s public relations specialist. “And for 2016 we have new exterior styling, including six new full-body color schemes, new dash styling and an upgraded infotainment system.”

Exterior changes include an aluminum-finned-style grille, modular headlamp designs, blade-type wheel trims with chrome accents, a curb-view window and rear fiberglass cap with a side-wing design.

The cockpit also received a redesign, with all dash switches relocated for better ergonomics, 3 inches of insulation added in the cab, and a newly designed “pullover” co-pilot workstation with USB, 12-volt DC and 120-volt AC receptacles.

As the company’s flagship Class A gas coach, the Adventurer provides high-end details such as hardwood cabinet facing, polished Corian countertops, glass and tile backsplashes, crown molding and a french-door, residential-style stainless-steel refrigerator with a 2-kW inverter and auto-generator start.

The 2016 Adventurer is built on a Ford F53 chassis, with a GVWR of 22,000 pounds to 26,000 pounds depending on floorplan, and is powered by a 6.8-L 362-hp Triton V-10 engine. It is offered in four floorplans, ranging from a 32-foot quad slide to a 38-foot triple slide (MSRP \$197,603).

**Winnebago, 641-585-3535,**  
**www.winnebagoind.com**

### Thor Vegas RUV

Thor Motor Coach (TMC) introduced its recreational utility vehicle (RUV) concept in 2013 with the release of the AXIS and Vegas models, the first compact Class A units in the industry built on the Ford E-Series framework. This year, TMC is adding a fifth floorplan to the Vegas — the 25.3, which brings additional kitchen prep area and bedroom space to this 26-foot motorhome that TMC bills as providing “increased comfort, function and drivability when compared to the ever-popular vehicle segment of SUVs.”

The Vegas 25.3 comes with a starting MSRP of \$97,500, features the same nearly parabolic-shaped panoramic windshield and is powered by the same 6.8-L Triton V-10 engine, but houses a queen bed in the single slide at the rear driver’s side, allowing for easy walkaround when the slide is extended. This also allows for a larger 32-by-32-inch shower in the



fully enclosed rear bathroom. Up front, the Dream Dinette converts to a sleeping surface with the flip of a lever and the overhead bunk above the cockpit provides plenty of family-friendly sleeping accommodations. Thor designers also point out that pet-friendly materials are installed throughout the entire line, with easy-care vinyl floors and scratch-resistant leatherette furniture.

Options on the 25.3 include a 32-inch exterior LED TV, 32-inch TV in the bedroom, an oven addition to the high-output gas cooktop, an upgrade to a 15,000-Btu roof air (from 13,500) and heated holding tanks.

**Thor Vegas, 800-860-5658,**  
**www.vegas-motorhomes.com**

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By Jeff Johnston

# No Heavy Lifting

Roadmaster's new Spare Tire Carrier is practical and convenient, and doubles as a hitch receiver for towing a dinghy vehicle

**R**oadmaster has developed a new spare-tire carrier for motorhomes, which may seem like a nonevent at first. After all, spare-tire carriers have been around as long as we've had motor vehicles, right? But this new product addresses a need and at the same time provides some fresh features that are exactly right for the motorhome fraternity.

Some of today's motorhomes aren't even equipped with a spare tire, which means the owner is at the tender mercies of the roadside service provider for flat repair. If the tire is destroyed and needs to be replaced, it may be difficult to find the right replacement because local tire dealers typically only carry a limited inventory of big tires. Some owners pack away a spare into a storage compartment, which makes accessibility — and heavy lifting — a chore.

The Roadmaster Spare Tire Carrier installs easily by slipping it into the motorhome's Class IV or Class V hitch receiver. The bar that goes into the receiver has two pinholes to allow for



The new Roadmaster Spare Tire Carrier is a functional, effective product for conveniently hauling a spare tire on any motorhome.

limited carrier-to-coach adjustment for an effective fit and broad application across most motorhome models. The holes are also tapped and the company provides a high-strength bolt, which is used in place of the standard-type hitch pin. Use of the bolt means the carrier is solidly secured against the receiver body to help eliminate squeaks and rattles. There's also a hole through the end of the bolt for the usual hitch-pin clip.

In use, the operator starts by removing a locking pin on the backside of the carrier body and extending the

lift handle straight up from the carrier. The same pin then locks the handle back in place. Next, a spring-loaded release lever is pulled to unlatch the carrier from its in-transit "stowed" position. Using the now-extended lift handle, the operator pivots the carrier to the side and lowers the tire to the



A dinghy-vehicle tow bar, bicycle rack or other accessory can be accommodated in the extended receiver that's built into the carrier body.



1

ground. The lift handle is long enough to provide a good grip and the leverage needed to lower or lift the tire without excess bodily strain. Next, the user unbolts the spare and can roll it into place as appropriate. Then the flat tire is rolled back to the carrier and bolted into place.

Stowing the carrier is the opposite of deploying it. The user lifts the tire and pivots it to a vertical position where the spring-loaded release lever automatically latches in place, after which the lift handle is lowered and locked in place. A secondary locking bolt is positioned to secure the carrier lift mechanism by snugging down the bolt with a wrench.

As a bonus, when the carrier is deployed and the tire is lowered, the user can open the engine-compartment doors on diesel-pusher motorhomes for convenient service or inspection access.

A feature Roadmaster calls the “lug

[1] The carrier allows the user to easily lower the spare to the ground for removal or replacement. A significantly larger and heavier size tire would naturally require more muscle for the job. [2] As a bonus, the engine-compartment access doors can be opened without obstruction when the carrier is lowered.



2

[3] A locking pin secures the lift handle when stowed for travel or extended for use. [4] The spring-loaded locking handle holds the carrier in its upright, stowed position and automatically latches back in place when pivoting the lowered carrier and tire up for travel.

matrix design” for the wheel-mounting bolts allows the unit to be adjusted for wheels ranging from 16 to 24 inches, which covers most motorhomes on the road today. The tire used for our demonstration was one of the smaller sizes available and was not a serious load for the operator. One of the largest 24-inch tire sizes will be heavier, but it’s still better than having to lift it in or out of a storage compartment or on to a standard fixed-position tire carrier.

Obviously, few owners will want to sacrifice the ability to tow, carry bicycles, etc., for the sake of a spare-tire carrier, so a Class IV 2-inch receiver is built into the tire carrier. Roadmaster rates the receiver to handle a 400-pound hitch weight and 10,000 pounds overall. And, like other Roadmaster products we’ve sampled, this tire carrier is very well-built. The steel carrier body has a powder-coated finish for long-term durability and the hardware is made of galvanized steel or other corrosion-resistant materials.

The new Roadmaster Spare Tire Carrier may not be fancy or exciting, but it may be one of the best problem-solving accessories you can buy for a motorhome. Retail price for the Roadmaster Spare Tire Carrier is \$695. **M**

**Source** Roadmaster Inc., 800-669-9690, [www.roadmasterinc.com](http://www.roadmasterinc.com)

[5] The carrier slides into a Class IV or Class V hitch receiver so a dinghy vehicle can be towed; the carrier can also handle other accessories, like bicycles, when not towing. Multiple pin-mounting holes in the bar that goes into the receiver are provided to allow for spacing between the carrier and motorhome.



3



4



5

## Parkour Punks

On a couple of occasions, teenage boys engaged in parkour (overcoming urban obstacles by climbing or leaping) and attempted to gain access to our roof via our motorhome's permanent ladder, despite the extension part of the ladder not being there. To combat this behavior, I installed a metal barrier that is easily removed if necessary. I used a galvanized piece of sheet metal with eight holes punched in it, four U bolts, and eight nuts and lock-washers. You could even paint your name or some other greeting on the metal, if so inclined. Since I have installed the device, I have not had any more problems.

**Earl Andrusiak | Edmonton, Alberta, Canada**

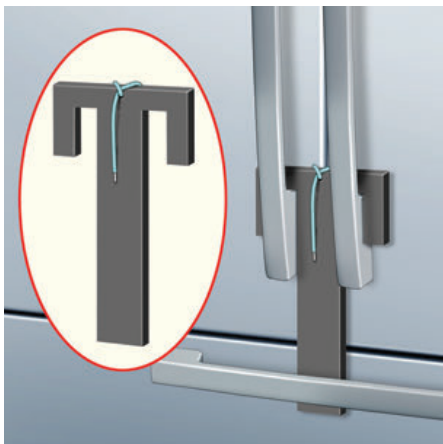


## Sleep Like an Angle

If you're like me, and you sleep better when your upper torso (not just your head) is a little higher than the rest of your body, this tip is definitely for you. I had a piece of 5/8-inch particleboard cut to 30 by 54 inches at the local home-supply store. This fits crosswise on our queen-size platform, and allows the slope to begin about where the waist would be when sleeping. A few screws along the bottom edge keep it in place, and a few screws through it into the edge of a 2-by-4 gives it a gentle slope. Round off all the edges and corners with sandpaper or a file for safety and to prevent damage to the mattress.

If your bed's platform is hinged for under-bed storage, leave some space at the top so it doesn't hit the wall or window frame when raised.

**Tom Becker | Bernalillo, New Mexico**



## T For a Tight Seal

I recently traded to a coach with residential appliances and found that I did not like the method used to strap the refrigerator doors together to prevent opening during travel. I cut a "T" fitted to the door handles to secure the doors and now I just slip the T into place and the doors stay closed. Since my refrigerator has a bottom freezer, the center of the T extends to capture that drawer. The key is a good fit so that the thickness is snug when inserted and the notches fit around the refrigerator handles. I used Plasti Dip Spray to coat the T so that it won't scratch the refrigerator and it helps prevent slipping. I added a pull-cord for convenience.

**Steven Ferguson | Frederick, Maryland**



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# Flame Thrower

Bison Airlighter makes short work of igniting charcoal and wood with the use of a super-hot torch and forced air

By Bob Livingston



## GADGETS

Cost: \$79.95  
Time: 5 min  
Difficulty: 1/10

Traditionalists will argue that the best way to grill food is over charcoal. Charcoal brings out a distinct flavor that makes grilling meats and vegetables so popular, but a traditional barbecue has its drawbacks for

motorhome owners. Charcoal has to be contained so it doesn't make a mess in the storage compartment and you need a way to start the coals. For most people, that means carrying along starter fluid or a starter chimney.

Plastic containers take care of messy charcoal, but it's easy to make a strong case against using starter fluid. Beyond the obvious care necessary when storing fluid, it's not environmentally friendly and can impart a foul taste on the food if not used correctly. A starter chimney has always been our first choice for lighting coals, but the bulky canister has been mothballed and replaced with a Bison Airlighter.

The Airlighter is a butane igniter on steroids. It's a relatively new product that was designed to light coals and wood safely and fast. Built around an ergonomic, adjustable handle, the metal tube terminates at a point where a flame, reaching 2,600 degrees Fahrenheit, starts by pressing a button. Of course, you have to get through the child safety lock, but in this case, the buttons are large enough for even an adult to handle.

Once the coals are ignited, which takes seconds, the internal fan is used to encourage the fire to burn much hotter. Within minutes, the coals are ready to cook over. There's no mess or fluid to deal with, and the blowing air cools down the tube so the device is easy to handle without the risk of getting burned. For nighttime visibility, there's even a light built into the housing that illuminates the coals or wood.

We've used a starter chimney for years and it also

works well, but it takes much longer. Our biggest gripe with the chimney is the use of paper stuffed in the bottom to ignite the coals. Once burned, it's hard to contain the ashes from the paper, especially if it's windy. The Airlighter eliminates this problem, and it stores in much less space.

Lighting coals or a wood fire could not be easier. The adjustable handle rotates in multiple positions and can even provide a pistol-type grip. Our first test was to get a wood fire started in a ring. Within a couple minutes, the fire was going; the blowing air plays a big role in bringing the fire to life. Lighting coals in a barbecue met with equal success. Honestly, we didn't think it would work as well as it did. And we got a kick out of the built-in bottle opener — some things never change.

Butane fuels the flame, and the company markets chef-grade gas that it claims will not clog the microscopic jets. The butane sells for \$6.95 and can refill the Airlighter three to four times. Although the company recommends its own butane (not supplied with Airlighter), it will not void the warranty if other high-quality butane is used. The flame is designed to burn for 15 minutes on a refill, which will go a long way considering how quickly it lights coals and wood.

The fan motor is run by an internal battery, which is charged with a USB cable. Fan run time is around 30 minutes per recharge.

The Airlighter feels durable and is finished nicely, which is probably why the company backs the product for 2 years, with registration. It is not inexpensive at \$79.95, but you have to get your head wrapped around the fact that it's not an ordinary igniter — and it makes using charcoal much more palatable. **M**

**The Bison Co.**, 845-258-9903, [www.airlighter.com](http://www.airlighter.com)



From far left: The Airlighter has a child safety lock to prevent accidental lighting. An integrated light works with the push of a button. Depending on the type of wood you're trying to light, you might need to use the flame mode for a couple of minutes, then switch the unit to fan mode.

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# Battery-Busted



Finding it difficult to secure a promised reimbursement for warranty work done on his motorhome, a reader asked Hot Line to intervene. He wrote:

“ I have a 2014 Forest River Berkshire 390RB that I bought new. There was a problem with the generator not starting because the house batteries would not hold a charge. The nearest Forest River dealership is Dylans RV Center in Sewell, New Jersey, which is more than 200 miles from my home, so I took the motorhome to RV Service of Virginia in Ashland, Virginia.

The technician at RV Service of Virginia found that the batteries were un-serviceable and needed to be replaced. I contacted Forest River's warranty department and put them in touch with the service manager at RV Service of Virginia. After that conversation, the warranty department representative told me that Forest River could not make payment directly to the service shop, that I would have to pay the bill and then get reimbursed.

I paid for the service and since then have been trying to reach Forest River's warranty department for reimbursement. I have left messages but have not been contacted yet. Hot Line's assistance would be greatly appreciated.

**Anthony Murray | Stafford, Virginia**

Forest River was contacted with Hot Line's request for further consideration. We received the following response from the company as well as an update from Murray:

We have received Hot Line's letter regarding Anthony Murray. I contacted Murray and informed him that we would reimburse him for the work that was performed on his coach in the amount of \$1,169.93.

It should be known, however, that according to my call log, I made a call to Murray and left a voice mail requesting information about the repairs. I never received a return call.

**Mitch Wirt**

**Customer Service and Warranty  
Forest River, Class A Diesel Division  
Elkhart, Indiana**

“ Today I am very pleased to inform you that I received a check from Forest River for the amount of \$1,169.93. Thank you very much.  
**AM**

noticed that within about 10 days all 30 gallons of propane had leaked out. I took my motorhome to a company in Maplewood, Minnesota, and it took the service technician no time to pinpoint the leak. Apparently, the mounting bracket that is welded to the LP-gas tank was cracked at the welded joint.

I drove home and did some research on the problem and found that Winnebago had a recall on this tank, but the recall only covered coaches built through September 2003 — mine was built Oct. 15, 2003. The same tank was still being used after the recall, and mine was one of those, but Winnebago won't cover my problem.

Can Hot Line please help me resolve this situation?

**Dale Sampson | Bethel, Minnesota**

Hot Line sent Sampson's plea to Winnebago Industries. We received the following reply from the company:

This is in response to Hot Line's letter concerning Dale Sampson. I have been in phone contact with Sampson and we have arrived at an agreement regarding repairs to his coach. Although his motorhome is well-past expiration of any applicable warranties, Winnebago Industries will provide him the necessary parts, at no charge, and he will pay to have them installed locally. We are taking this action as a gesture of goodwill and in appreciation of a Winnebago owner. Sampson seemed pleased with this resolution.

**Neal Flugum**

**Service Administration Supervisor  
Winnebago Industries Inc.  
Forest City, Iowa**

## Leaky LP

Experiencing ongoing problems with the LP-gas tank in his coach, a reader turned to Hot Line for help. He wrote:

“ In 2010 I purchased a 2004 Winnebago Journey from a private party. At that time, the motorhome had approximately 23,000 miles on it.

In 2011 I smelled LP-gas, but could not detect where it was coming from. Then, while attending the Winnebago Grand National Rally in Forest City, Iowa, in July 2012, I asked a Winnebago technician to try to find the leak. I was charged a fee for the inspection, but he could not find the source of the leak.

In 2014, I filled the LP-gas tank and

## Take Action

## Contact Hot Line for Help

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



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EQUAL HOUSING LENDER

By Ken Freund

## Cold Showers Build Character

**Q** We own a 2007 Thor Mandalay Presidio. I don't know if my question is unique to this unit or is typical of multiple lines of RVs. The showers, both inside and outside, have a shut-off at the handheld head. If I shut off the water at this point, when I turn the water back on, I am greeted with a large dose of cold water. The timing between shutting the water off and back on from 30 seconds to 3 minutes changes the amount of cold shower experienced. The only way to avoid the shock value is to turn the head away until the right water temperature returns.

Why does this occur? It is as if the cold water is displacing the hot water at the valve. I am unable to say if the condition is consistent if the water pump is in service or in city-water mode.

**Tom and Leigh Schaefer | Sioux Falls, South Dakota**



**A** As my father used to say when I complained about it taking so long for the shower to get warm, "Cold water builds character and shrinks everything else." It doesn't take much of a temperature drop for the water to feel cold. It shouldn't make a difference if the water source is onboard or city water, as both are routed through the water heater before reaching the taps. The easiest solution is to keep the water running slowly if you are trying to conserve, rather than shutting it off completely, or face it away as you mentioned. This is an age-old problem and there are no definitive answers. I have found that using a high-quality mixing valve (the kind used in homes) helps fix this problem.

### Battery Problem

**Q** We own a 2012 Winnebago Vista 30T. I have replaced three engine-starting batteries in 4 years. I tested this last battery and it showed 12-plus volts, but when I put a load on it with the tester, it read bad. So I took it to NAPA and had them charge it, and it was all right to start the engine. I went on a trip and the coach sat for three days. When I tried to start the engine it would not crank. I was able to start the engine off the other batteries. Do you know why the battery keeps failing to hold a charge?

**W. James Smith | Dansville, New York**

**A** The condition where the battery reads around 12 volts without a load, but the voltage drops off precipitously when a load is put on it, is known as a "surface charge" and it is usually indicative that the battery is weak and perhaps no longer able to hold a charge. It could be that it held another charge (by NAPA) long enough to work for

a while and then self-discharged. Another strong possibility is that you have one or more parasitic electrical draws on the battery, and when it is left connected for several days, it becomes discharged. On many coaches, the dash radio, cab lights and other items run off the engine battery. Keep in mind that most power converters only charge the house batteries, and not the engine battery. The more times the battery gets deeply discharged, the weaker it gets until it fails.

So, you need to fully charge that battery and then load test it to determine if it is still good. Then, install the battery (or a known good one) and check for draws when parked, using an ammeter connected between the battery post and cable terminal (with it removed). Track down current draws. You can also install a battery-disconnect switch for when you are parked, which is always a good idea. I also recommend a charging device such as Trik-L-Start, which directs current from the power converter to the engine battery.

### Gear Selection for Towing

**Q** Several issues back there was advice on which gear a dinghy vehicle should be in while being towed four down. I reread it several times and even showed it to a friend who does tow four down. The article said to put it in REVERSE and there was no mention about the key being on or off. Was this a misprint, error or am I nuts?

**Richard Rasey | Prospect, Kentucky**

**A** I'm not sure exactly what you are referring to, but we never recommend flat towing with the transmission in REVERSE. Two-wheel-drive vehicles need to be towed in NEUTRAL. Some automatic transmissions require that the shifter be cycled through several positions in preparation for towing before NEUTRAL is selected, which is outlined in the owner's manual. Four-wheel-drive vehicles with transfer cases, which have a driver-accessible NEUTRAL position, are a different situation. The vehicles get

towed with the transfer case in NEUTRAL, and the transmission should be left in gear to prevent any parts from being spun internally by the transfer case, since there's no lubricant circulation in the transmission when the engine isn't running. In owner's manuals, manufacturers recommend using various gears while towing. I have heard of situations where the transfer case got accidentally bumped into gear, and then the vehicle got towed at highway speeds. If a manual transmission is in REVERSE, the engine will get spun backward at great speed and will quickly be destroyed. Likewise, other low forward gears will spin the engine very fast when driven from the output end. Therefore I recommend using the highest forward gear, such as fifth or sixth, unless the manufacturer specifically states otherwise. This way, if the transfer case accidentally gets put into direct drive, the engine will only be spun at normal driving-speed RPM. In any case, always check the owner's manual for specific instructions.

### Ventilation Blower Malfunctions

**Q** I have a 1998 Tiffin Allegro on a Ford F53 chassis. The chassis air-conditioner blower started working on the high setting only, with no lower speeds. I traced it back to the resistor that controls the speeds. I found a melted connector and corroded terminals on the resistor. After contacting a local Ford dealer and finding that the resistor is no longer available, I cleaned off the corrosion and lubed the connection with dielectric grease. The blower worked on all speeds again, for a while. Then I noticed the blower only working on high. As the resistor still looks good, I'm wondering if there might be a problem with the motor.

**John Mangles | St. Charles, Missouri**

**A** You can test the resistor unit with a powered continuity tester, or with an ohmmeter. Each coil should have a different resistance. If any of the resistance coils show an open circuit,

the part is bad. This can be caused by overheating due to a motor that is starting to go bad, if the insulation in the windings is breaking down or shorting out or if the bearings are starting to fail and bind up, causing more drag and therefore requiring more amperage. If it is difficult to turn the circular fan by hand, the motor is definitely faulty. I checked with a local NAPA auto parts and was told the motor is available for \$39. They didn't find a listing for the resistor, but similar ones are available for Ford pickups and E-series vans that could be readily adapted. Salvage yards also may have them.

### Engine Failure Due to Overheating

**Q** My wife and I were traveling along Interstate 77 on our way to a rally in Virginia when we came to a 7-mile-long grade. We were within 1,500 feet of the top when our engine suddenly lost power. We got off onto the breakdown area and the engine gave up completely. The engine is an 8.1-liter GM gas model. After a Good Sam tow by T&A Automotive Towing and Recovery in Ennice, North Carolina, we found ourselves at Johnson Chevrolet in Woodlawn, Virginia. Long story short, they showed us the cause: The front surface of the main engine radiator was covered with road debris. About 3/4 of the surface was closed over. The result was two holed pistons among other problems. After installing a GM long block with a 3-year, 100,000-mile warranty, a new radiator, oil cooler, water pump, oil pump and sundry other little extras, we brought her home. The dealer recommended washing the radiator every year. It is hard to see this surface and it might have to be done from the inside.

If your motorhome is running a little louder, or the electric fans are coming on more often and are loud, you might look at the radiator. Heck of a lot cheaper than a long-block replacement.

**Hugh and Peg Fowler,  
Littleton, North Carolina**

## ADVERTISERS' INDEX

RS #	ADVERTISER	PAGE #
101	5 Star Tuning .....	8
126	Avion Vans .....	29
110	BrakeBuddy .....	24
103	Brazel's RV Performance .....	56
104	Camp Casual .....	78
	Camping World .....	49-51
	Classifieds .....	79-81
	Coach House Inc. ....	15
105	Cypress Trail .....	5
133	DISH Network .....	13
106	Dave & LJ RV Interiors .....	81
	Destinations .....	77
107	Desert Gardens RV Park .....	31
	Fleetwood RV .....	17
	Good Sam Extended Service Plan .....	30
	Good Sam RV Loans .....	73
	Good Sam Roadside Assistance .....	64
	Good Sam Travel Assist .....	69
	Good Sam Visa .....	20
108	Guardian Automotive .....	9
	Harbor Freight Tools .....	71
109	Holland Motor Homes .....	55
128	Leisure Travel Vans .....	37
112	Lippert Components .....	18
113	MaintainMyRV.com .....	5
	New York State RV Show .....	83
114	Newell Coach Corporation .....	85
115	Newmar Corporation .....	32-33
116	Nexus RV .....	59
	Phoenix USA Inc. ....	78
117	Progressive Insurance .....	19
118	RV Armor, Inc. ....	38
	RV Marketplace .....	76
119	RV Roofing Solutions .....	36
131	RV World of Nokomis .....	40
111	Renegade RV .....	84
132	Riverside Resort & Casino .....	40
122	SMI Manufacturing .....	58
120	Safe-T-Plus .....	7
121	Sea Eagle .....	8
123	Spartan Chassis .....	2
124	Sprinter Store .....	56
125	Steinbring Motorcoach .....	81
	Sun Trust Bank .....	47
127	Thor Industries .....	25
129	Vogt RV Center .....	57
130	Wilder Corporation .....	10

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**A** Sorry to hear of your incident, but I'm glad you got through it relatively unscathed — except for your wallet. Long upgrades are the ultimate test for cooling systems, and if there is anything wrong with one, this is where it will probably show up first. You didn't mention anything about what your gauges were showing: the coolant temperature gauge should have warned you in time to pull over and let it cool down without any damage. The engine should have also been making some ping-pong noises from detonation from the high temperatures. Anyway, other owners should heed your advice and keep that radiator clean. Blow the dirt and crud off from the back side. Be careful how much pressure you use; pressure washers can bend the radiator fins shut.

Workhorse Brake Problems

**Q** Have you heard of anyone having brake problems after their Workhorse motorhome chassis had the brake recall work done? My 2002 Winnebago Adventurer on a W-22 chassis is exhibiting the same symptoms of the brake calipers hanging up that Workhorse's recall was supposed to address. I filed a complaint with the National Highway Transportation Safety Administration (NHTSA) but have not heard back yet.

**Stephen Rusk | Elkin, North Carolina**

**A** Although you don't directly state it, I assume your coach had the caliper recall performed. I have heard of a few complaints afterward of the recall not solving the problem, but not many. I suggest calling NHTSA using the phone number on the recall paperwork.

Mudflap Flap

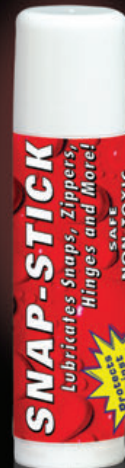
**Q** In my ongoing research to answer the question of "which mudflap is best," I want to comment on your response regarding mudflaps. In my professional opinion, the most effective protection and also the most bang for the buck are mudflaps behind the drive tires. I do concur with you that the solid mudflaps behind the coach are the better choice to enhance the quest to protect the dinghy vehicle. I have manufactured both for many years. I would also like to ask from where did you derive the facts as to the solid mudflap affecting the fuel mileage? The question is not aimed to dispute your opinion, but to increase my knowledge on the matter.

**Dennis Perry | Owner, Duraflap Mudflaps Medford, Oregon**

**A** A solid mudflap will block more air from flowing under the vehicle than a more flexible mudflap such as a "hula skirt" type, which tends to move out of the way and allow air to flow. Any time you block and trap airflow

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like this, you increase wind resistance of the vehicle. When you increase wind resistance, there's always the potential to decrease fuel mileage; the faster the vehicle drives, the greater the decrease. Additionally, a solid flap is likely to weigh more than a flexible one, and extra weight can affect mileage. This is all speculation and theory, of course, and would need to be proven one way or the other via head-to-head tests under controlled conditions.

### Genset Problems

**Q** I have an older Onan 5.0 Emerald generator. I had an RV dealer perform a tune-up with plugs, oil change and air and oil filters. The genset runs, starts, and handles half and full loads. However, it stalls at such inconsistent times, regardless of whether it has a full tank or half tank. Any suggestions?

**Joe Brennan | Via email**

**A** Whenever you pay a service facility to service a vehicle or generator or other device, and it doesn't operate properly when you get it back, the first thing you should do is notify the service people and schedule an appointment to have it checked over. It's possible that a component was left loose, for example. Did you originally take it in for service because you were already having this problem, or did it only crop up after the work was done? The most common problem with gasoline gensets these days is that they sit unused for extended periods and the stale fuel gums up the carburetor. Other fuel-related problems arise from not changing fuel filters (you didn't say if it was replaced) and faulty fuel pumps, or hoses that are deteriorated.

### Slow Refueling Tip

We have a 2005 Gulf Stream Independence gas engine with the same slow refueling problem as mentioned in the June issue. I found that by holding the pump nozzle as close to horizontal as possible when inserted, I'm able to fill the tank. Unfortunately I have to hold it in that position for the duration of the

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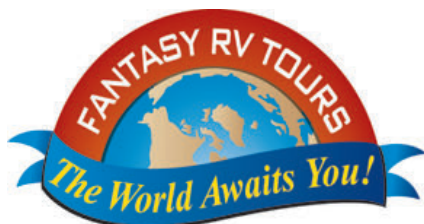
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fill-up. The shut-off does work when full.  
**Ed Patla | Roselle, Illinois**

Yes, sometimes it's possible to find the  
 right position for the filler nozzle, which  
 may require you to be a bit of a contor-  
 tionist. It's always worth a try, before  
 resorting to more difficult solutions.

**Rough-riding Chieftain  
 Comment**

This is regarding the "Rough-riding  
 Chieftain" letter in August. I had a 1999  
 Winnebago on an F53 chassis that also  
 rode rough, so I put Bilstein shocks on,  
 which helped a bit. Since I already had  
 an on-board air compressor to power  
 the tow brakes, I had a Firestone dealer  
 add front and rear supplemental air  
 bags with valves to adjust the ride, which  
 really helped. My next coach was a 2004  
 Triple E on a Workhorse chassis that had  
 Bilsteins, but I still wasn't satisfied with  
 the ride. While at a rally I was advised by  
 a presenter to replace the shocks with  
 Konis. I was able to tell the difference  
 almost immediately in crossing railroad  
 tracks or blacktop cracks, and noticed  
 less leaning going around freeway on-  
 and off-ramps. I also have the Firestone  
 supplemental air bags.

**Gene Nelson | Mora, Minnesota**

Thanks for sharing your experiences,  
 Gene. The Koni shocks and Firestone  
 air springs are good products that can  
 provide a noticeable improvement  
 over stock. If you make two changes at  
 the same time, such as installing new  
 shocks and air bags (springs), it can be  
 difficult to determine which one had  
 what effect on ride and handling. That's  
 why I recommend taking it for a test  
 drive after each modification. **M**

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# Happy Wanderings

Arizona's Antelope Canyon proves once again that there's a distinct upside to aimless ambling

By Alan Rider

“Lord of the Rings” author J.R.R. Tolkien famously wrote that “not all those who wander are lost.” It’s a statement that, as far as I’m concerned, should be every motorhome owner’s motto.

Oh, sure, it’s possible that on any given trip we can pick out a destination, slide behind the steering wheel of our coach and make a beeline for it. But, honestly, where’s the fun in that?

No, like everything from a raindrop on the windshield to the mighty Mississippi, we RVers tend to meander. And like those rivulets and rivers, over time we’re likely to leave behind a path that’s been worn smooth; one free from most of the rough spots — schedules, tickets, luggage — that trouble all those travelers who have yet to discover the slow pleasures of the motorhoming lifestyle.

While streams are the most common physical manifestation of this aimless rambling idea, it recently occurred to me that they’re not the only ones. I’m talking here about canyons in general and slot canyons in particular.

On a recent visit to Arizona and the grandest canyon of all, my ever-curious wife happened to notice a dot on the map just southwest of the town of Page that was labeled “Antelope Canyon.” Now, if that name doesn’t ring a bell, allow me to elucidate: If you’ve ever seen a photo of a slot canyon, chances are this is it.

That’s because Antelope Canyon is quite possibly the most photographed fissure on the planet, at least for its

size. Granted more pics have probably been snapped of the Grand Canyon but, then again, that chasm stretches for more than 200 miles.

This slot canyon on the Navajo reservation, on the other hand, is measured in feet. The upper portion we visited measures a mere 660 feet long.

But what an eighth of a mile it is. Having been carved by the raging waters of flash floods, Antelope Canyon winds its way between walls of Navajo sandstone more than 120 feet high. Now consider that in many places it’s narrow enough that you can touch both walls with your outstretched arms and you’ll begin to get a mental picture.

Over the years these floodwaters have not only cut this convoluted

channel, but have also polished its walls smooth. The result is a phantasmagorical world where a jaw-dropping 360-degree panorama of swirling shapes awaits you around every twist and turn.

To visit Antelope Canyon you’ll need to be accompanied by a licensed Navajo guide. We went with Chief Tsoosie of Antelope Slot Canyon Tours (928-645-5594, [www.antelopeslotcanyon.com](http://www.antelopeslotcanyon.com)) on a late afternoon outing when the canyon was at least a little less crowded than the typical midday excursion.

As our group wandered into the nondescript-looking crack in the red sandstone wall that serves as the canyon’s entrance, our guide offered insights into Navajo culture and even pointed out the best photo ops. Like all guides here, however, her most crucial function was to monitor the latest weather reports to keep us all safe from potential storms upstream that might generate another flash flood.

In addition to a guide, there’s one more thing no visitor here should be without: a camera. It doesn’t have to be anything fancy; a simple point-and-shoot or even a cellphone will do.

Not that any photograph can fully capture the enchantment of a place like Antelope Canyon. For its true beauty lies in that quasi-magical realm that awaits all wanderers, a place we like to call The Road Ahead. **M**

“In addition to a guide, there’s one more thing no visitor here should be without: a camera.”

## The Crack and the Corkscrew

Antelope has two separate slot canyon sections: upper Antelope Canyon (near right), also called the Crack, and lower Antelope Canyon (far right), also known as the Corkscrew.



Photo: MatthiasKabel

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