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WINNEBAGO

Adventure Overload Winnebago's versatile Fuse 23T Class C is fun to drive and lives large

A DAY AT THE BEACH **GULF ISLANDS** NATIONAL SEASHORE

DURANGO COLORADO A MODERN

SPIN ON THE OLD WEST

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1-11

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CONTENTS OCTOBER 2016 VOLUME 53, NUMBER 10



A spectacular spectrum of seasonal colors greets visitors to Lake Powhatan Recreation Area and Smoky Mountains National Park (see page 34).



A tailgating-friendly Class A motorhome like Newmar's Bay Star 3333 makes it easy to watch the big game in style. **Pg. 46** **4 ON RAMP** The Connection Addiction

6 P.O. BOX MotorHome readers share their opinions

13 ESCAPES Road Foodie, Wheels & Gear, Crossroads

68 OUICK 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 🕢

Sun, Sand & Solitude......42

Gulf Islands National Seashore may be spread out across two states, but spending time in this Mississippi and Florida gem can be a whole bunch of fun

The Classic Ride: Rialta Reality...64

A highly recognizable 1998 Class B offers one couple the motorhome of a lifetime



ON THE COVER

Winnebago's Fuse 23T lights up the backroads near the Santa Monica Mountains in Southern California. The Class C, built on the Ford Transit chassis and powered by an inline five-cylinder Power Stroke diesel, features a versatile floorplan and plenty of room for the whole family (see test on page 54). Photo by Scott Hirko.

ON RAMP

By Bob Livingston

The Connection Addiction

t's really interesting to see how motorhome travel has evolved over the years. Almost every RV enthusiast will tell you that the freedom to travel unencumbered and the ability to set aside their daily routines were big influences on the decision to buy a motorhome. Yet, it seems like even those of us that heed the call of the open road have become trapped in our own little electronic boxes. We were all promised that technology would make our lives simpler and provide more time to play, and no doubt the smartphone is now our most important tool, but these devices that can think for us and provide instant communication may actually be our nemeses.

When we first traveled in an RV, my wife, Lynne, and I made a pact that we would cut ties to our daily lives and enjoy the outdoors without the inherent distractions of work and maintaining a home. Granted, work was a little different for us, since RV travel was my job. But we tried to stay disconnected and, for the most part, it worked. We would seek out pay phones to call our family to let them know we were OK, but other than that, we concentrated on visiting fun places.

Attending the Winnebago International Travelers rally in Forest City, Iowa, last July was a real eye-opener for us. It's been a long time since we found ourselves without cell and internet service. As it turned out, our cell provider is not strong in that part of the country, and even though we tried to rely on a data device for internet service, the response time was slow because so many people had the same idea. We had a great time at the rally, but at the same time were stressed because we couldn't use the cell phone, check our email on demand or, heaven forbid, connect to Facebook. Lynne is addicted to Facebook and managed a workaround by logging in during off-peak hours.

When we got back on the road and the service returned, we were, for the moment, euphoric; in retrospect, it felt like being a prisoner of our own devices. Whatever happened to that promise to make life easier?

Obviously, we're not alone in our desire to stay connected. In this month's



P.O. Box (see page 6), there are a number of letters from readers who rely on electronics, whether to stay in touch with family or for business, and who have expressed some frustrations with service, especially in RV parks. It's not a perfect technological world yet, and we're constantly being bombarded with new developments that sometimes take longer to reach fruition than we'd like. For example, streaming entertainment to smart TVs and portable devices is pretty slick, but in reality, few RV parks are set up for that kind of service, and most of us don't want to pay for unlimited data plans. So we hope for improvements in available Wi-Fi systems.

RV parks usually provide basic Wi-Fi service, and the cost to expand capability is expensive. I'd like to see RV parks implement robust systems capable of streaming, but I am also willing to pay a premium for such service. Not everyone is on board with that idea, but it keeps the costs down for those who would rather stay less connected.

Sometimes I wish I could turn back the clock and keep quarters handy to feed those pay phones. Just sometimes.

"We were all promised that technology would make our lives simpler and provide more time to play..."

Contributors October



Morey Edelman, and his wife, Ruth, are adventure-loving RVers who travel six months a year in their Winnebago Vista 30W. They are continually amazed at the sights they encounter while on the road.



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



time between sailing and traveling in their Minnie Winnie. James Stoness has been crisscrossing North America in a

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and her husband, Eric, divide their

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Alan Rider has been wandering America's backroads for more than four decades, and is passionate about collecting memories of the remarkable people and unforgettable places he encounters along the way.



Mary Zalmanek and her husband, Jim, enjoy traveling in their 2003 Safari Trek when they are not at home in Monument, Colorado. Mary is the author of *The Art of the Spark* (www.artofthespark.com).

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

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



Alphabet Soup

P.O. BOX

Regarding Wi-Fi in a motorhome, as with most things, it depends. If you are doing business from an RV and need a solid connection, you cannot beat a Verizon MiFi (personal hotspot) device. You might have to get an amplifier if you travel in the boonies a lot, but my experience is that it works fine in most places with Verizon. Remember, an amplifier will make a weak signal usable, but it will not work if there is no signal available.

If you stay in commercial campgrounds, most provide Wi-Fi connections that are good for a few emails and a few website visits. Don't count on streaming, as even if it is not forbidden, you will soon find it doesn't work, anyway. Don't hesitate to ask for a site where the Wi-Fi signal is good. You still won't be able to do much, but you will usually have a good signal for checking email. Most smartphones have a hotspot feature that works fine to set up a connection to a computer or streaming device. I have found this works most of the time, but the MiFi device seems to have a more solid signal, and holds a signal better.

It is important to note that unless you are blessed with an unlimited plan on your phone, you will have to exercise caution with data use. Learn from your provider how to check your usage so you won't have to pay overage fees.

I have a somewhat limited data plan, but I still have enough data to stream some TV. I use a Roku stick and connect to the MiFi. Sling TV and my setup allow me to watch a few football games that are not on broadcast TV, but a football game in high definition can burn through 3 GB of data in a single game.

Don Miller | Leesburg, Florida

Thumbs Up!

I take my laptop with me when I am traveling in the motorhome. I use a wireless device that looks like a thumb drive. It's a dial-up service from AT&T, and works anywhere there is a cell tower or service. I like it better than Wi-Fi because I can use it without being in a campground or a store parking lot. It does seem a little pricey to me, but the convenience is worth it. **Connie Walton | Via email**

When You're a Jet ...

To stay connected to the internet when at home and while on the road, and when no other free Wi-Fi service is available, we use the Verizon Jetpack, also called the MiFi. The device connects to any Verizon tower for a 4G connection. Unlimited phone, unlimited text and various data plans are available. The Jetpack has a fast

Featured Letter



Rather than using a separate mobile hotspot, I'd recommend looking at your smartphone for tethering. Use your smartphone to provide the mobile hotspot, not an additional device with an additional monthly charge. If you need to go the additional device route, talk to your current cellphone provider first. They may be able to give you a good deal. I would look at AT&T and Verizon for their huge national networks. There is no joy if you can't get a connection. For the best pricing for intermittent use, check out Virgin Mobile's Broadband2Go plan for \$5 per day. **Dave Bittner | Dillon, Colorado**





New 36VSB floorplan joins the family friendly Verona lineup

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rechargeable battery for portable use. We also have a home phone in addition to our cellphones. So, for our home phone we use the Verizon wireless router system (model F256VW) with unlimited local and long-distance calls for about \$20 a month. It works when plugged into a 120-volt AC power source and is plugged into our house wall socket when at home, but we also take it with us when we travel in our diesel-pusher Class A motorhome. Our motorhome features an inverter system for 120-volt AC power for the all-electric fridge, TVs and various wall outlet plugs. So, we just plug the router into one of the motorhome's inverter outlets and we have our house phone with us while on the road or at any of the places we stay while in our motorhome but not out on the road. **Dick and Sandy | Near Buffalo, New York**



Manufactured by The RV Factory



Limited Use

I looked into just about every company that had some sort of portable Wi-Fi system. Since I am not a full-timer I did not want anything I would be paying a big monthly subscription for, or would have to be permanently installed in my 34-foot Class A at this time. For me, I only needed something to stay in touch with my customers until I could get back to my office. For my needs, I found the Verizon Jetpack works best. All the others were almost double the price, and featured longer contracts. The Verizon Jetpack package I use is only \$50 per month. The unit is about 3 by 4 inches and fits comfortably in my shirt pocket. There are more expensive plans with more GB available. So if you want/need to just check email, the Jetpack is the perfect unit. You can also use this device for up to five wireless devices. I use it for my iPad, and it seems to work well anywhere I go. Eddy B. | Cranston, Rhode Island

To the Maxx

I initially tried the Verizon MiFi system, but in some of the remote areas where my wife and I like to camp, service was still an issue. After much research I installed the MaxxFi Pepwave system from www.maxxfi.com. It is the same concept as the Verizon MiFi, but has a series of antennae installed on the roof, in addition to boosters inside the motorhome that allow it to pick up cellular signals from up to 20 miles away and link to any available Wi-Fi hotspot. It combines and broadcasts those signals as a personal Wi-Fi that you can access 50-100 feet from your RV. I use my Verizon data card at \$80 per month for 10 GB of data, or my T-Mobile card from my phone, but Verizon seems to have the best coverage. It's enough data for normal work and email, but if you want to stream movies or video you'll burn through 10 GB very quickly. Randy Springer | McHenry, Illinois

Lower-tech Alternative

I've had great success with Verizon 3G MiFi. It receives signals nearly everywhere I go, including way out in the country where even cellphone service can be minimal. Be sure to ask for the 3G MiFi device if you travel outside metro areas. The newer Verizon Jetpack only works near large cities where 4G cell towers are available. **Richena Holbert | New Haven, Kentucky**

iPlans

Our travels are limited to east of the Mississippi, and we use AT&T as our cellular carrier. We each use an iPhone 6. Most things that we need access to (emails, quick website queries, etc.), we handle using the iPhones alone. If we need the size of a laptop (his) or netbook (hers) and can't locate a free wireless signal, we activate the wireless hotspot on the iPhone, linking it to the larger computer and using the AT&T data plan. We keep several books from the public library or from Project Gutenberg (www. qutenberg.org) downloaded on our Nooks and, of course, our back issues of MotorHome stay in the RV. Steve and Sheila Glaser | Via email

Nice Velocity

We use AT&T Velocity (mobile hotspot), which provides us with our own Wi-Fi. It is much safer than any campground Wi-Fi. It is only about 4½ by 2½ by ½ inches deep with a charger to carry with you. You can get it at an AT&T wireless company store. Keep in mind that not all AT&T wireless stores are company stores. **Diana Henze | Via email**

We've Come a Long Way, Baby

Your July question of the month brought back memories of the many years my wife and I have used our motorhome for business. For 25 years we have been blessed to travel across this wonderful country selling our art.

In the mid-1990s, we traveled to events with a full point-of-sale program on a laptop, and we still use one today. But back then, at the beginning of internet use, we had to wait until we returned home to settle the credit card payments that we had received, settling them via the phone line. We also had to be home to print out reports, process inventory sold and pray all credit cards were approved.

When Wi-Fi started to become available. we would search around the area and find open Wi-Fi networks, which were mostly at chain hotels and libraries. With today's technology, all the hassles we encountered are behind us. We now use a 4G LTE mobile network (carrier of your choice) modem to connect to the internet. We also broadcast the signal so others can connect to the internet. It allows us to run our credit cards in real time, send receipts to customers, connect to our main computer at home and, with a network printer onboard in our motorhome, we are able to print our end-of-day and events reports. Guy and Barb Beals | Bailey, Colorado

Woeful Wi-Fi

My wife and I do a four-month winter escape from Point Roberts, Washington, each year to Southern California and on the return, we visit Arizona, Nevada, Utah, Idaho, Oregon and Washington in our Fleetwood Discovery 40X. We love the freedom and lifestyle that motorhome travel allows, and nothing beats going south in the winter.

Regarding this topic of Wi-Fi devices and services, I hope the industry (campgrounds and the rating systems) is listening. RVers experience horrible Wi-Fi systems, even in the best RV parks. For us, we likely hit 25-30 parks in the four months on the road, and can accurately say that about 94 percent of the parks have substandard Wi-Fi. Many have their own systems, and we found that those RV parks that contract out their Wi-Fi seem to be the worst of the bunch. It never fails when I call support; they say I am the only one having trouble, and there's nothing they can do but reset the router. Sometimes the internet works, and sometimes it doesn't. The biggest issue is that email won't work even if I have an internet connection. Other times, the internet is so slow I can hardly read a story before falling asleep. And I'm not even talking about downloading videos!

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EQUAL HOUSING LENDER

P.O. BOX

in, RV parks are not keeping pace. How can Amazon and Netflix expect campers to use their service if simply surfing the web and checking email are not doable? Dave and Zhen Zi Stumpo | Point Roberts, Washington

Sage Advice

We use a NetZero hotspot, which works very well. However, when using hotspots, be careful while streaming movies, as they use an incredible amount of data in a short time. Mobile hotspots are great for checking emails and planning trips. Mobile hot spots are also secured with a password, so you don't have to worry about getting hacked. Natasha B. | Via email

Making Life on the Road Easier

I grab the latest copy of *MotorHome* every time it arrives, usually reading it cover-to-cover in one sitting. And while I always enjoy the experiences and wisdom Bob Livingston shares with readers in his "On Ramp" column, I found two sentences in his "No Time to Relax" article particularly intriguing: "We also took the time to add a number of household items that make life on the road easier. Most of these items were the result of suggestions from our fulltiming friends who have spent enough time on the road to know what works and what additions are worth the extra weight." While my husband and I are not full-timers, we do spend several months at a time on the road in our RV each year. This leads to my question: What suggestions can your readers (particularly fulltimers) offer for added household items that make life on the road easier? Carolyn Cheezum | Finksburg, Maryland M

Question of the Month

Which everyday household items do you carry along in your motorhome to help make life on the ad even easier?

Send your comments to:

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

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King's Bounty Newmar's 2017 King Aire 4519 is a luxurious bath-anda-half model with upscale appointments. pg. 16



14 ROAD FOODIE | 16 WHEELS & GEAR | 18 CROSSROADS



Fire and Ice

The McKenzie Pass-Santiam Pass National Scenic Byway in central Oregon offers visitors a close-up view of nature's extremes

By Morey Edelman

uring a recent 38-mile drive from Belknap Springs, Oregon, to Sisters, Oregon, we passed through dense forest, stopped to stretch our legs on some great hikes and took in panoramic views of the Cascade Range. This section of Oregon Route 242 is part of the McKenzie Pass-Santiam Pass National Scenic Byway. Because much of the road is twisty, it is not recommended for vehicles longer than 30 feet. Those with larger motorhomes should park them in Sisters or Belknap Springs, and then drive their dinghy vehicles across the pass. Also note that this road is closed from winter (once the snow arrives) through June.

We drove the byway in fall to catch the seasonal colors. We camped near McKenzie Bridge at Paradise NFS Campground, which has 64 primitive sites, 30 of which can be reserved, and plenty of room for large motorhomes. Then we drove our 30-foot motorhome to Proxy Falls and hiked to the double falls that spill over ferns and mosses. Next, we drove up to the McKenzie Pass, stopping to view the incredible scenery of lava and fauna. The Dee Wright Observatory, built by the Civilian Conservation Corps and completed in 1935, is positioned at the highest point of the drive, overlooking 65 square miles of broken lava created less than 3,000 years ago. After parking our motorhome, we walked the half-mile interpretive trail to the observatory. From the top we had great views, including Mount Washington, only 5 miles away.

For more information, go to www.fhwa.dot.gov/byways/ byways/2148 or visit www.fs.fed.us/visit/destination/deewright-observatory.

ROAD FOODIE

By Bobbie Hasselbring

Passionate for Pumpkins

umpkins may be the Charlie Brown of vegetables. They're largely ignored all year, until October or November. Then we carve them, smash them or even use them as projectiles. According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, most of the nearly 2 billion pounds of pumpkin grown in the U.S. end up in landfills.

It's a shame, because pumpkins are low in calories (1 cup contains 49 calories) and high in fiber, antioxidants and vitamins. Some health authorities believe pumpkin may protect the eyes from age-related macular disease.

Pumpkin is also incredibly versatile. It can be baked, stewed, fried, steamed or roasted. It's a terrific addition to pies, pancakes, cookies, soufflés, stuffing, soups, breads and even beer. You can also roast the seeds for a hearthealthy road snack.

Pumpkins weren't always an ignored food. "Pumpkin" comes from the Greek word "pepon," meaning large melon. Historians think pumpkins originated in Central America 7,500-plus years ago.

Native Americans used to roast long strips of pumpkin over open fires. Clever American olonists invented pumpkin pie by scooping out the seeds and adding milk, spices and honey, and baking them in hot ashes.

Fall pumpkins are a terrific reason to go exploring. Communities across North America offer pumpkin patches, harvests, festivals and contests. In Ohio, the Circleville Pumpkin Show (October 19-22), one of the largest, features a biggest-pumpkin-pie contest and pumpkin-flavored donuts, ice cream and even pumpkin burgers.

Other great pumpkin celebrations include the New Hampshire Pumpkin Festival in Laconia; The Great Pumpkin Farm Fall Festival in Clarence, New York; and in Cresthill, Illinois, Siegel's Cottonwood Farm Pumpkin Festival offers the popular Sniper Zombie Paintball Ride. On the West Coast, you'll find the Underwood Family Farms Fall Harvest Festival, where animatronic chickens cluck, in Moorpark, California; and in Washington state, Craven Farm's Fall Festival in Snohomish offers a 3-D adventure projected onto the barn's walls and a pumpkin slinger for flinging the orbs.

Have a pumpkin recipe or festival you'd like to share? Email bobbie@realfoodtraveler.com with "pumpkin" in the subject line.



Above: Fall means pumpkin festivals around the country. For the recipe below, use canned pumpkin or make your own pumpkin puree by baking fresh pumpkin and pureeing the flesh in a food processor.

PUMPKIN COOKIES WITH PUMPKIN CREAM CHEESE FROSTING



This makes deliciously soft, not-overly sweet cookies.

- □ ⅔ cup granulated sugar
- □ ⅔ cup packed brown sugar
- □ ¾ cup softened butter
- □ 1 teaspoon vanilla
- □ ½ cup canned pumpkin (not pumpkin-pie mix)
- 🗌 2 eggs
- □ 2¼ cups all-purpose flour
- □ 1 teaspoon baking soda
- □ 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- ☐ ½ teaspoon salt

Frosting

- □ ¼ cup softened butter
- □ 2¹/₂ ounces softened cream cheese
- □ 2 tablespoons pumpkin puree
- □ 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- □ 2¹/₈ cups confectioner's sugar, sifted

▶ Preheat oven to 375 degrees Fahrenheit. In large bowl, beat granulated sugar, brown sugar, butter and vanilla with electric mixer on medium speed, scraping bowl occasionally, until well blended. Beat in pumpkin and eggs. On low speed, mix in flour, baking soda, cinnamon and salt.

Drop heaping tablespoons of cookie mixture onto an ungreased cookie sheet. Bake 10 to 12 minutes, or until almost no indentation remains when touched. Immediately remove from cookie sheets to cooling rack. Cool completely (about 45 minutes).

▶ **Frosting:** Beat butter, cream cheese, pumpkin and vanilla in a bowl with an electric mixer until soft and creamy. Beat in confectioner's sugar, about ½ cup at a time, until frosting is smooth and spreadable. Frost cooled cookies.



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Cood Sam RATED 10/10 */10 Pala Casino RV Resort joined the small percentage of resorts to be awarded the coveted 10/10*/10 rating from Good-Sam. The top marks are in every category including facilities, restrooms and showers and visual appearance.



Pala RV Resort: 11042 Hwy 76, Pala, CA 92059 PalaCasino.com Located in Northern San Diego County. From San Diego County & Riverside County: Take I-15 to HWY 76, go east 5 miles. From Orange County & Los Angeles County: Take I-5 South to HWY 76, go east 23 miles. Please Gamble Responsibly. Gambling Hotline 1-800-522-4700

For reservations: 1-844-4PALARV (1-844-472-5278)

WHEELS & GEAR



Dash Panache

As any motorhome owner who has left their rig outside knows, the sun's damaging UV rays can cause major damage if left unchecked. More than any other location inside your motorhome, the dash is exposed to direct sunlight, so it only makes sense to provide it a layer of protection. Action Awnings & Upholstery now offers custom dash covers to protect the dash while reducing glare and even heat reflection in the motorhome's interior. The covers are precision-fit using CAD/CAM technology and are easy to install with the integrated hook-and-loop fasteners. Available in nine colors, the dash covers are constructed with lifetimewarrantied poly-carpet. Fitting your motorhome is easy on the company's website; three simple steps in an online form will lead you to a nice-fitting, attractive cover. The company offers a 30-day full-refund return policy (receipt required). MSRP: \$229 (regularly \$249).

Action Awnings & Upholstery, 800-393-2169, www.rvdashcovers.com

One Hot Hotspot

Staying connected while on the road is more important than ever, as our lives become more intertwined with electronic corre-



spondence and entertainment. With Singlepoint's Wi-Fi In Motion MAX RV kits, users can create their own Wi-Fi hotspot in the motorhome. Onboard mobile Wi-Fi allows users to enjoy fast wireless broadband speeds without the need to tether to the often unreliable campground system. Plus, your own hotspot means your devices are protected with a private, secure connection. The Wi-Fi In Motion kit includes a rugged router that lets you set bandwidth limits for family members, block harmful online content and surf the web. The kit is customized based on your antennamounting needs: magnetic roof-mounted, wired roof mount or window mount. The system is compatible with most major carriers, or users can select the company's SinglePLAN data plan (\$85 per month), which offers the option of being turned off for up to six months per year for a modest \$15 monthly suspension fee. MSRP for the kit: \$549. **Singlepoint, 866-959-9434, www.wifiinmotion.com**



Fit for a King

Sometimes, roughing it can be so overrated. Newmar's 2017 King Aire 4519 is proof you really can take it with you. Built on the beefy Spartan K3 STAR tag-axle chassis, the King Aire is powered by the equally stout Cummins ISX 15-liter diesel, which churns out 600 horsepower and 1,950 LB-FT of torgue. The 4519 is a new full-wall-slide, bath-and-a-half model featuring luxurious appointments like polished-porcelain plank-tile flooring, Ralph Lauren fabrics and plush leather furniture. The front living area features opposing sofas, with an 84-inch sofa bed across from a large jack-knife sofa. A 49-inch 4K TV on a lift, Blu-ray player and surround sound handle entertainment duties. The galley features a stainlesssteel residential refrigerator, large pantry and a dishwasher. The bedroom has a king bed with rounded corners, and leads to the master bath with an enormous 50-by-34-inch glassenclosed residential shower, a vanity with two sinks and a full wardrobe along the rear wall. MSRP: \$887,250. Newmar Corp., 800-731-8300, www.newmarcorp.com



Back on Trac

The Mercedes-Benz Sprinter is one of the most popular and versatile chassis on the market today, but many owners feel there are still some issues with handling, especially when faced with high winds or the jolt of a passing semi. To help improve the ride, SuperSteer is offering a new trac bar for the Sprinter chassis (part No. SS701), designed to dramatically reduce sway and improve steering control by positively centering the rear axle. The bar bolts on easily in about 90 minutes with no drilling or welding required, according to the company, and comes with all necessary hardware and instructions. MSRP: \$583 plus shipping.

SuperSteer, 888-898-3281, www.supersteerparts.com

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ESCAPES CROSSROADS

Albuquerque, New Mexico

Up, Up and Away!

If you can't make it to the famous Albuquerque International Balloon Fiesta this October 1-9, don't worry: You can still experience the history of this lighterthan-air sport. Set in the center of the launching

fields on the banks of the Rio Grande in the northern part of Albuquerque, New Mexico, is the Anderson-Abruzzo Albuquerque International Balloon Museum. This museum details the history of ballooning, beginning in France with brothers Joseph and Jacques Montgolfier, who are credited with inventing the hot air balloon in 1783; just months later, the first free flight carrying humans reached an altitude of 3,000 feet. Since this first flight, continued balloon improvements have led to longer, higher and larger balloons. The museum takes you through this development.

In addition to the history and explanations of the science of ballooning, the museum has many of the record-breaking balloons of the past 50 years on display. These include a re-creation of the Double Eagle II, which in 1978 became the first hot air balloon to cross the Atlantic Ocean, and the Double Eagle V, which successfully crossed the Pacific Ocean in 1981.

Plan to spend a number of hours at this museum. Admission is \$4 for adults, \$1 for children ages 4-12 and \$2 for seniors 65 years of age and older. Parking for large motorhomes is readily available.

For more information, call 505-768-6020 or visit www.balloonmuseum.com — *Morey Edelman*

Ashland, Nebraska

Cold War Classics

For fans of military aircraft and the Cold War-era alike, the Strategic Air Command and Aerospace Museum in eastern Nebraska is a must-see attraction. Located just off Interstate 80 between Lincoln and Omaha. the facility offers visitors more than 300,000 square feet of exhibit space designed to commemorate the aircraft of the Strategic Air Command (SAC), which was a United States military command tasked with duties related to strategic air-forces combat between 1946 and 1992, primarily as a nuclear deterrent against the former Soviet Union. As a Smithsonian Affiliate, the museum houses a large number of aircraft — including an A-26B "Invader," F-84F "Thunderstreak" and an F-101B "Voodoo," to name a few — in addition to a number of exhibits and a gallery for the restoration of aircraft. Be sure to find the Apollo Command Space Module in the Spacecraft exhibit.

The main building features a huge glass atrium displaying a Lockheed SR-71A Blackbird — a long-range, high-altitude reconnaissance aircraft that had a cruising speed of 1,320 MPH. The facility also has two aircraft hangars, an exhibit of missiles and rockets, a children's interactive gallery and a theater. Visitors can also learn about outer space at the mobile planetarium in one of the hangars for an additional fee.

Camp next door at Eugene T. Mahoney State Park. For more information, call 402-944-3100, or visit www.sacmuseum.org — James Richardson 🖾

²hotos: James Richardson

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GETAWAY

Durango Diversion

With outdoor recreation, ancient and contemporary art collections, and a famous train, this Colorado destination offers the spirit of the Old West at its modern best

By Mary Zalmanek

urango, a charming town with more than 17,000 residents in southwestern Colorado, sits in the Animas River Valley surrounded by the San Juan Mountains. Its idyllic location draws visitors year-round. While the busiest tourist season runs from Memorial Day to Labor Day, winter visitors can enjoy skiing at nearby Purgatory Resort, and spring visitors can hike or bike through magnificent fields of wildflowers. I'm happy anytime I get to visit southwestern Colorado, which I've always considered the most scenic part of the state, but my favorite time is fall. Aspen trees turn a brilliant gold, daytime temperatures are in the 70s and the tourist attractions are lively but not overcrowded.

In mid-September, the Montezuma Land Conservancy hosts the annual Harvest Beer Festival in the nearby town of Cortez. It's a chance

Molas Pass, at an elevation of 10,899 feet, is on U.S. Highway 550 south of Silverton, and is also called the Million Dollar Highway.

to drink regional ales and ciders, save land (the sponsor has conserved more than 41,000 acres in three counties) and listen to good music. While I was happy to support this altruistic cause, it was the band Let Them Roar that got us there for the 2015 event. When the band started at 6 p.m., a few devoted followers listened from their lawn chairs. Soon the dance floor was dotted with children, who were almost as entertaining as the musicians. When the set ended at 9 p.m., appreciative fans were dancing, standing and clapping for an encore.

Truth be told, we've known Sofia Clark, one of the singers in the band, since she was an infant. Her mom, Michele Diamond, and stepfather, Sumner Schacter, met us earlier in the day at the KOA Campground in Cortez. We had a few hours before the beer fest opened. My husband, Jim,

hotos: Jim and Mary Zalmanek



$\overline{\text{Getting There}} \ni$

Located in southwestern Colorado at the foot of the San Juan Mountains, Durango is 20 miles north of the Colorado-New Mexico border, at the crossroads of U.S. Highway 160 (east/west) and U.S. Highway 550 (north/south).





Above: The Durango and Silverton Narrow Gauge Railroad, the undisputed top attraction of the area, travels through the picturesque San Juan Mountains. Above right: Old Town Square in Silverton reflects the character of the mining town during the late 1800s.

and Sumner opted to mountain bike at the popular Phil's World Trail System. They spent several hours enjoying the hard-packed, single-track trails carved through a high-desert mesa.

Michele and I went to the Anasazi Heritage Center, a museum in Dolores that explores native cultures and history in the Four Corners region. We learned about the Ancestral Puebloans. the term modern descendants prefer rather than Anasazi, by watching a film called "The Cultural Heritage of the Great Sage Plain" and studying the interactive exhibits. We peered through microscopes to examine pottery shards and imagined everyday life by looking at a replica of a pit house. Outside, the short, paved Escalante Trail leads to a view of McPhee Reservoir and the Escalante Pueblo, a small settlement from the mid-1100s. The museum is also headquarters for the Canyons of the Ancients National Monument, which contains more than 6,000 recorded archaeological sites on more than 170,000 acres of high desert.

The next day we moved the motorhome to Durango, stopping at the small town of Mancos on the way. We browsed several interesting art galleries. Raven House Gallery has some lovely handmade aspen vases and beautiful landscape photographs. Goodnight Trail Gallery of Western Art features high-end paintings, sculptures and Kelly Kilgore's museum-quality collection of antique and vintage Native American rugs, weavings, baskets, pottery, kachina dolls, beadwork and jewelry. The most memorable sight we saw was not the art, but Will Stone, a local man, strolling down the street followed by his cow named Crash, with his dog, Charlie, calmly perched atop the cow.

We checked into Junction Creek Campground, northwest of Durango. Our peaceful campsite (electric hookups only) was surrounded by ponderosa pines. The Colorado Trail, which stretches 470 miles to Denver, begins nearby. We hiked on the trail, encountering numerous hikers and mountain bikers, attesting to its popularity with outdoor enthusiasts. Since there are no water or dump facilities at the campground, after two nights we moved to Alpen Rose RV Park, a full-service campground north of Durango for the rest of the week.

Jim and I devoted a full day to exploring Mesa Verde National Park. After stopping at the Visitor and Research Center, we decided to see the Spruce Tree House and hike the Petroglyph Point Trail. We bought guide booklets for each. Four miles inside the park, we detoured to check out Morefield Campground. There are 267 sites, including 15 with full hookups (reservations required). It would be ideal for RVers who plan to be at the

Right: A rafter of wild turkeys gathered on a road near Durango.

park for more than one day. We continued on to Chapin Mesa, site of Spruce Tree House and the Archeological Museum. In the museum, dioramas depict scenes of Ancestral Puebloans who inhabited the area from the year 550 to 1300. Other exhibits include prehistoric artifacts and various items related to the park. Mesa Verde features nearly 5,000 known archaeological sites, including 600 cliff dwellings and mesa-top sites. For the first six centuries. Ancestral Puebloans lived on the mesa tops. In their final 75 to 100 years, they built the cliff dwellings. Spruce Tree House is the third-largest cliff dwelling in the



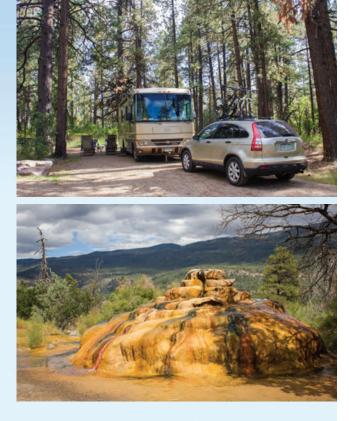
GETAWAY DURANGO, COLORADO

Right: Junction Creek Campground (29 sites with electric hookups only), northwest of Durango, sits near the beginning of the Colorado Trail, which stretches 470 miles to Denver. Below right: During a quick stop at Pinkerton Hot Springs along U.S. Highway 550 north of Durango, visitors learn that in the late 1800s the waters, thought to cure all diseases, were used for drinking and soaking.

park and the best-preserved due to the protection of the overhanging cliff. Built in an alcove 216 feet long and 89 feet deep, this village contained 120 rooms, 10 associated ledge rooms, eight kivas and two towers. As of press time, Spruce Tree House is closed to the public due to rock-fall concerns for the foreseeable future, though the site can still be viewed from overlooks near the archaeological museum.

The Petroglyph Point Trail is a 2.4-mile loop that encircles Spruce Tree House. We used our guidebook to identify points of interest. Most of the 34 markers on the trail are there to introduce the natural environment and the ways it was used to provide food, clothing, shelter and medicine. Pictograph Point, at marker 24, is the largest and best-known group of petroglyphs at Mesa Verde. According to our guidebook, "The panel is misnamed because pictographs are painted on rock whereas petroglyphs are carved into the rock."

On our way back to Durango, we saw a collection of interesting sculptures that aroused our curiosity. Dave Sipe has an open studio, sculpture garden and museum filled with whimsical, artistic carvings. A folk artist and wood sculptor, Dave invited us to wander the grounds. We were impressed with the quality and variety of his work, with everything from painted wood statues, to animals with a natural wood finish, to functional furniture. Only later did I discover that he once won a world cham-



pionship in chainsaw sculpture.

Several locals recommended Ken and Sue's Restaurant. After all that walking at Mesa Verde, we were ready for a good meal. We arrived at 5 p.m. without a reservation and were lucky to get the last table on the patio. I ordered the Thai shrimp with coconut curry, and Jim had the grilled tuna steak with wasabi smashers. Both meals were excellent.

After dinner we walked down the street to see an Old West show at the Diamond Belle Saloon in the Strater Hotel. We passed the time inside listening to a ragtime piano player. Soon, three saloon ladies — the Narrow Sisters, so called because their daddy, the sheriff, tried

Baker's Bridge was the picturesque site of Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid's daring jump into the river below.



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GETAWAY DURANGO, COLORADO

to keep them on the "straight and narrow" — entered the bar and ordered shots. Not long after that, daddy came in, very angry at his daughters. After a heated disagreement, the four of them went outside to settle matters. Most of the people in the saloon went out to watch. The daughters got the best of dear old dad in a mock gunfight. If only all such disputes could end this way, with everyone unharmed and smiling for group photos.

The undisputed top attraction in town is the Durango and Silverton Narrow Gauge Railroad. It's something all visitors to Durango should do at least once. We rode it several years ago and fondly remember the stunning scenery along the Animas River. The vintage coal-fired steam-engine train was voted "One of the World's Top 10 Train Rides" by the Society of American Travel Writers and the "Number One North American Train Trip" by National Geographic Traveler. Passengers can choose from four classes: presidential, first. deluxe or standard. The deluxe class offers a historic narration coach in which travelers learn how Durango began as a railroad town in 1881 and what it took to build the railroad. The train can also be used to access the San Juan National Forest and Weminuche Wilderness. When we rode it, we got off at Needleton, hiked for several hours in Chicago Basin, then caught another train on its return to Durango.

Since we didn't explore Silverton on our previous trip, we decided to drive there. In the early 1870s, nearly 1,000 prospectors came to the area looking for gold. In 1882, the first train rolled into this mining camp from Durango. By 1883, the town grew to a population of 2,000. The mining operation closed in the early 1990s. Now Silverton, with a year-round population of 500, is a National Historic Landmark. The tourist destination is noted for its outdoor recreation in the San Juan Mountains. and the Animas River, tours of the Old Hundred Gold Mine, and its charming Main Street with shops, restaurants and hotels built in the late 1800s.



Clockwise from above: Spruce Tree House at Mesa Verde National Park is the third-largest cliff dwelling in the park and the best-preserved due to the protection of the overhanging cliff. In Mancos, Will Stone strolls down the street followed by his cow named Crash with his dog, Charlie, calmly perched atop the cow. Dance-hall girls and the sheriff pose for photos after the Old West show at the Diamond Belle Saloon in the Strater Hotel.

After eating a yummy meal and buying several gifts in the shops, we took a leisurely drive back to Durango, stopping at sites along U.S. Highway 550. Less than 10 minutes after leaving Silverton, we were atop Molas Pass, elevation 10,899 feet. From the large parking lot, we walked to the viewpoint to admire the majestic San Juans with a lily pond in the foreground.

Honeyville is a third-generation family business just north of Durango that's been around since the 1920s. We stopped to sample some of its 100-plus products, including specialty honeys, jams, jellies and sauces. About 300,000 pounds of local honey per year goes into making these products. Using a new custom-made still from Kentucky, the Honey House Distillery is now making vodka and two whiskeys. I've never been much of a bourbon drinker, but I loved the Colorado Honey Bourbon Whiskey.

We saved the best for last, spending time with Zeke, our 5-monthold great-nephew, and his parents, Caley and Bob Copeland. We did family-friendly activities, like walking the Animas River Trail. The paved trail, popular with walkers, runners and bikers, stretches 7 miles through Durango's Animas River Greenway. We also drove to Baker's Bridge, the picturesque site of Butch Cassidy and the





Sundance Kid's daring jump into the river below.

Southwest Colorado embraces its past by preserving ancient ruins, conserving public lands, bringing history alive on its famous train and staging Old West showdowns on the streets of Durango. It makes me grateful to live in the present. The abundant outdoor recreation makes it an exciting place to watch our greatnephew grow up.

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Cortez/Mesa Verde KOA

970-565-9301, http://koa.com/campgrounds/ cortez

Junction Creek Campground

877-444-6777, www.fs.usda.gov/recarea/ sanjuan/recreation/camping-cabins/ recarea/?recid=42998&actid=29

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MEMBER NEWS | BENEFITS | EVENTS | PARKS | SAVING



DESERT KALEIDOSCOPE

Dreams take flight at New Mexico's hot-air-balloon spectacle

It's up, up and away this fall as 550 hot-air balloons fill the Southwestern sky at New Mexico's Albuquerque International Balloon Fiesta, the world's largest ballooning event. To help Good Sam members make the most of the 2016 festival, for the first time in years the club is staging a Balloon Fiesta Rally, October 7 through 10, hosted by Fantasy RV Tours.

The annual festival provides breathtaking visuals of hot-air balloons in all shapes and sizes, launched from Balloon Fiesta Park's 78-acre field. Each morning, spectators rise early to

see hundreds of balloons greet the sun in a series of harmonious lift-offs. After sundown, the park transforms into a dazzling light show, as countless burners ignite simultaneously and colorful balloons illuminate the night.

Good Sam members will circle their wagons within walking distance of the launch field for the four-day rally. In a nearby tent, Fantasy RV Tours will serve morning coffee, snacks and catered meals, and showcase evening entertainment.

The Albuquerque Balloon Fiesta is a bucket-list event that attracts people from all over the world, and the Good Sam Club is proud to be part of it once again.

FROM ALBUQUERQUE TO ARIZONA

Good Sam members who aren't able to make it to New Mexico this fall can get their hot-air-balloon fix one state to the west at the 2017 Havasu Balloon Festival and Fair in Lake Havasu City, Arizona, January 13 through 15. For the fourth year in a row, members can take advantage of Good Sam's discounted registration fees and camp in the club's reserved RV parking area on an island with wonderful views of the balloon ascensions and free shuttles to the fairground.

Learn more about upcoming Good Sam events at www.goodsamclub.com/events.



• GOOD SAM DAYS Camping World is celebrating the Good Sam Club, October 7 through 16, during Good Sam Days at store locations nationwide. Members can check their Camping World October savings mailer for exclusive members-only coupons and save even more during this 10-day event. www.campingworld.com

Rally-going Good Sam members see the Southwest at its best.

Giving Back

Members make a difference on Good Sam Cleanup Days

At this year's Good Sam Cleanup Days, May 14 and 15, members hauled out their Hefty bags and picked up trash on public lands, just as they have for the past 21 years. Among Good Sam chapters taking part in the 2016 event, the Capitol Gypsies of Boise, Idaho, were chosen at random to receive \$25 Camping World merchandise certificates for each participating family. The chapter did its part for the environment by planting flowers and raking leaves and branches at Lucky Peak State Park, east of Boise.

In the upper Midwest, North Dakota's Missouri River Breakers chapter spent Cleanup Days tidying up the campground and 4 miles of roadside ditches at Hazelton Recreation Area with help from local students. At the end of the day, the Missouri River Breakers thanked the youthful volunteers with a hot dog and ice cream feast. Because of Good Sam members' efforts at Hazelton each May for the past 15 years, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers-managed site now has a playground, a horseshoe pit and some electric RV hookups, says the chapter's president, Verda Seeklander.



Cleanup crew: Members of Idaho's Capitol Gypsies spruce up Lucky Peak State Park.

• For more information about how Good Sam members can give back, visit www.goodsamclub.com/volunteering.

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WINNEBAGOS AND LOCKS Discovering Ontario's historic Rideau Canal

ust across the Thousand Islands Bridge in northwestern New York lies the Rideau Canal, a 125-mile-long canal stretching from Kingston, at the head of Lake Ontario, to Ottawa, Canada's capital city. It's the oldest continuously operated canal in North America and you don't even need a boat to enjoy the sights, as all of the lock stations are accessible by road. If it hadn't been for the threat of attack to Canada from the south after the War of 1812 and the need for a route other than the St. Lawrence River, the canal — one of eastern Ontario's favorite recreational places — may never have been built. In 1826, construction began on the canal. It was a 6-year-long task that proved almost impossible.

The territory involved was mostly unknown forest, bogs, rivers and swamps. The terrain was varied, starting with a limestone plain near Kingston, passing over the granite part of the Frontenac Axis and back to more limestone as it descended to the Ottawa River. It is this variety that provides the great scenery that is now enjoyed by so many visitors to the region. In particular, the Frontenac Axis is a narrow piece of the rugged igneous rock of the Canadian Shield, which extends across the St. Lawrence River to widen and rise and meet the Adirondack Mountains of New York.

Today the Rideau Canal is a well-known historic waterway. In fact, in 2007 it was designated a UNESCO



Left: Merrickville is often referred to as the "Jewel of Rideau" and features many heritage

buildings and shops. Right: Once a lock is full, the craft inside is ready to descend. The process can

take from several minutes to more than an hour, depending on the number of locks in the system.

World Heritage Site. Twenty-four lock stations (47 locks) are still in operation, and many of the stations remain virtually as they were when built. The canal's locks also work much as they did when the canal opened in 1832 — turn the wheel by hand and crank up the chain to open a lock. It's fun to sit on a park bench and watch the boats passing through but, if possible, book a short cruise on the Rideau so you can experience "locking through" first hand.

Traveling along the Rideau

In the shadows of Parliament Hill, the Lockmaster's Office (built in 1884) stands at the head of the eight Ottawa locks. The highly informative Bytown Museum of the Historical Society of Ottawa can be seen in the distance.



Heritage Route in your motorhome, you will find museums, historic sites, scenic lakes and peaceful havens that take you back to the 19th century. To see the entire canal in one trip would be difficult. Many of the locks are still in areas with access roads unsuitable for larger RVs. Some places are likely going to be drive-by sightings since parking spaces are small. If you have a dinghy vehicle, we recommend you find a campground to use as a base and tour in your dinghy.

If you are crossing the border into Canada from northeastern New York, enter at the Thousand Islands Bridge (toll bridge) system. From there, turn west on Canadian Highway 401 to Provincial Highway 15 south and head



Getting There

From northeastern New York, enter at the Thousand Islands Bridge system. Turn west on Canadian Highway 401 to Provincial Highway south toward Kingston, which is a good starting point to explore Rideau Canal. toward Kingston, a historic city and a good place to begin your explorations.

Kingston has been a military center since the 1700s, and as such there are several installations well worth a visit. Part of their grandeur lies in the fact that they were built of blocks of local limestone. In fact, many of the buildings in downtown Kingston used limestone and present a unique appearance to the area, which is why Kingston is known as Canada's Limestone City. One of the must-see attractions in Kingston is the Fort Henry National Historic Site of Canada, located on a hill overlooking the harbor. Inside the citadel, visitors can take a self-quided tour or a one-hour guided tour of the old British military outpost. More adventurous visitors can take a hands-on shot at experiencing 19th century military life by firing a Snider Enfield Rifle or an Armstrong Cannon.

If you want to continue on into the city, you will pass under the La Salle Causeway Bridge, which is a heel-trunnion (lift) bridge opening the way for ships and barges into the Rideau Canal. Ahead on the route are more fortifications in the form of round martello towers built of stone, which were built to protect the harbor. Kingston was a shipbuilding town, and the harbor housed the armed fleet of sailing ships. These ships ruled much of Lake Ontario, and to be trapped in a harbor would be a disaster.



From far left: It takes a team of trained attendants to ensure safe passage through a lock. Victoria Park is conveniently located near the canal in Smiths Falls. The municipal park offers more than 50 sites, partial hookups, a playground and wading pool, free Wi-Fi and a dump station.

To follow the canal, don't cross over the bridge — head back north on Ontario Highway 2. Six miles ahead on the left is Rideau Acres Camping Resort — your best bet for camping in the Kingston area. The resort has 8,000 feet of water access, big-rig sites and full hookups. With approximately 300 available RV sites and access to the Rideau system, this is a good spot to start your canal adventure. You can even rent a boat and do a little fishing.

Continuing north, drive 22 miles on Ontario Highway 15 and take a left at Country Road 11 to Jones Falls, one of the prettiest lock stations on the Rideau. Here you'll find the 360foot-long Jones Falls Dam, rising 60 feet above the placid waters of the river. The dam was built with huge sandstone blocks that were guarried 6 miles away, dragged by horse and oxen to a barge, then towed to the site where workmen shaped them and put them in place without the use of mortar. It is known as the Whispering Dam because its curved arch reflects softly spoken words at one end to someone listening at the other. At the time the dam was completed (1832), it was the largest dam of its type in

North America and the third-largest in the world. The four locks here provide plenty of activity as the staff hand-crank the doors open, and then crank them shut. There is a marked walking trail leading across the dam and past the locks. RVs need to stop at the rather small parking lot, and not enter the side roads.

To get to the next lock, backtrack on Country Road 11 and continue north on Ontario Highway 15 until you reach Ontario Highway 9, then turn left to reach Chaffey's Lock Station — one of the must-see locks. Chaffey's Lock is a hidden jewel squeezed in between knobs of Precambrian shield. This small, rustic community caters to canal visitors. Just a 2-minute walk from the lock is The Opinicon resort; dining here will make your stopover especially pleasant. The Chaffey's lockmaster's house, built in 1844, is now a museum that interprets canal life from a bygone era. The Lockmaster's House Museum is worth a visit, though there is a lack of parking and turn-around spots for large RVs. Six miles south is Sand Lake Campground & Cottages, which has full-hookup sites, Wi-Fi, boat and canoe rentals.

Continuing along Ontario Highway 15, the next must-see stop is Smiths Falls — the halfway mark between Kingston and Ottawa. Here you'll find The Rideau Canal Visitor Centre, a museum with four floors of displays, artifacts and multimedia exhibits housed in a former 19th-century stone mill. Two other museums are worth a visit: the Railway Museum of Eastern Ontario and the Heritage House

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> If you time your trip to Rideau Canal just right, fall colors blaze over azure-blue waters around nearly every turn.-

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WINNEBAGOS AND LOCKS



Originally known as the Isthmus, the Newboro Lock Station offers a total lift of 7 feet. Construction began in 1827 but was hampered by a malaria outbreak before reinforcements were sent in.

Museum. Set up camp at the municipal Victoria Park, which is located on the water and is close to town. The campground has partial hookups, Wi-Fi and a dump station.

From Smiths Falls, head east on Ontario Highway 43 and make a stop in Merrickville — once voted Canada's prettiest village — before reaching the town of Kemptville. Here, the Rideau River Provincial Park has almost 200 sites (46 with electricity), and is located on the Rideau Waterway, but is not close to any locks. Canoes are available for rent.

The final stop is at the nation's capital, Ottawa. In 1826 Lieutenant Colonel John By established the point of entry of the new canal into the Ottawa River. Workers built houses and engineers erected barracks on top of the hill that is now Parliament Hill, home of the government.

The Wesley Clover Parks Campground is only a few minutes from downtown Ottawa and the Rideau Canal. Do not miss the opportunity to walk up to Parliament Hill and perhaps take a guided tour of the Parliament Building. Simply viewing the amazing stonework that covers this beautiful building is worth the walk.

The locks and canal permit easy access to downtown Ottawa. You can rent bikes or walk along the miles of dedicated trails at the edge of the canal. It's a great leisurely way to view the hundreds of pleasure craft moored along the canal or locking through. You can even book a short, guided cruise and see the locks firsthand.

Through January and February, 4.8 miles of the canal through the heart of Ottawa become the World's Longest Skating Rink. Nice days will see thousands of parents and children enjoying the ice, or stopping to buy hot chocolate or beaver tails at a booth, and generally having a great time.

A visit to the Rideau Canal region provides a chance to experience Canadian heritage, a working museum of lock systems, great scenery and good fishing. It's just plain fun!

For More Information

Jones Falls Walking Tour www.pc.gc.ca/eng/lhn-\Dhs/on/rideau/activ/ sentier_trail/sentier_trail_jonesfalls.aspx

Parks Canada 888-773-8888, www.pc.gc.ca

Rideau Acres Camping Resort 800-958-5830, www.rideauacres.com

Rideau Canal Campgrounds www.rideau-info.com/canal/accom-camp.html

Rideau Canal National Historic Site www.pc.gc.ca/eng/lhn-nhs/on/rideau/ index.aspx

Rideau Heritage Route www.rideauheritageroute.ca/en

Sand Lake Campground 866-359-6361, www.sandlakecampground.on.ca

Wesley Clover Parks Campground www.wesleycloverparks.com





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FALL FANTASY

Exploring the Blue Ridge Parkway and Great Smoky Mountains National Park is a great way to take in the splendor of the changing seasons by motorhome, on foot or astride a bicycle

s we drove our motorhome along the Blue Ridge Parkway, we couldn't stop oohing and aahing at the magnificent views at every new turn in the road. Traveling from the north, we had timed our trip to arrive in Asheville, North Carolina, in mid-October, when the autumn leaves were in all their glory. We took a couple of days to check out Asheville — its terrific farmers market, the town's eclectic shops and some of the local brewpubs — and camped nearby at Lake Powhatan Campground (828-670-5627), a U.S. Forest Service facility with available electric hookups and showers. From the campground, we hiked a short 1-mile trail to the North Carolina Arboretum (www.ncarboretum.org), 65 acres of cultivated beauty. This was all good fun, but we were just warming up for our time in the Great Smoky Mountains.

We awoke to a misty morning, the perfect day to head to Great Smoky Mountains National Park. First, we needed to decide whether to continue along the Blue Ridge Parkway to the park entrance, or to take an alternate route due to the mist and fog. This stretch of the Blue Ridge has the highest elevation, with some great views, and we didn't want to miss these. So we delayed awhile, waiting for the fog to clear, and decided to take the Blue Ridge option. We're glad we did; the fog lifted as we climbed through the 6,000-foot mountain pass. Along the way, we stopped at mile marker 422.4 and took the hike at Devil's Courthouse up to a promontory. This is a fairly steep hike, but worth the effort, as we watched the sun break over the mountains. Knowing that there are some tunnels in the last 5 miles of the Parkway that are not RVfriendly, we exited by Soco Gap (mile marker 455.7) and headed to the town of Cherokee on U.S. Route 19.

Cherokee was a good place to fuel up, fill our pantry and then take a couple of hours to visit the Museum of the Cherokee Indian. There are lots of exhibits and history at the museum on the first 10,000 years of this Indian nation. The museum depicts the arrival of the British and their trading, the settlements of the new Americans encroaching on Cherokee territory and then their forced relocation to Oklahoma. One Cherokee clan was able to return and purchase land, and has now become re-established in their former tribal lands.

Following our history stop, it was time to enter Great Smoky Mountains National Park, with an immediate stop at the Oconaluftee Visitor Center. We learned that this park is the mostvisited national park in the country, with more than 10 million visitors annually. We picked up the fall park newspaper, park maps and a good

In addition to the scenic autumn splendor, the Lake Powhatan Recreation Area offers a swimming beach, trout fishing, cascading waterfalls, and hiking and mountain-biking trails.

book on local hikes. Loaded with all of this information. we started driving the Newfound Gap Road. We had been a little bit concerned about driving our motorhome on this road (U.S. Route 441), but it turned out not to be an issue. The road climbs to the Newfound Gap, with an elevation of 5,046 feet, and then drops back down toward Gatlinburg, Tennessee, following the Little Pigeon River. The road is well-paved, with wide shoulders and fairly gradual grades as well as many pullouts with mountain views. We thoroughly enjoyed the sights and watched the many different forests change as we climbed up and down from the gap.

After 33 miles on this pleasant drive, we reached the Sugarlands Visitor Center, where we turned west onto Little River Road (and then Laurel Creek Road) for another 18 miles. A beautiful but fairly tedious drive in our 30-foot motorhome, we reached our first campground destination in the Smokies, located in Cades Cove.

Cades Cove Campground is a pretty typical national park campground. The primitive sites are fairly close together; no hookups are available, but there are flush toilets, drinking water and a dump station. There is an adjacent camp store with basic necessities (including ice cream!) and bike rentals. The best part about this campground is its location close to the Cades Cove Loop Road and the many hiking trails. With 159 campsites for RVs up to 35 feet, this campground does fill up on weekends, as it did while we were there. The peak fall colors brought out many of the campers. Fortunately, we had made reservations (877-444-6777),

Right: Lake Powhatan Campground offers nearly 100 sites (20 with full hookups) and an RV dump station. Most sites are private and shaded, and all have picnic tables, tent pads and fire rings. Hot showers and flush toilets are available in the bathhouses. The WNC Farmers Market in downtown Asheville is open year-round and provides nearly 200 spaces for merchants to sell seasonal local treats like fruits and vegetables, jams and jellies, honey, baked goods and, of course, pumpkins.





Getting There

Great Smoky Mountains National Park straddles the border of North Carolina and Tennessee. The three main park entrances are located in Cherokee, North Carolina; Gatlinburg, Tennessee; and Townsend, Tennessee. To reach the Cherokee entrance from the north, take Interstate 40 to U.S. Highway 74 to U.S. 19 to Cherokee. Turn on to U.S. 441 north and follow the road into the park. From the south, take U.S. 441/U.S. 23 north. At Dillsboro, merge on to U.S. 74 west/U.S. 441 north. At Exit 74, merge on to U.S. 441 and follow it through Cherokee to the park. so we had no issue getting a campsite. We recommend you do the same. While staying at this campground, we spotted white-tailed deer and heard rumors of nearby sightings of black bears, coyotes and turkeys.

The main event is the 11-mile Cades Cove Loop Road, which begins only a quarter-mile from the campground. The valley of Cades Cove held a vibrant community in the late 19th century. Throughout the valley there are still many buildings from this era, including log homes, barns, a gristmill and three churches. Many of these buildings have been restored and are open to explore. You can make the drive with your dinghy or, as we did, bicycle the length of the loop.

Having brought our bikes with us, we set them up, loaded a picnic lunch and some snacks in our panniers and off we rode. Because it was a Saturday morning, we ran into some heavy car traffic driving the same one-way loop, and since we were into late October there were no bicycle-only times. (Every Wednesday and Saturday morning prior to 10 a.m., the road is closed to automobile traffic, from the beginning of May until the third week in September). Fortunately, after the first mile, the traffic congestion cleared and we could enjoy the ride. We stopped at many of the cabins and churches, and took a longer break by the Cable Mill to enjoy our lunch. There is also a small general store with souvenirs and snacks.

We spotted a park ranger interpretive talk and went over to hear a discussion about bear safety. A volunteering 12-year-old boy with a bearskin was demonstrating the proper actions to take when confronting a bear. With more than 1,500 bears in the park, this was good information. Next we talked with a park ranger who was playing a psaltery, a musical instrument from the era. Played with a bow rather than plucked, it was hauntingly beautiful. The ranger said it was a combination of the Irish-Celtic and the German settlers' instruments. Following our break, we got back on our bikes and continued the loop with stops along the way. Arriving back at the campground, with the blue skies of fall, and the leaves coming down, we sat by our campfire and relaxed, planning for our next two days of hikes.

And hike we did. Waking up in the morning with the mists surrounding the mountains, we ate a hearty breakfast and then assembled our packs and headed out on the trails. It's really good to have so many trails leaving right from Cades Cove Campground. Today's hike was the Anthony Creek Trail, only a little over a half-mile to the trailhead, and then we continued another couple of miles to where we met up with the Appalachian Trail. We enjoyed the great views of the leaf colors and the surrounding mountains.



Top: Water and hydrocarbons emitted by the dense forest give the Great Smokies their name. Far left: John Oliver's Cabin in Cades Cove still stands; Oliver and his wife resisted selling the land when the park was being formed. Left: Serene sights such as this stream on Little River Trail are common.



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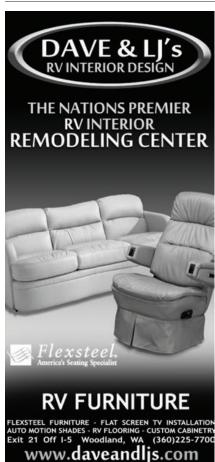
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The following day, we hiked the 5-mile round trip to Abrams Falls. Even though these falls are only 20 feet high, the volume of water crashing down the rocks into a long, deep pool made this one of our favorite waterfalls in the park. The pine and oak forest along the ridges, the hemlock and rhododendron forest along the creek and another sunny blue sky all made for



We could have lingered at Cades Cove Campground for many more days, but we decided to head to Elkmont Campground and check out another part of this park. Once again, we were glad we had made reservations, since the campground was full. The fabulous weather and peak fall colors had much to do with the lack of available sites. The 220 campsites at Elkmont are more spacious than Cades Cove. There is a maximum motorhome length of 35 feet here (32 feet for trailers). Elkmont is also centrally located to a number of hiking trails, the nearby Sugarlands Visitor Center (where the RV dump station is located) and the 1.9-mile pedestrian bike/walk trail from the visitor center to Gatlinburg. There is also a shuttle service from the campground to Laurel Falls and to Gatlinburg.

We skipped the walk into Gatlinburg, although driving through the main street on our way out of the park, it did look like fun checking out the local souvenir shops, the many restaurants and the constant activities at the convention center. We did decide to take the Cucumber Gap Trail (with a name like this, how could you not?). This was another lovely hike through the woods, and then a surprise. In the early 1900s the Appalachian Club was established by visitors from Knoxville. They built a large clubhouse for their social activities, and many cabins

to house the visitors. This was quite a happening place in its day. The National Park Service has restored the clubhouse and is working to restore many of the other buildings. Our hike led us down the main street of this development. At one time, the location of the Elkmont Campground was part of this resort, but we had no idea we would come across this village at the back of our campground.

Above: A moderate 5-mile round trip hike through pine-oak, hemlock and rhododendron forests rewards visitors with 20-foot-tall Abrams Falls, named for a Cherokee chief who lived down-

stream. Blue Ridge Parkway is one of the top leaf-peeping destinations in the United States.

After a few days, it was time for us to move on, but there were so many more hikes and waterfalls that we wanted to see. We will just have to make another trip back here in the future. We thought we had picked the perfect time to see the Great Smoky Mountains with its vibrant fall colors. Or did we? When the rhododendrons bloom in May, the spring flowers pop; is that a better time to visit? Or is it the summer. when the mists have cleared? There's so much to do and see here in Great Smoky Mountains National Park. It's easy to see why this is the most-visited national park. 🖾

For More Information

Blue Ridge Parkway 828-298-0398, www.nps.gov/blri

Great Smoky Mountains National Park 865-436-1200, www.nps.gov/grsm

Museum of the Cherokee Indian 828-497-3481, www.cherokeemuseum.org

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A day at the beach takes on a profound meaning at the Gulf Islands National Seashore

The National Park Service's 100th birthday celebration may be winding down, but here on the pages of MotorHome magazine, the party's far from over. Which means our monthly Find Your Adventure series continues as we head for warmer climes to seek out some of the wide variety of adventures — from mild to wild — that are just waiting to be had in the 400-plus units under the protection of the National Park Service.

hatever mental images the phrase "a day at the beach" conjures up, chances are good that the 120,000 acres of sparkling white sand and brilliant turguoise-colored water known as Gulf Islands National Seashore will confound and contradict them.

That's because this lovely yet ever-changing unit of the National Park Service (NPS), stretched out along 160 miles of Gulf of Mexico coastline, protects some of the last undeveloped stretches of oceanfront property in Florida and Mississippi. No small accomplishment in two states where so much of the natural coastal environment has been lost to vacation condos and T-shirt shops.

Look a little closer, however, and you'll find the park's real beauty goes much deeper than its sunny days and sandy beaches.

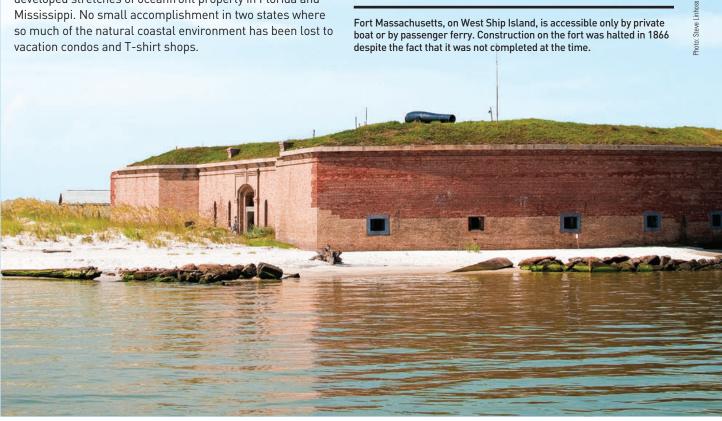
A Big Sandbox

The islands that give the park its name run from just east of Pensacola, Florida, to the Mississippi resort town of Gulfport (some islands between these two sections are part of Alabama's state park system). Together they make up the largest of the 10 national seashores under the NPS's watch.

From east to west the islands include Santa Rosa, Perdido Key, Petit Bois, Sand Island, Horn Island, East Ship Island, West Ship Island and Cat Island. Perhaps just as important is the more than 80 percent of the park's acreage that's actually underwater.

The number of annual visitors — almost 4 million at

Fort Massachusetts, on West Ship Island, is accessible only by private boat or by passenger ferry. Construction on the fort was halted in 1866 despite the fact that it was not completed at the time.





Left to right: Tours of Fort Massachusetts are available in the spring, summer and fall. The Blue Angels perform daring feats while airborne. The National Naval Aviation Museum in Pensacola offers visitors 350,000 square feet of exhibit space on its 37-acre grounds, and is home to more than 150 aircraft from the Navy, Marine Corps and Coast Guard.

last count, or about the same as Yellowstone — gives some indication of the park's popularity. And yet, Gulf Islands National Seashore itself still manages to retain an unspoiled feel that so many beach destinations lost decades ago.

To help you get your bearings, there are four visitor centers: Naval Live Oaks Visitor Center and Park Headquarters in Gulf Breeze, Florida; Fort Pickens Visitor Center in Pensacola Beach, Florida; Fort Barrancas Visitor Center aboard the Naval Air Station Pensacola, Florida; and the William M. Colmer Visitor Center in Ocean Springs, Mississippi, just east of Biloxi.

Beyond the Beach

The main focus here, of course, are the low barrier islands themselves, their dunes held in place by waving bunches of sea oats and their interiors dotted with scraggly pine forests.

But, if it's a jumpin' beach scene you're after, this is not it. Given the fact that only one of these narrow spits of sand — West Ship Island — is accessible by public ferry (228-864-1014, www.msshipisland.com), the chances are better than average that you can find a long stretch of deserted beach to call your own.

That said, don't make the mistake of assuming the islands are the only place to find this increasingly rare quality. Those looking for a break from all of that sun and sand, for example, will find mainland attractions like Mississippi's Davis Bayou, with its coastal forests, bayou boardwalks, bird-watching and fishing pier, to be equally peaceful.

In addition to this natural history, the Gulf Islands National Seashore also has its share of fascinating human

relics, including a number of historic forts that await your inspection. These include everything from the Spanishbuilt Bateria de San Antonio that dates back to the American Revolutionary War, to Fort Pickens, which was the only Southern fort held by the Union Army throughout the Civil War and which last saw service in World War II.





Visitors to Pensacola Lighthouse and Museum, originally built in 1859, climb 177 steps to the top for sweeping coastal views.

Getting There

Gulf Islands National Seashore is composed of two sections — Florida and Mississippi — that are actually a two-hour drive apart. Both are located south of Interstate 10. Visit the NPS website (www. nps.gov/guis/planyourvisit/directions.htm) for detailed directions to each area.



Beaches in the area can fill up quickly, especially during the summer months. The beaches are especially popular due to their gentle waves; clear, shallow waters; and sugar-white sand.

Offshore Adventures

By all means, the adventurous should start with exploring the islands. Some, like Santa Rosa and West Ship Island, are relatively easy to visit because of bridges to the mainland and that seasonal ferry service, respectively.

Others require a little more effort

to get to, but offer a potentially bigger payoff. To get to Petit Bois, Horn Island and Cat Island, for example, you'll need to arrange for an authorized water taxi shuttle service like the ones listed on the park's website (www.nps. gov/guis/planyourvisit/boat-chartersin-mississippi.htm).



RV PARKS

There are two developed campgrounds in the park, one in Florida and one in Mississippi.

Fort Pickens Campground on Santa Rosa Island near Pensacola, Florida, has 180 campsites with water and electric hookups that can accommodate RVs up to 50 feet in length. A dump station is onsite. Keep in mind the road to the campground can flood at any time, forcing the closure of the road and campground; call 850-934-2656 for the latest information.

Davis Bayou Campground near Ocean Springs, Mississippi, has 52 sites with water and electric hookups that can accept RVs up to 45 feet in length. A dump station is onsite.

For reservations to either campground, call 877-444-6777 or visit www.recreation.gov for reservations.

The surrounding cities of Gulfport/Biloxi, Mississippi and Pensacola, Florida, also have a number of commercial RV parks from which to choose.

Once you come ashore, you have a number of entertaining options. Besides simply kicking back and working on your tan, you can swim and snorkel to your heart's content. You can also amble along through the gentle surf in what has been described as one of the country's best beachcombing spots. Plan your arrival for the hours around low tide — especially after a storm — and you may be surprised what you'll find staring back up at you from the receding waves (you can collect seashells as long as they don't have living creatures in them).

From far left: Visitors to the Davis Bayou can learn about the area through informative plaques along the eponymous trail. Gulf Islands National Seashore's habitat is home to a wide variety of animals, including these tern.

Horn Island is an undeveloped barrier island that has been designated a wilderness zone, which makes it a great place for wildlife viewing and bird-watching.

A Wild Life

One of the little-heralded joys of Gulf Islands National Seashore is the chance to see wildlife in its element. like the bottlenose dolphins that often play in the wake of charter fishing boats and the West Ship Island ferry. A more elusive but no less exciting sighting is the sea turtles that crawl up onto the sand to lay their eggs on area beaches from spring through early fall. If you're really fortunate you might witness hatchlings from one of these four sea turtle species loggerhead, green, Kemp's ridley and leatherback — as they emerge from the nest and scamper their way toward the ocean.

If bird-watching's your thing, be sure to bring your binoculars and field guides. This is a prime stopover and nesting ground for more than 280 winged species, offering the chance to add everything from a common osprey to the endangered snowy plover to your life list. Migration patterns mean the best bird-spotting usually occurs in spring and fall.

Mainland Diversions

The Gulf Islands National Seashore also has its share of attractions back on the mainland. For starters, you can get your daily workout climbing the 177 steps to the top of the Pensacola Lighthouse and Museum, whereupon you'll be greeted with sweeping views from the top of the tallest beacon along the Gulf Coast.

With all this water around, it figures there's also some good fishing to be had. Daily charters head out into the Gulf in pursuit of game fish, from sharks to red snapper. Closer to shore, you'll find a number of other fishing guides ready to show you their favorite spots along inland waterways for the best in flats fishing.

Aviation buffs will want to visit the National Naval Aviation Museum, where you'll find more than 150 planes and thousands of smaller artifacts, plus flight simulators and an IMAX movie. This is also the home of the U.S. Navy's Blue Angels flight demonstration team, which you can often watch practicing on most Tuesday and Wednesday mornings from March through November. As of press time, the flight line was not open to the public, so be sure to check www.naval aviationmuseum.org before your visit.

The One Constant

In the final measure, a visit to Gulf Islands National Seashore may seem like just another day at the beach. But while you have your sunny days and sandy shores, what really sets it apart is the one thing that's hard to come by in your typical beach scene — a true sense of solitude.

For More Information

Gulf Islands National Seashore 850-934-2600, www.nps.gov/guis





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From top: Winnebago's Vista 29VE offers a Tailgating package that includes everything you need for a big-game experience. The Fleetwood Storm 36D's galley is a great setup for entertaining. With a coach like Tiffin's Allegro Bus 40SP, it's fun to sport your team's colors at the RV park.

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GAME TIME

D

f getting there really is half the fun, that still leaves quite a bit of room for partying once you've arrived. As motorhome owners, we tend to be a sociable bunch who enjoy the company of others, be it family, friends or even fellow campers we've just met. Campsite gatherings are a regular occurrence in the RV lifestyle, and become even more enjoyable when the outside becomes an extension of the motorhome. That's what makes motorhomes with exterior entertainment centers and galley areas so special; they allow us to combine the luxury of high-end appointments with the splendor of the great outdoors. And, if you can add the kinship and camaraderie of being a sports fan to the mix, you have the ingredients for the perfect afternoon. Rallying the troops outside and watching the big game — whether it's played on the gridiron, the diamond, the court or on the ice - is easier than ever thanks to the continually evolving technology of electronics and kitchen appointments. That's why we've gathered the following all-star team of top Class A motorhomes for tailgating bliss. These rigs are designed with the mindset of bringing the indoors out, so that we may enjoy all the benefits of the RV lifestyle together, breathing in the fresh air under the bright midday sun or beneath a dazzling canopy of stars.

D



COACHMEN PURSUIT

Coachmen's 30-footer packs quite a bit of tailgating punch for barbecue connoisseurs and sports fans alike. The 30FW features an exterior kitchen with a fridge for snacks and cold drinks, in addition to a sink and additional counterspace the cook is sure to appreciate. The included portable grill can be connected to LP-gas in seconds and collapses for easy storage once the game's over. The available exterior entertainment center with a 32-inch TV and DVD player allows tailgaters to enjoy every second of the game, while a large 20-foot awning helps keep the crowd protected from the elements. Inside, the open floorplan offers a great space for socializing, and additional 32-inch TVs in the living area and the bedroom make it easy to catch every highlight.

Chassis	Ford F-53
Engine	6.8-L V-10
Fuel capacity	80 gal
GVWR	18,000 lbs
Exterior length	30' 3"
Exterior width	8' 6"
Exterior height with A/C	12'
Wheelbase	208"
Freshwater capacity	50 gal
Black/gray-water capacity	35 gal/35 gal
LP-gas capacity	20 gal
Base MSRP	\$110,543

Coachmen RV

574-825-8212, www.coachmenrv.com

ENTEGRA INSIGNIA

Who says tailgating can't be a luxurious affair? The 2017 Insignia 44B from Entegra Coach combines upscale styling with high-end entertainment options perfect for die-hard and casual fans. An exterior entertainment center with a 40-inch LED TV on a swivel mount is standard, and the powered patio awning will help reduce the midday glare. Those who choose to watch the game indoors are treated to an impressive 50-inch LED TV, and available cabover 32-inch LED TV and optional fireplace. A 20-cubic-foot refrigerator, induction cooktop and microwave convection oven will handle the snacks, and the LED-lit solid-surface countertops allow cooks to prepare in style. The extra half bathroom located amidships is an ideal setup for partygoers, while the master bedroom is outfitted with a 32-inch LED TV and affords easy access to the full rear bath for fans who prefer to avoid the masses.





Chassis	Spartan K2
Engine	Cummins ISL
Fuel capacity	100 gal
GVWR	47,660 lbs
Exterior length	44' 11"
Exterior width	8' 5"
Exterior height with A/C	12' 9"
Wheelbase	320"
Freshwater capacity	100 gal
Black/gray-water capacity	41 gal/62 gal
LP-gas capacity	50 gal
Base MSRP	\$383,051

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

GAME TIME



FLEETWOOD STORM

Tailgating is frequently a family affair, but sometimes the little ones aren't interested in watching the entire game. Fleetwood's 2017 Storm 36D offers an oasis inside for eager kiddos with two 26-by-74-inch bunk beds that guickly convert to a full-length wardrobe or seating area, where the smaller fans can get comfortable playing their favorite sports video game in the integrated game center with fold-down shelf and A/V inputs on the opposing wall. Other interior details like the stainless-steel residential refrigerator, large sofa and 40-inch LED TV are sure to be appreciated by those indoors. Outside, the standard exterior entertainment center with CD/DVD and speakers is sure to delight, as is the standard exterior kitchen that houses a sink, refrigerator and microwave, perfect for stadium snacks like nachos and hot dogs. Storage space is provided via a cabinet with a handy pull-out

Chassis	Ford F-53
Engine	6.8-L V-10
Fuel capacity	80 gal
GVWR	22,000 lbs
Exterior length	36' 2"
Exterior width	8' 5"
Exterior height with A/C	12'
Wheelbase	228"
Freshwater capacity	60 gal
Black/gray-water capacity	37 gal/37 gal
LP-gas capacity	25 gal
Base MSRP	\$158,843

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



FOREST RIVER BERKSHIRE XLT

When the game goes down to the wire, some fans (including myself) simply can't sit still and tend to pace the area. Worrisome wanderers need not worry about missing a second of the action because the Berkshire XLT 43A offers a virtual grand slam of TVs: a 40-incher in the exterior entertainment center with stereo and auxiliary input; a 47-incher in the living room with a soundbar and Bluetooth capabilities; and a pair of 32-inch TVs, one across from the king bed in the rear and one over the cockpit. There's plenty of seating in the living area, and buyers have the option of an expandable L-shaped sofa and freestanding dinette for even more flexible seating arrangements. And, if things get heated and

somebody spills pizza on their favorite jersey, the available washer/dryer in the master bedroom can get their wardrobe looking like new before the final whistle.

Chassis	Freightliner XCR
Engine	Cummins ISL9
Fuel capacity	150 gal
GVWR	44,320 lbs
Exterior length	42' 10"
Exterior width	8' 4"
Exterior height with A/C	12' 11"
Wheelbase	273"
Freshwater capacity	86 gal
Black/gray-water capacity	42 gal/66 gal
LP-gas capacity	24.5 gal
Base MSRP	\$329,000

Forest River

574-522-3693, www.forestriverinc.com

HOLIDAY RAMBLER VACATIONER

The aptly named 2017 Vacationer XE 36D from Holiday Rambler is a great way to enjoy tailgating, at the RV park or even in the stadium parking lot. Its just-north-of 36-foot length means it's easy to maneuver. But once you set up camp to cheer on the home team, that's where the motorhome really shines. An outdoor kitchen with a sink, microwave, refrigerator, and additional storage and counterspace makes it easy to whip up ballpark treats, and the standard exterior entertainment center with TV and CD/DVD/stereo and speakers should really get the point across to the crowd. Inside, there are bunk beds for the little ones that convert to a seating area, and a "gaming station" with a flip-down

cabinet and A/V inputs for the 24-inch LED TV. The large, open floorplan also offers a generous amount of storage for your sports memorabilia collection.

Chassis	Ford F-53
Engine	6.8-L V-10
Fuel capacity	80 gal
GVWR	22,000 lbs
Exterior length	36' 2"
Exterior width	8' 4"
Exterior height with A/C	12'
Wheelbase	228"
Freshwater capacity	60 gal
Black/gray-water capacity	37 gal/37 gal
LP-gas capacity	25 gal
Base MSRP	\$158,843

Holiday Rambler

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GAME TIME



JAYCO ALANTE

In sports, size doesn't always matter, as smaller and guicker often vanguishes bigger and stronger. Jayco's 2017 Alante 26X is a nimble motorhome with amenities that belie its 271/2-foot length. The outside entertainment center features a 32-inch TV CD/DVD/ stereo for viewing David versus Goliath athletic feats, and a 13-foot electric awning with LED lights helps protect tailgaters from the harsh elements. If rain or severe weather should interfere with the tailgating, it's easy to bring the party inside. Entertainment-friendly features include a 39-inch LED TV in the living area, an 8-cubic-foot refrigerator, a large dinette and plenty of storage. There's a cockpit table for added convenience, and a water-filtration system

NEWMAR BAY STAR

Regardless of where the actual cooking occurs, most of the meal-prep work invariably happens in the galley, so it's important to have the space for all your hungry tailgaters to convene and mingle. Newmar's 2017 Bay Star 3333 achieves this feat by utilizing a slideout that's nearly a first-down (10 yards) in length. The slide houses an 84-inch jackknife sofa and dinette booth, and continues rearward to house the galley before extending into the master bedroom and hosting a chest of drawers and cabinets. The main TV is a 48-inch LED, with numerous prime-viewing angles across the spacious living room. During timeouts, guests are sure to enjoy the



makes sure your drinks taste great. An optional front overhead bunk is perfect for overnight guests, and making them breakfast is easy thanks to the large, fully appointed galley.

Chassis	Ford F-53
Engine	6.8-L V-10
Fuel capacity	80 gal
GVWR	16,000 lbs
Exterior length	27' 5"
Exterior width	8' 5"
Exterior height with A/C	12' 5"
Wheelbase	158"
Freshwater capacity	59 gal
Black/gray-water capacity	32 gal/40 gal
LP-gas capacity	16.5 gal
Base MSRP	\$101,463

Jayco

574-825-5861, www.jayco.com



spacious amidships lavatory, with a porcelain-bowl toilet and large radius shower. And once the food has been prepped and the team heads outside, they are greeted with the available 32-inch Sony LED TV in an integrated compartment, perfect for watching their favorite superstars.

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Chassis	Ford F-53
Engine	6.8-L V-10
Fuel capacity	80 gal
GVWR	22,000 lbs
Exterior length	33' 11"
Exterior width	8' 31⁄2"
Exterior height with A/C	12' 8"
Wheelbase	216"
Freshwater capacity	75 gal
Black/gray-water capacity	40 gal/60 gal
LP-gas capacity	25 gal
Base MSRP	\$139,748

Newmar Corp. 800-731-8300, www.newmarcorp.com

NEXUS MAYBACH

As sports fans, many of us secondquess the decisions of our teams' front offices. We question why they trade a particular player, or why the team was designed the way it is. Well, with the factory-direct 2017 NeXus Maybach 37M, buyers can act as the general manager and design their own dream motorhome. Buyers start with a basic, already wellappointed floorplan and add on their favorite features, including entertainment options from additional TVs and Blu-ray players to an exterior entertainment center perfect for tailgating fun. Add-ons such as a four-door refrigerator, water-filtration system and microwave convection oven enhance sideline snacking, while the standard bunks are a great spot for little sports to



trade baseball cards or talk stats. And, the bath-and-a-half layout is always a bonus when hosting a gathering, as the line at the bathroom can get quite long after tailgaters have had a few.

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Chassis	Ford F-53
Engine	6.8-L V-10
Fuel capacity	80 gal
GVWR	22,000 lbs
Exterior length	37' 5"
Exterior width	8' 5"
Exterior height with A/C	12' 10"
Wheelbase	242"
Freshwater capacity	80 gal
Black/gray-water capacity	43 gal/86 gal
LP-gas capacity	20.3 gal
Base MSRP	\$99,999

NeXus RV

855-786-3987, www.nexusrv.com



THOR WINDSPORT

The 2017 Windsport 29M from Thor Motor Coach goes long in terms of ways for family and friends to get outside and enjoy time together. For tailgaters, the 29M includes standard features like a 32-inch exterior LED TV: exterior kitchen with 2.6-cubic-foot refrigerator, sink and portable LP-gas grill; power patio awning with integrated LED lighting as well as awnings over the slideouts; and a Bluetooth-capable stereo system with exterior speakers. All this adds up to an immersive big-game experience. Inside, the drop-down bunk, 60-by-80-inch sofabed and 42-by-70-inch Dream Dinette team up with the master king bed for a luckynumber-seven sleeping positions, while two more 32-inch TVs inside (living area, bedroom), a double-door refrigerator and Onan RV QG 4000 generator ensure there are plenty of options for major-league entertainment.

Chassis	Ford F-53
Engine	6.8-L V-10
Fuel capacity	80 gal
GVWR	18,000 lbs
Exterior length	30' 8"
Exterior width	8' 3"
Exterior height with A/C	12' 2"
Wheelbase	190"
Freshwater capacity	50 gal
Black/gray-water capacity	40 gal/40 gal
LP-gas capacity	20.3 gal
Base MSRP	\$126,600

Thor Motor Coach

800-860-5658, www.thormotorcoach.com





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TIFFIN ALLEGRO BUS

When 50,000-plus people use the same bathroom facilities in a three-hour span, things can get a bit messy. On a much smaller scale, but to the same effect, 10-15 tailgating revelers can also wreak relative havoc on your motorhome's facilities, so the more lays, the merrier. The 2017 Tiffin Allegro Bus 40SP isn't the only bath-and-a-half floorplan in our roundup, but with the amidships lavatory in addition to a master bath spanning the full rear of the coach, you'll notice the difference after the final horn sounds. The Tiffin is built on the company's proprietary PowerGlide chassis for a smooth ride to the RV park. Once you're set up, the all-electric 40SP offers 7-foot ceilings, four slides and an open floorplan that could practically accommodate an entire NBA roster. The exterior 32-inch

WINNEBAGO VISTA

When searching for a motorhome that's a great choice for tailgating, a good place to start, obviously, is one that offers a "Tailgating Package." Winnebago's 2017 Vista 29VE does just that, with the add-ons amounting to a portable grill, refrigerator, three-drawer cabinet, stainless-steel sink and a few thoughtful appointments like an ice chest, silverware tray, bottle opener, and garbage-bag and paper-towel holders. Combine all that with the powered patio awning and the available 32-inch exterior TV and sound system and you can root for the home team in style. Inside, the large amidships bathroom, near full-wall





TV and available basement refrigerator/ freezer mean the bench players can enjoy the outdoors, while the starters revel in the luxury of Villa furniture, porcelain tile flooring and an electric fireplace below the big-screen TV in the living area inside.

Chassis	PowerGlide
Engine	Cummins ISL
Fuel capacity	150 gal
GVWR	38,600 lbs
Exterior length	40' 11"
Exterior width	8' 5"
Exterior height with A/C	12'
Wheelbase	276"
Freshwater capacity	90 gal
Black/gray-water capacity	50 gal/70 gal
LP-gas capacity	N/A
Base MSRP \$423,500 (450-нр)/\$497,000 (600-нр)	

Tiffin Motorhomes Inc.

256-356-8661, www.tiffinmotorhomes.com



living-area slide and plenty of galley counterspace will help ease your March Madness. And, with a spacious dinette, sofa bed and swiveling cab seats, the entire coaching staff is ensured a great view of the TV in the living area.

Chassis	Ford F-53
Engine	6.8-L V-10
Fuel capacity	80 gal
GVWR	18,000 lbs
Exterior length	30' 3"
Exterior width	8' 5.5"
Exterior height with A/C	12' 2"
Wheelbase	190"
Freshwater capacity	70 gal
Black/gray-water capacity	40 gal/61 gal
LP-gas capacity	18 gal
Base MSRP	\$105,560

Winnebago Industries Inc. 641-585-3535, www.winnebagoind.com 🖾



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Firestarter The New Winnebago Fuse Class C burns diesel and sparks imagination By Chris Hemer

he word "fuse" carries a variety of connotations. To most, it is something in an electrical circuit that prevents overloads. To some, it can recall something dangerous, like the time your childhood friend applied the hot end of a match to the business end of a firecracker, and the surprise of the moment was captured on his young face in a flash of burning black powder. But it can also conjure fonder memories, like fireworks shows (presented in a responsible manner, of course) a party (Let's light this fuse!) or in the case of Winnebago's latest small Class C, years of memorable trips with friends and family.

A new RV consumer is emerging — one that is looking for something small, well-crafted and nicely equipped, not to mention efficient and practical. He/she wants something that's easy to drive, but doesn't want to sacrifice the comforts of home. Up until fairly recently, the RV industry has struggled with these concepts, as for decades its bread and butter was the traditional motorhome — wellequipped and comfortable, but not much fun to drive, park or maneuver in tight areas. It has required a rethink of what constitutes a modern motorhome, and the reboot has taken some time, but this new Fuse gives us reason to believe that the future of RVing looks very bright, indeed.

Available in two floorplans (23T shown), the Fuse is built on the excellent Ford Transit chassis powered by the inline five-cylinder Power Stroke diesel engine and six-speed automatic transmission. It scores high in the "fun-to-drive" quotient with great

power, fantastic chassis dynamics and a smooth ride — yet it's priced significantly lower than similar motorhomes built on the long-standing Mercedes-Benz Sprinter chassis. It's comfortable, too, with supportive seats, a logical dashboard layout and outstanding visibility. We also absolutely loved the rearview camera display that takes the place of a traditional rearview mirror. What a great idea! Our eyes are already trained from years of driving to look up — not down — when we want to see what's behind us, so it just makes sense. The display is large, has great resolution and is always on, so you can see what's behind you, even in low-light conditions.

To put this new motorhome through its paces, we packed up our gear and family members, and headed off for dry camping on the bank of the

ABOVE: Built on the Ford Transit chassis and powered by a five-cylinder Power Stroke diesel, the Fuse is fun to drive and offers a smooth ride.





From left: The bathroom is highlighted by a large corner sink and a decent-sized shower with a spring-loaded sliding door. Storage is available beneath the sink and in a mirrored medicine cabinet. The curbside dinette employs a full-time bench; additional seating at the table is accomplished by swiveling the passenger-side cockpit seat and using a "booster" seat, and also by sliding the opposing couch closer to the end of the table.

upper Kern River, located in the Sierra Nevada and San Joaquin Valley regions of California. It should be noted that this road is not one for squeamish drivers — it's winding, narrow in parts and undulates almost continuously. But the Fuse felt more like a van than an RV — we simply shifted the transmission to manual mode and felt fully in control as we rounded the many corners en route to our destination. Gusting winds generated by the thermals of the desert floor gave us no pause for concern, as the motorhome's low center of gravity made it easy to hold our lane.

We arrived at our site about an hour after sundown in pitch darkness, but thankfully we were familiar enough with the site to amble down a steep dirt road to our little piece of paradise. Excitement was momentarily quelled as we heard a scraping sound, and later realized that we had bent a power step bracket on a rock that was covered in dirt. The Fuse's low ride height is great for on-road handling, but not so much for rugged campsites —so use caution when seeking out-ofthe-way campsites.

Undeterred, we found a level spot and began to unpack the Fuse's curbside rear compartment, which was large enough to handle four folding chairs, a small barbecue grill, two folding tables and other necessities. The compartment is stepped, carpeted and is lighted, and should have enough space for most families' gear with careful packing. We also liked the side-opening door, but wish it were equipped with a catch or strut, as it sometimes flapped in the breeze as we unloaded. What we couldn't fit here namely a large outdoor carpet and a broom — easily fit on the other side in a long, narrow compartment.

Winnebago is big on flexible seating/sleeping options, and it seems like it's always experimenting with new ideas. In the Fuse, a streetside sofa with two belted positions teams up with the curbside dinette to form a somewhat unusual sleeping/eating/socializing combo. Normally, the dinette has a bench only on one side; the other side of the table butts up against the back of the front passenger seat. At meal time, this seat is rotated around to face the dinette, but since it is in the cockpit and is therefore lower than the opposing dinette bench, Winnebago supplies a booster seat, if you will, that puts you on eye level with the other diners. A fourth diner can be accommodated if the sliding couch is moved closer to the end of the table. It's not ideal, but it works — and is a small price to pay for the overall functionality of the living area.

At bedtime, the couch is slid all the way across the aisle to meet the dinette table, which is then lowered into place at the same level as the seating to make the beginnings of a spare bed. It's a pretty easy process; the table simply unhooks from the wall, then the support leg folds in half and the table is lowered. Where we had some problems was configuring the bed itself: once all the seat backs and cushions were positioned onto the platform, there was still some leftover space. Perhaps there is another cushion that should go here but wasn't included the test unit. We made due by placing folded towels in the gap, and

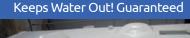
Left: When it's time for bed, the couch slides across the aisle to the dinette table. The table unhooks from the wall and its support leg folds in half to lower the table. Add a cushion and the result is a relatively comfortable two-person bed. The process is simple and takes little time to reverse when the sun comes up.





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otherwise the bed was fine for our two guests.

WINNEBAGO FUSE CLASS C

Happily, this is about the only flaw we could find in the Fuse. To start with, the interior design is beautiful, drawing high marks from young and old, male and female. The Spark color palette is made up of light shades of gray, cream and brown and gold, giving the living space an upscale feel. The vinyl floor resembles the worn planks of a beach house, and the gray Glazed Driftwood cabinetry ties the space together. In the living area, the cabinets feature smoothly sliding doors adorned with a sort of cracked gold-leaf finish that is unique and breaks up the gray to great effect.

The kitchen countertop is dominated by a large, single-bowl stainless-steel sink with cover and an industrial-looking stainless-steel faucet that looks like it was borrowed from a professional kitchen. The juxtaposition of worn woods and bright finishes really works here, the finishing touch being a genuine glass-tile backsplash behind the threeburner Suburban stove. There is no oven (it's optional), but its absence does make room for lots of storage. A large, tall cabinet underneath the sink can accommodate a small trash can, and there are three narrow but deep drawers in the middle, plus three wide, deep drawers directly underneath the cooktop. The microwave above is not a convection model (nor is one offered in this floorplan) and the MaxxFan roof vent in the living area kept the area free of smoke and cooking odors while preparing food on the cooktop.

WHAT'S HOT 🏠

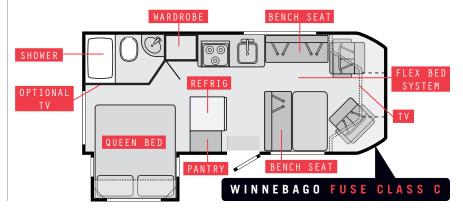
Fun and easy to drive, attractive interior appointments, fridge placement near entry, nice sound system, queen bed in slideout.

what's not \heartsuit

Cushion gaps in the front-bed design, wobbly toilet and undersized vent fan susceptible to damage in bathroom.



Just inside the entry door to the left is the refrigerator, which at first we thought was a little odd, but then later realized was brilliant. For one thing, it allows you and your guests to simply open the entry door, reach inside and open the refrigerator. There's no need to even step all the way inside, as the fridge door opens toward you, placing cold drinks in the door within immediate reach. Second, it keeps the hallway free of obstruction. Winnebago could have put the fridge across from the stove, but that would make the area very cramped when the door was opened. Below the fridge is a huge drawer, which, considering the proximity of cold drinks above, was a great place to keep chips, cookies and bread. Immediately to the left of the fridge is a small pantry with slide-out drawers and another deep, narrow drawer beneath it. Near the entry steps are logically placed controls for the awning, power disconnect, etc., and at



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RVX 496

Specifications

Chassis

01103313	
Model	Ford Transit
Engine	5-cylinder turbodiesel
SAE Hp	185 @ 3,000 rpm
Torque	350 lb-ft @ 1,500-2,500 rpm
Transmission	Six-speed automatic
Axle Ratio	3.73:1
Front Tires	195/75R16
Rear Tires	195/75R16
Wheelbase	156"
Brakes	Disc with ABS
Suspension F/R	Independent MacPherson
	strut with stabilizer bar/solid
	axle with leaf springs and
	heavy-duty gas sock absorbers
Fuel Capacity	25 gal
Fuel Economy	15.8 mpg
Warranty	3 years/36,000 miles basic,
	5 years/50,000 miles powertrain

Coach

Exterior Length	24'
Exterior Width	7' 6"
Exterior Height	10' 2"
Interior Width	7' 3"
Interior Height	6' 8"
Construction	Laser-cut steel tubing,
aluminum f	rame, Thermo-panel walls,
	one-piece fiberglass roof
Freshwater Capacity	33 gal
Black-Water Capacity	41 gal
Gray-Water Capacity	43 gal
Water-Heater Capacit	ty 6 gal
LP-Gas Capacity	13 gal
Air Conditioner (1)	13,500 Btu with heat strip
Furnace	20,000 Btu
Refrigerator	6.3 cubic foot
Converter/Charger	45 amp
Battery (2)	Group 24 12-volt
AC generator	2.5 kW
MSRP	\$93,880
MSRP as tested	\$104,063
Warranty 12 m	onths/15,000 miles limited

Wet Weight

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

Front Axle	3,800 lbs
Rear Axle	5,480 lbs
Total	9,280 lbs

Chassis Ratings

	Cargo Carrying Capacity
ROCCC	Realistic Occupant and
GCWR	Gross Combined Weight Rating
GVWR	Gross Vehicle Weight Rating
GAWR	Gross Axle Weight Rating
ROCCC	1,080 lbs
GVWR/GCWR	10,360/13,500 lbs
GAWR F/R	4,130/7,275 lbs



chest height, switches for the porch light and interior lighting.

The next day, the Fuse was transformed into command central for our younger family members that camped around us in tents. The power awning provided welcome shade, although it definitely turned out to be a headknocker as the day wore on. When fully deployed, it hangs low to keep the sun out, which is a good thing — but we would recommend covering the exposed edges with pieces of brightlycolored pool noodle to mitigate head trauma. Our group found it amusing, and proceeded to take bets on who would conk their head next.

As the days wore on, the living area turned out to be a welcome oasis from the afternoon heat. A 32-inch LED TV is located front and center above the cockpit, with large, deep storage cabinets on either side. The TV swings out to reveal a Jensen AM/ FM stereo/DVD player with a USB port, Bluetooth connectivity and controls for both indoor and outdoor speakers, which were surprisingly good. Our younger users made good use of the system, streaming music from their phones on rotation (mostly hip hop, unfortunately), playing Microsoft Xbox and watching movies. Initially, we were concerned about the mounting of the TV, as it was opened and closed at least a dozen times each day and we worried that inexperienced hands might cause it to break — but the TV is attached to a steel frame, so there's no need to touch its housing when opening/closing.

As you work your way to the rear of the motorhome, you'll find Winnebago's well-conceived OnePlace system that, as its name would imply, keeps all the relevant controls/monitors in one location. These include switches for the water pump and LP-gas/120-volt AC water heater, start/stop buttons for the LP-gas generator and tank/battery levels. Above this in the test unit was the charge controller for the optional Zamp Solar system that kept the two 12-volt house batteries fully charged for the duration of our trip.

Compact motorhomes divvy up the

rear bedroom/bath areas with varying degrees of success, often placing a small bed in the corner butted up against the bathroom exterior wall. The Fuse solves this problem simply and effectively by locating a queen-size bed in a curbside slideout. When deployed, the slideout makes for a cozy bedroom with adequate walkaround space and corner cubbies on either side with lights, blue-illuminated USB ports and enough space for water bottles, phones, etc. The bed was very comfortable and the 24-inch LED television was in the perfect position for easy viewing. Because the slideout is relatively small, the bisected mattress must first be stacked on itself before the room can be retracted, but this doesn't require much effort.

Even with the slideout in the travel position, there is still plenty of room to access items stowed on the bed, or to visit the spacious bathroom. Though not fancy, this area is very functional with a surprisingly large corner sink, elegant residential-style faucet and plastic shower enclosure with a spring-loaded, sliding door. The toilet is also plastic, and wiggled somewhat disconcertingly when occupied due to the way it was mounted, but this is a cost-saving measure that could easily be rectified if desired. Beneath the sink is a large storage cabinet, and above, a medicine cabinet and mirror. The only room for improvement here was the vent fan, which was small and required that the cover first be pushed open (not cranked like traditional vents) before turning on the fan. If your quests don't know this, the vent can be easily damaged.

If you're the type of person that only drives a motorhome the typical four to six times a year, the Fuse may not be for you. But if you like to take frequent weekend trips as well as cross-country journeys with your small family, you really can't do much better. The Fuse makes the journey as enjoyable as the destination.

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By E. Don Smith

Replacing a galley fixture is easy, and is a quick way to improve the look of your motorhome's kitchen

hen it comes to plumbing, your motorhome has many of the same fixtures as those in a residential home. At some point, you may want to change out a galley faucet for cosmetic reasons, or you may have to replace it due to failure. Whatever the reason, the installation steps are simple enough that the average person can tackle this job using a few hand tools, and doing so can really save you a lot of money.

Plumbing fixtures installed in a motorhome are exposed to a different set of conditions from



those installed in a traditional house because they often sit unused during the off-season (unless you are a full-timer). During the winter, these fixtures may be subjected to freezing temperatures, which is why it is critical to winterize the motorhome if you store it for the winter. Otherwise these waterlines, valves and faucets are prone to freezing with water inside them, which usually results in cracking. And, as you will see during the installation of this new kitchen faucet, many of the parts are plastic, so if they are not completely winterized you can almost be assured they will fail during the first hard freeze.

The old kitchen faucet in our Tiffin motorhome not only had an annoying drip, but the finish of the 9-year-old metal had started

Left: As you can see, our old faucet included a soap dispenser and a separate sprayer for a total of four holes, so we selected a new faucet that has the same configuration for the easiest install. Before you remove each of these components, make a note of which goes into each hole. Remember that the spout has to access both sides of the sink, so it is usually positioned in the hole that is in the centerline of the two sinks (if your setup has dual sinks).

GALLEY FAUCET REPLACEMENT

looking rough, so we decided it was time to replace the faucet with a completely new unit.

If you make the decision to replace the entire faucet, there are a few things you need to make note of before purchasing a new unit. First, look at the current setup and determine how many holes are occupied by the faucet, valve, sprayer and/or soap dispenser. In our case it was easy to determine because there were four distinct fixtures all occupying their own hole. However, sometimes the fixture uses an escutcheon plate on top of the counter, which makes the number of holes needed more difficult to determine. It may be necessary to look under the sink, or completely remove the faucet, before buying a replacement model.

Once that's settled, another important aspect of a successful changeover is determining the diameter of the holes in the countertop. Each faucet manufacturer has a different requirement for the





[1] The first thing you will need to do is to locate the water-supply lines from the motorhome and disconnect them from the lines to the faucet. This usually requires a wrench to hold the line to prevent damage to the braided lines of the faucet. Here you can see that our lines were ½-inch pipe-thread style. Your setup may be different, so check these before you buy a new faucet to make sure they are compatible. [2] All the retention devices below the sink will have to be disconnected so you can pull the old faucet out through the holes in the countertop. It's easier if you remove the soap-dispenser bottle at this time by unscrewing it. [3] Remove the tension ring by unscrewing it. This can usually be done by hand; if not, a wrench may help. Remove the handle from the top of the sink. Repeat this same process for the spray handle if yours is so equipped.





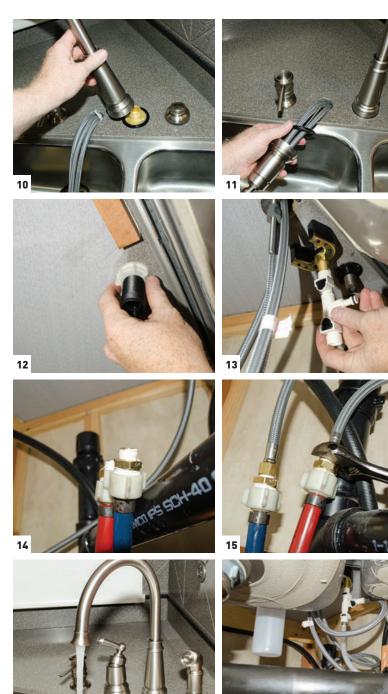
[4] Every faucet manufacturer uses its own way of retaining the valve and hoses, but to remove ours we had to use a wrench to loosen this nut and then remove the plate above it. [5] After disconnecting the hoses, pull the valve body through the countertop, then remove the sprayer assembly as well. [6] Now the only part of the old faucet left behind is the spout. Usually it will have a nut holding it in place. Simply loosen it with a wrench and then unthread it completely. [7] With your old faucet removed it is a good idea to measure each hole (every one of ours was different) to make sure the faucet you are buying will fit. We had to return one faucet because it required an increase in the hole size to accommodate the sprayer wand and soap dispenser. Drilling

a countertop is not particularly easy (nor is it recommended) if your motorhome has a solid-surface countertop, so it's far easier to buy a faucet that fits. [8] Armed with the information such as the number of holes, the supply-line type and the diameter of the holes in the motorhome's countertop, we purchased a new faucet at a local buildingsupply store for less than \$200. Prices and quality vary widely, so it pays to shop around before making a decision. [9] Install the backer plate to retain the new spout shank for the new faucet. The faucet you selected may have a one-piece shank/spout, so if it is not exactly like this one, use the instructions supplied with the faucet. This faucet included its own long-reach wrench, which made this step easy. [10] After installing the supplied gasket, we threaded on the spout and tightened it by hand, making sure the gasket stayed around the base of the spout. [11] Install the gasket for the handle assembly and thread all the hoses through the countertop. Since the valve handle rotates to the left and right as well as up and down, you need to position it properly before tightening it from the bottom. [12] Install the plastic nut on the threaded shank for the soap dispenser and the side hosesprayer assembly. [13] This particular faucet uses a diverter valve to supply water to the sprayer. On this model it simply presses into place over the spout shank. Please note this valve is directional, and if you install it upside down the sprayer will not work. Install the hoses into the diverter if required. [14] Since our supply lines from the coach are $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch female pipe thread and the supply-line connections are 3/8-inch female compression fittings, we had to buy adapters and install them. Notice we used pipe-sealant tape on both male fittings to reduce the chances of a leak. [15] Attach the supply lines to the faucet hoses, making sure to connect the hot-water line from the hose to the red/hot supply lines from the motorhome. [16] After restoring the water supply to the main line of the coach, we tested the faucet to make sure the spout as well and the side sprayer worked properly with hot and cold water. [17] After the water was running, we made one final check under the sink to ensure there weren't any leaks or drips.

diameter of each of the holes. This measurement also dictates where each part of the faucet can be mounted, so if you want to change the position of the handle or the spout it may or may not be possible depending on the configuration of the new faucet and the diameter of the holes in your countertop.

Another important consideration is the diameter and type of the water-supply lines in the motorhome that will be connected to the new faucet. There are two common types of supply-line fittings currently in use: a female ³/₈-inch compression fitting, or, as in our case, a ¹/₂-inch female pipe-thread fitting. When we went shopping for a four-hole faucet, we found that most of them used a ³/₈-inch compression fitting, so we also had to purchase an adapter to mate the two types of fittings.

This project is actually quite



easy and requires just a few hand tools, so if you are flexible enough to crawl under your motorhome's kitchen sink there is no reason you can't perform this DIY project in your driveway, or even while parked at a campground.

16

The only safety precaution here is to make sure you first disconnect

the water-supply line to your motorhome and completely drain the pressure off the water system by turning on several faucets until there is no water flow on either the hot or cold lines.

17

This easy project only takes about an hour and you'll save money by doing the work yourself. 🖾



RIALTA REALITY

THIS COMPACT CLASS B WINNEBAGO IS EASY TO MANEUVER AND REPRESENTS THE MOTORHOME OF A LIFETIME FOR ONE HAPPY COLORADO COUPLE



Above: Alan Rule and Jane Browning found that the Rialta has many of the features they need, including a full-time bed and an easy-to-drive chassis.

This article is the fourth in a series looking at motorhomes that have stood the test of time. They may have miles under their wheels, but they can still make dreams come true. Each has earned the right to be called "the classic ride."

Brigger isn't always better. You know this if you have ever tried to maneuver a large motorhome through the narrow streets of Key West, Florida, while free-range chickens are crossing the road in front of you. Most of the quaint small towns you'd love to visit, with their art galleries, shops and sidewalk cafés, were simply not designed to accommodate big

rigs. The trade-off of having a Class A, or even a larger Class C, is that you must either take your dinghy along or resign yourself to pedaling 5 miles every time you don't feel like cooking a meal. Wouldn't it be great if you could have it all in one vehicle — an RV with the comforts of home that could still do dinner out and maybe even fit in your garage? That sentiment explains the growing popularity of Class B and B-plus motorhomes, and why Alan Rule and Jane Browning are seeing the country in a Winnebago Rialta.

We first met the Colorado husband and wife when we saw their motorhome snuggled in between palmettos at Tomoka State Park near Ormond, Florida. Fascinated by the size of the motorhome and its sleek, clean lines, we were curious about whether a motorhome so small could really be practical for daily living. It was the same question Rule and Browning asked themselves two years ago when they were in the market for a used motorhome.

The couple had traveled for years in camping van conversions, and they liked the flexibility of having a smaller RV. At the same time, there were things they missed, like having a shower onboard, or not having to pull apart the bed every morning. They also had family and friends they wanted to visit on extended vacations, and they wanted their own selfcontained place to stay. They decided they needed a motorhome that was big enough to live in comfortably, but was still compact enough to take into town for sightseeing or shopping.

"We started looking at the next phase," Rule said, and that meant compiling a list of the features they wanted, including a bathroom and a dedicated bed.

They thought this would rule out all Class B's and had resigned themselves to searching for a larger motorhome when they came across the Winnebago Rialta 22RC, a model that includes a full-size, full-time



Above: The compact-but-efficient galley features a sink, a two-burner LP-gas stove, a microwave and an under-counter refrigerator. To deploy the bathroom area, the two telescoping walls are pulled out and the door opened to reveal a fold-down sink, lavatory and shower. There's also a mirrored medicine cabinet with sliding doors in the bathroom.

bed. Though they knew someone with a Rialta, Browning noted that it "never caught our eye before we saw this layout." After looking at just how many of their wish-list features were packed into the diminutive motorhome, they knew they had found just what they were looking for.

"And it does fit in our garage," Rule adds with a laugh.

The Rialta is 21 feet 8 inches long but only 8 feet 10 inches tall and 7 feet 4 inches wide, meaning that it can be parked in most standard spaces, leaving its owners free to explore without having to bring along a dinghy vehicle. The size also gives the Rialta a tighter turning radius than most motorhomes, making it drive more like a car than an RV.

"It's nimble," said Browning, when asked about the Rialta's handling.

The Rialta's low-profile body also resulted in a near-zero drag in windtunnel tests during the design phase. With its 140-horsepower Volkswagen V-6 engine and aerodynamic design, Rule also points out that the Rialta gets a solid 21 MPG, equal to many family-sized cars, making it economical.

Fuel efficiency was also a factor in Winnebago's choice of materials. Built with a welded tubular-aluminum framework, the construction is lightweight and sturdy. The side walls are patented lightweight Thermopanels with an interlocking joint system, and have proven resistant to the leaks that often plague older motorhomes. The engineers did not just build the Rialta to be light; they also built it to be durable. The unibody and the floor are made of

RETRO RIALTA

The 140-horsepower Winnebago Rialta was produced from 1995-2001, and a 201horsepower model was produced from 2002-2005. Used market prices range from as low as \$12,000 for a 1995 Rialta to \$39,900 for a 2005 unit. If you are interested in a Rialta but are concerned about buying an older motorhome, check out Rialta Heaven, a company that specializes in refurbishing and selling Rialtas, at www. rialtaheaven.com. The website also has links to the original Winnebago sales brochures and specs for each model year that the Rialta was sold.

> At less than 22 feet in length, the Rialta can be parked in most standard spaces.



The Classic Ride

steel for added strength and stability.

In addition to its maneuverability and its structural integrity, price was another factor in the Rialta's favor. The couple found their 1998 Rialta 22RC on Craigslist in September 2014 for \$17,500, and while it did need some immediate work, the interior and the body were in pristine condition. After adding new brakes and repairing the refrigerator, Rule and Browning were ready to travel.

There are obviously some limitations to a motorhome the size of the Rialta, but the designers made optimal use of every available inch. There is ample storage space in the bedroom, including a shirt closet, bedding shelf, wardrobe and under the 54-by-75-inch double bed. The bedroom also offers a handy vanity with drawers.

The roomy driver and passenger seats rotate, and there is also a swivel chair and small built-in pop-up table on the passenger side to be used for dining or as a desk. The driver's-side galley is compact but complete, with an under-counter refrigerator, a sink, a microwave and a two-burner LP-gas stove. The unit includes all of the traditional RV systems, including a standard rooftop air conditioner, a 17,000-Btu furnace and an optional 3,000-watt Generac AC generator.

Perhaps the most innovative feature of the Rialta is the expanding and contracting bathroom. To save space, the motorhome has a Pullman sink that folds down for use, and the side walls of the bathroom slide out to form a shower area. When not in use, they slide back so that the door barely protrudes into the living space.

You might think that all of these features would result in a crowded, cavelike space. Instead, the interior is bright and inviting, with a large 27by-25-inch skylight near the galley, two windows on each side and a large rear window over the bed. In addition to the many storage spaces in the motorhome, there is also an exterior rear storage compartment, so clutter can be kept to a minimum. The



Above: The Rialta houses a full-time double bed, which is not too common in this class of motorhomes. There's storage space below the bed in addition to the plentiful cabinets.

spacious feel is also enhanced by the light-colored wood cabinetry.

Even with all of its benefits, Rule and Browning admit that the Rialta isn't for everyone. While the maximum headroom is 6 feet 2 inches, that is only in the domed skylight. The rest of the standing headroom is 5 feet 10 inches, fine for this couple but problematic for anyone taller. The floor in front of the doorway is sunken to make it easier to step inside but can present a hazard when walking to the front or rear. Rule remedied this by creating a removable carpeted false floor to fill in the space.

Counterspace is negligible, so the couple added a small fold-up extension next to the galley sink. Both Rule and Browning wish the holding-tank capacity was larger than its current 19 gallons, but they have adjusted by using bathhouse facilities when they stay in campgrounds that do not offer full hookups.

While the Rialta was designed for optimal use of space, some also might find the close quarters and lack of privacy an issue. Not so for Rule and Browning. Browning recently retired from the Alaska Fish and Game Department, and Rule spent more than 30 years in Alaska's commercial salmon fishery.

"We're both used to being on boats in small spaces," Browning explained, "so it doesn't bother us."

Rule also pointed out that they did not anticipate ever becoming full-time RVers. They love their home in Howard, Colorado, an old one-room schoolhouse that they bought and remodeled, and they grow a big garden in summer and ski in the winter. Instead, they see themselves spending a few months on the road each spring and fall, then returning to enjoy their home.

"It's the best of both worlds," Browning said.

The best of both worlds — a fitting description of this couple's lifestyle, but also of their motorhome. The Rialta combines the flexibility of an automobile with the comforts of a home, and that's why it qualifies it to be called a classic ride.

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





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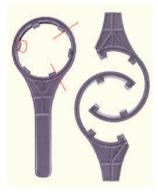
Barbecue Grill Soak

I've found that the best way to loosen the cooked-on debris from the barbecue grill is to soak it for several hours in a soap solution. The problem was finding a suitable container that's durable, easy to clean and would always be on hand when needed.

I solved the problem by cutting down a plastic storage bin of a size that would fit the grills of my portable barbecue. After the grills have cooled, I let them soak in several inches of cleaning solution. Once a few hours have passed, I put on a pair of rubber gloves and scour with a wire grill-cleaning brush. I then rinse well, dry, replace on the grill and apply a coating of olive oil to enable easier cleaning the next time.

If another bin of a similar size is being used for storage, the homemade soaking pan can be nested under it so no additional space is needed to keep it handy.

Tom Becker | Bernalillo, New Mexico



Bayonet Busters

After bayonet-type fittings have been in service for a few weeks, disassembling the connections for packing away the sewer hose can become a chore. And, as we continue to age, our grip becomes a little less firm. So, looking at the water-filter canister for my freshwater system, I came up with this idea for a "wrench" to help disconnect the fittings. I used two 4¼-inch inside-diameter canister wrenches that are used on the water canisters. By cutting them for placing over the hose and removing the center remaining cleat, the wrench fits nicely behind the raised grip-nodules on the bayonet fittings of opposing connectors for easy removal. Shortening the handles reminds me that these are for the bayonet fittings rather than for the freshwater filter canisters.

Marshall Buzzell | Lake Havasu City, Arizona



Closed Carry

I own a 29-foot Class B-plus motorhome and have never had a place to put the sewer hoses. The owner's manual says to store the hoses in an exterior compartment, which only causes a mess. I purchased two hose carriers and spray-painted a portion to match the paint scheme on the motorhome. I am temporarily using a strap and a rope to mount them, but am currently on the lookout for permanent straps that are the correct color to match the paint. Storing the hoses this way eliminates messy and smelly compartments.

Paul Diehl | Spring Grove, Pennsylvania 🖾



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TECH SAVVY

HANDS-ON | HOT LINE | COACH & POWERTRAIN

The Curb Cushion

Unique heavy rubber mats fill the space in a rolled curb that can send motorhomes rockin' and rollin'

By Kevin Livingston

() STORAGE

Cost: **\$125** Time: **45 minutes** Difficulty: **2/10** wners who have the capability of storing their motorhomes on their own property have the advantage of not dealing with off-site facilities. In some cases street design calls for a rolled curb, which adds sort of a gully in front of

the driveway. Driving on and off driveways with such a configuration often results in bouncing and jarring inside the motorhome as it negotiates the rolled curb. Come in at an angle and the side-to-side rocking can feel very uncomfortable and is even hard on suspension components. Depending on the length of the rear overhang, it's possible to drag lowhanging hardware (like a hitch receiver) on the pavement, making a loud screeching sound and leaving telltale grooves in the ground. The Curb Cushion is a new product that fills the gap in the rolled curb and acts as a ramp for a smoother ride when entering or exiting the driveway.

The Curb Cushion — made by Smart Solutions, a company that markets rock guards for the rear of motorhomes — is a very simple and effective product made of heavy recycled rubber that has been formed into hefty 4-foot ribbed mats that are 20 inches wide and %-inch thick. The kit comes with three of these mats that are connected with wooden planks (using Phillips-head screws) to make a 12-foot section, which is plenty wide to handle any motorhome. What really makes these rubber mats unique is the manner in which the screw holes are located, which encourages the mats to mold around the wood in just the right manner so they can conform to the rolled curb and fill the gap. If necessary, additional 4-foot mats can be added to extend the coverage in front of the driveway.

Due to the heavy and bulky nature of the Curb Cushion, you'll want to determine the best location to leave it in place; it's not easy, nor is it practical, to move these mats. Once



Above: Once the planks are attached, the mats are configured to fill in the gap in a rolled curb. The mats are fairly heavy, so moving them is not practical, nor is it necessary.

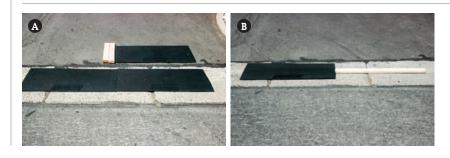
the location in front of the driveway has been chosen, simply lay the 2-by-4s in the deepest part of the curb in accordance with the installation instructions, and obviously for what best suits your needs. Typically, you'll want to center the 4-foot wooden planks under the mats. After ideal placement is selected, the mats can be attached to the wood via the included Phillips head screws, driving them through predrilled countersunk holes using a cordless drill. That's really all there is to it, making it very user-friendly on any level. There's no reason to remove the Curb Cushion because water will flow through the mats and they are not affected by street sweepers.

The physics and design behind the Curb Cushion suggest that it should work as advertised, and it does that beautifully. We noticed a significant decrease in bouncing and jarring when driving on and off the driveway, and there is an added safety element when parking in tight quarters because it's now possible to get over the rolled curb slowly without having to accelerate to power over the gully. In fact, the Curb Cushion makes it pleasant to drive any vehicle — not only a motorhome — onto the driveway or parking area.

The No. 32048 kit sells for \$125 at Camping World and additional sections are \$80 each. \blacksquare

Smart Solutions

630-775-1517, www.smartsolrv.com



[A] Each kit comes with three 4-foot mats, four 2-by-4 planks and the hardware to connect the system. Additional 4-foot sections can be ordered to extend the length of the Curb Cushion system. [B] The planks are attached to the heavy rubber mats using Phillips screws that are placed through the predrilled holes.

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TECH SAVVY

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Blowout Blues

Wrestling with his extended-service contract provider over compensation for service, a reader sought the intervention of Hot Line. He wrote:



In April 2011 I purchased a new motorhome and bought an Ultimate Coverage five-year extended warranty through CornerStone United from Independence RV in Winter Garden, Florida. On a Sunday in December 2015, I experienced a tire blowout. I contacted the emergency number on my CornerStone card and was told by the representative (who offered a tow) that she couldn't find anything open for tire service, and that I should try to contact someone on my own — which I did. No claim number was provided, but she said to mail the bill in for review and approval. I called Big Tones Truck & Tire Repair, and they changed out the tire for \$289. I paid with cash.

According to my CornerStone contract, "Flat-tire service consists of removal of the flat tire and its replacement with the spare tire; if the covered vehicle has no inflated spare or, if it has two or more flat tires, the covered vehicle will be towed to the nearest service facility." CornerStone denied my reimbursement because I had no spare in a carrier on the motorhome. I paid for the spare tire and exchange to the rim, and only asked to be reimbursed \$100 for the service to respond and install the spare tire.

Can Hot Line help me out? Bobby Ratliff | Bedford, Virginia

Hot Line contacted CornerStone United in an attempt to facilitate a positive settlement for Ratliff. Both a CornerStone representative and Ratliff provided input on the final outcome. They wrote:

Mr. Ratliff's complaint has been received and evaluated again according to his contract. It appears that the circumstances surrounding Ratliff's claim are unusual. As such, there seems to have been some aspects of his situation that may have caused abnormal processing of his claim. The unavailability of services in the area of breakdown was unprecedented. That circumstance incited language and actions in relation to his claim that disgualified it for coverage, even though Ratliff's explanation of the situation indicated that he acted in accordance to his contract for

coverable assistance.

Finding no fault with Ratliff's actions given the circumstances of his breakdown, CornerStone United has decided to change the judgment of his claim and approve it for payment according to the flat-tire assistance portion of his contract. Ratliff has been informed of this decision and has accepted reimbursement.

Adam Payne, Claims Manager, Corner-Stone United Inc. | Hickory, North Carolina

66 Thanks to Hot Line, I received a very polite email and follow-up phone call

from Adam Payne at CornerStone. Payne advised me that after he received the letter from Hot Line he reopened my file, and the \$100 for the tire service had been approved. Approximately three days after that call, I received my check. Thanks again for your support in this matter. **B.R.**

Schematic Stumper

Unhappy with a delay in service from a repair facility, a reader asked for Hot Line's help. He wrote:

66 My 2005 Coachmen Mirada motorhome has been at McDonald Ford in Freeland, Michigan, for two months for service on a problem with the windshield-wiper motor. The technicians at McDonald told me that they have to trace the wiring, but don't have a schematic, so they are stumped. I thought that since it is a Ford product the technicians could repair it. I am at my wit's end. Please help. **Richard Rybak | Bay City, Michigan**

Hot Line contacted Coachmen RV, and the company responded as follows:

Thank you for writing regarding our customer, Mr. Richard Rybak. We were very sorry to hear of the difficulties he has encountered. We phoned Rybak and it seems the dealership found the needed part and has corrected the item. Thank you for contacting us. Please do not hesitate to write or call if you should require any additional information or assistance.

Mel Williams, Owner Relations Manager, Coachmen RV, a Division of Forest River Inc. | Middlebury, Indiana 🖾

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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ADVERTISERS' INDEX RS# ADVERTISER PAGE # 128 Avion Vans......8 111 BrakeBuddy......53 101 Brazel's RV Performance......51 102 Cal-Am Properties......84 Camping World 39-41 103 Carefree of Colorado12 109 Coachmen 23 104 Custom Glass Solutions31 112 Cypress Trail76 106 Desert Gardens RV Park45 110 Geico......19 Good Sam Extended Service Plan......59 Good Sam RV Loans10 Good Sam Roadside Assistance 81 Good Sam Visa.....73 Harbor Freight Tools67 108 Hymer.....25 134 Instagone.....9 Newell Coach Corporation85 115 116 Newmar Corporation27 Newmar Corporation60 117 118 119 Pala Casino Spa & Resort......15 Phoenix USA Inc.2 120 Pleasure Way......52 122 RV Armor, Inc.....77 RV Marketplace74 123 RV Roofing Solutions50 131 RV World of Nokomis57 RVRoof.com......56 124 113 Renegade RV7 132 Riverside Resort & Casino......83 Roadtrek Motorhomes, Inc......11 107 126 SMI Manufacturing5 135 Steinbring Motorcoach9 Super Springs32 127 Vogt RV Center18 129 Wi Fi In Motion.....5 125 130 Winnebago Industries17

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This is a common problem with

these chassis. What you need to

do is insulate the floor and doghouse areas with a heat-shield product such

as one by Thermo-Tec Automotive

thermotec.com). Thermo-Tec makes

a host of quality products that can be

ordered through its dealer network.

under the carpet and doghouse, and

also shielding to block the radiation of heat from the exhaust under the

I suggest you consider insulation

Products (800-274-8437, www.

By Ken Freund

Hot Cab

I own a 2007 Four Winds Chateau built on a Ford E-450 chassis with a V-10 gas engine. I experience a large amount of heat from the doghouse around the engine compartment and the floor directly behind it between the front seats. Is there any way to insulate the compartment or divert the heat? I can't rest my leg against the housing without burning it. I have created a double-insulated floor pad between the seats to rest a cooler on. Ford and my RV dealer have no ideas. Can you help?

Jerry Sheets | Port Orange, Florida

Rough-riding Ford Chassis

am very interested in purchasing a set of Sumo Springs for my 2000 Coachmen Mirada 28-foot Class A motorhome built on a Ford F-53 chassis. My wife and I travel around the country and would like something to dampen the rough ride when going over bad highways. We understand that whatever we do, we will not be able to equal the ride of a diesel pusher.

Reading reviews for the Sumo Springs recently piqued my interest enough to do some research. I contacted a company online about the springs. They did not recommend I install these to improve the ride unless my motorhome was close to being fully loaded every time it was used. The tech said that the ride would become rougher, as the overall spring rate would be increased. In his opinion, the best ride improvements would come from high-end shock absorbers with air suspension. He also recommended a thorough inspection of the factory suspension components, as these vehicles are hard on bushings and

steering components (which I plan to have serviced as well).

cab floor.

I have done a lot of research on internet RV forums about F-53 ride improvements and there are many different opinions out there. The majority of reviews for the Sumo Springs were positive, with one or two stating that it did not improve the ride, or that they actually made it rougher.

I do not have the sway or body-roll issue: mine is more of a rough ride on bad highways (banging, jarring, etc.). I am checking with you to get your opinion on whether they might help to cushion some of the rough ride. Mike Herman | Austin, Minnesota

Basically, you are riding on a Medium-duty truck chassis, and the combination of stiff high-pressure truck-type tires and high spring rates along with fairly limited suspension travel set the stage for a pretty hard ride. MotorHome magazine evaluations have resulted in positive reviews for Sumo Springs, but some owners find they are more of a help if your suspension is bottoming out, rather than just having a hard ride.

First, I would make sure that the tires are properly inflated for the loads they are carrying (best measured on individual wheel scales), not simply inflated to the pressure printed on the sidewalls. Your tires may be somewhat overinflated and thus. somewhat stiffer than they need to be.

I spoke with Eric Davis, owner of Eric's RV Performance Center (800-488-3697. www.ericsrv.com). as he has worked extensively on the development of chassis-improvement products for the F-53 chassis. Davis recommends checking tire pressures first, and then upgrading the shocks. Then, if you still want more improvement, consider either the Kelderman or MORryde suspension kits, along with front and rear trac bars. Later models built on the F-53 chassis came with Bilstein shock absorbers as original equipment.

OBD II Adapter Plug

Does anyone know of any manu-Q facturer that makes an adapter from the nine-pin Deutsch plug on a Workhorse chassis to the standard

COACH & POWERTRAIN

OBD II plug on most readers? I have a standard OBD II reader, but cannot read codes because they use a Deutsch plug on the coach.

Jack Johnstone | Auburn, Washington

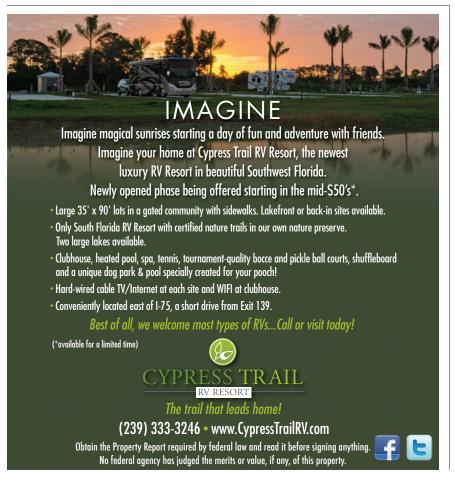
Yes, you are in luck. OBD Diagnostics Inc. offers a cable adapter for that purpose. Call 888-469-3274 or visit online at www.obd2allinone.com/ adapter.asp.

Refrigerator Rebuild

I am a full-timer who owns a 2002 Fleetwood Discovery motorhome. I plan to try to sell it within the next 18 months. From what I have read, absorption refrigerators have a lifespan of 10 to 12 years, thus I am living on borrowed time with my Norcold four-door fridge. I've heard that it can cost between \$3,000-\$4,000 to put a new refrigerator in. I have read about rebuild kits, and have seen them online for \$600-\$900. Do you have any opinion about using these rebuild kits? Given that I plan on getting rid of the motorhome, the thought of spending that much money replacing the refrigerator is not appealing to me.

Rick Cramer | Box Elder, South Dakota

When you start reading some of the online forums about absorption fridges, you'd think the world was coming to an end. There really is no definite lifespan for these refrigerators, and what happens to one person does not automatically equate to others. If I had a failure that could be fixed with a rebuild (which amounts to replacing the cooling unit) rather than replacing the whole refrigerator at a greater expense, I'd do it. I believe in being thrifty and not spending money unless you need to. Therefore, I'd wait until you start having problems with the refrigerator before making repairs. As the old saying goes, if it ain't broke, don't fix it!



Dodge Doesn't Register

I own a 1979 Pace Arrow motorhome on a Dodge chassis powered by a 440-horsepower V-8 engine. The coolant-temperature gauge doesn't move, and stays on COLD even after hours of driving. What needs to be done?

Doug Saint

Greenwood, British Columbia, Canada

Even if the coolant thermostat is fully stuck open, the temperature gauge should register something after driving for a while. Still, just to be sure, start by checking how hot the upper radiator hose gets after driving long enough that the engine is fully warmed up, say, 15 minutes. Shut the engine off and try touching the upper hose that goes between the radiator and top of the engine (thermostat housing). If this hose is too hot to hold your hand against, the engine is warmed up and the gauge should be pointing somewhere to the middle of the range.

Next, check the gauge circuit. Power comes from the fuse panel via the ignition switch to the instrument cluster. Check the fuses, and then check that the wire going to the coolant-temperature sending unit on the engine is properly connected to the sender. If it is clean and connected, try touching the wire's terminal to a good ground connection. With the ignition on (engine not running), the gauge should make a full sweep when it is grounded and released from ground. If it still doesn't move, it's time to remove the gauge cluster and start checking the gauge and its wiring. Check for power at one terminal of the gauge, and continuity from the other terminal to the sending unit. If you have both, the gauge has probably gone bad.

Koni Shocks for GM Chassis

I have a 1998 Winnebago Chieftain motorhome on a Chevrolet P-chassis with a 7.4-liter V-8. When it was time to replace the shocks, I brought Bilstein part No. 24-011730 (front shock) to my mechanic. I was later called by the mechanic, who told me that the shock part number was correct, but that it was smaller in length and diameter than the factory shock. I called Bilstein, and the technician I spoke with told me they did not have one that was heavy-duty like the old ones.

Will I need to order GM Delco shocks from a dealership, or will Konis fit my motorhome? Glenn Cannon | Waco, Texas

Koni makes good shocks, and lists part numbers for your 1998 P-chassis. The number I found for the full shock kit is 8805-FSD, and 8805-1006 for the front, and 8805-1007 for the rear. However, since you've had a problem with size already, I suggest you check with a Koni supplier and provide them with the dimensions of the replacement before having them shipped to you.

Leveling Jacks — Again

In the July issue, you dissuaded Rich Marcom from using the coach-leveling system due to a variety of issues including hydraulic pressure and external screw exposure ("Using Leveling Jacks for Storage — Revisited"). I own a 2004 Fleetwood Storm 34F, which I purchased new. The unit has an Atwood automatic electric leveling system, which has none of the issues of concern that you cite. I have used the leveling system for all of these years without any apparent problems. Exposure in my case is not an issue, since the coach is housed in a garage, which also has a 6-inch reinforced concrete floor. Does your advice apply for levelers of this type? Tom Zanotti

Rio Communities, New Mexico

I checked with Atwood technical services and was told that the jacks can be used for an extended period in their intended role. However, they are levelers and are not designed to be used as jacks. The tires should not be lifted off the ground using them. If that is done, the extra load may result in damage to the units. For anyone with further questions, Atwood's customer service number is 866-869-3118.

Tire Cracking

I question the theory that sun damage alone, or at all, causes tire sidewall cracking. After seven years I decided to replace the six low-mileage tires on my rear-diesel-engine Holiday Rambler. All six Bridgestone tires carried the same 8-year-old date code, but only the four rear tires showed maior sidewall cracking, and the two front tires were like-new with no cracking. I never covered the tires or used any preparation, except mild soap. Because the rear inner rims were ugly steel, I never inadvertently switched them with the polishedaluminum wheels during brake-pad maintenance, but those were the tires that showed the most sidewall cracks. Located closest to the engine, I can only surmise that engine heat or weight is more detrimental to tires than sun damage. Tire pressure was always maintained, brake wear was normal, the shocks were good and there weren't any engine leaks to contribute to their condition. I have since traded in the old coach. and I do not cover the eight Michelins on my new motorhome.

Bob Bojanowski | Naples, Florida

I've never heard from anyone else stating a similar theory that sunlight doesn't harm tires. I've picked up old tires lying in the desert and the exposed side was extremely deteriorated, while the downward side was in relatively good condition. I'd like to hear from our readers about their experiences.

Another Electrical Mystery

I read the letter, "Another Electrical Mystery," in the May issue with great interest. I helped out one of my neighbors who happens to own a 2011 Thor Freedom Elite Class C and had the exact (continued on page 80)

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Questions: Phone 847-229-6756 Email: katey.purgatorio@goodsam.com

COACH & POWERTRAIN

(continued from page 77)

same problems as Mr. Warden. After checking the batteries, the fuses and the switching relay, we went to the battery-disconnect switch. Outwardly it appeared OK, and felt fine when switched. I pulled it after taking a picture of the wiring on it and metered it out. It was not working all the time.

After opening it up (very carefully) I found burned contacts and weak springs. Cleaning the contacts and retensioning the springs still didn't correct the problem. The two internal levers that contained the contacts had gotten hot and flattened slightly. I bent them back into a slightly more V-shape and reassembled the switch, and everything came to life.

I recommend a replacement switch, but I think one with a heavier-duty rating would be advisable as the contacts in the factory switch are extremely small for the load they carry. I hope this helps others who might have the same issue.

My motto is always look for the simple things first. Too many people look for major issues before they check the simple things. I have worked in the I.T. field for many years, and checking the simple things first has saved me hundreds of troubleshooting hours. **Steve Berg | Jacksonville, Florida**

Thanks for sharing your experience with the coach. I recommend that after a part like this is found to be faulty, while it's OK to try to repair it, it's best for reliability to replace it, especially since the cost is not that great and it can fail again down the line. Based on the condition of the old part, a replacement part with a higher ampere rating should be used.

Cold-shower Tip

I read the October 2015 letter about getting a blast of cold water at the showerhead, then turning it back on. I also read Pete Garrett's reply in the April issue, and I agree with his diagnosis that the cold-to-hot pressure difference is the underlying cause. However, before readers go to the trouble of installing a check valve in the hot-water supply, they should first look at another, simpler, very likely possibility: a leaking showerhead (if it is the type that incorporates a shut-off). The OEM showerhead fitted to many RVs is often lesser-quality, and leaks water slightly even when supposedly turned off. The water that leaks out is replaced in the flexible shower hose by the slightly higher-pressure cold water, rather than the hot or a mix, with the result being the cold blast originally complained about.

To fix the problem in this case, all that is required is to replace the original leaky showerhead with a higherquality one that doesn't leak when turned off, and the problem is solved. It worked for me, and it's quick and easy.

It should also be noted that if the showerhead is leaking, adding a check valve as suggested by Garrett is unlikely to completely fix the problem, as the valve will even further reduce the hot-water pressure relative to the cold.

Paul Fryer | Belleville, Ontario, Canada

Thanks for writing, Paul. Most of the showerheads I've used in motorhomes seem to leak when shut off. According to an RV manufacturer spokesman, those showerheads are designed to seep a bit when shut off, at the head, to remind the user that the shower is still turned on, so that "leaking" is intentional. Another no-cost cure for the cold water blast is to turn the handheld shower head away from yourself when reopening the water flow, and after a few moments, the water is warm again and you can continue. The showerhead-replacement idea is a good one, and should help some readers. 🖾

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Two for the Road

Sometimes motorhome travel is more about the "whom" than the "where"

By Alan Rider

t's been said that the joy of travel lies not in the destination but in the company of one's traveling companions. As far as I'm concerned, truer words were never spoken.

You see, I've just returned from the longest and most ambitious road trip of my life. A 8,700-mile loop from California to Vancouver, British Columbia, across the length of the Trans-Canada Highway to Halifax, Nova Scotia, and then back across the U.S.

While I'll likely regale you with stories of the places I saw and people I met at a later date, today I'd like to take this opportunity to share an important insight I gained from this expedition. An aspect of motorhome travel that's so common it's easy to overlook: namely, the folks who go out there on the road with us.

In this case, it was my best friend, Mike. Living on opposite sides of the country we see each other all too infrequently but, thanks to his flexible work schedule and understanding spouse, he was able to carve out the time to accompany me on this transcontinental trip-of-a-lifetime. Could I have done it without him? Sure, but in hindsight, it would have made for a much less satisfying journey.

I bring this up because the richness added to our travels by sharing them with others is something we often take

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Beautiful scenery during the trip was around virtually every corner, including this stretch of Icefields Parkway between Jasper and Banff national parks. Traveling with a friend such as Mike is worth its weight in gold.

for granted. The simple act of being able to turn to someone and say, "Wow, that's so cool!" can't help but improve the experience immeasurably.

Of course, there were practical benefits too. Like the fact that Mike turned out to be a crackerjack navigator and fixer of all things, from a broken closet door to a flapping fender.

Speaking of which, part of the fun were the difficulties we had to rise above, from the sewer hose that burst all over my beloved UGG boots to the overzealous Canadian border guard who barked orders and gave us the third-degree about our trip before sending us off to secondary inspection. According to his paperwork, he was concerned about A) the two apples in our fridge, and B) the modest amount of cash we had in our wallets (I am not making this up). Those minor adversities aside, Mike and I spent our days in that rather remarkable interpersonal space where we rarely ran out of things to talk about. And on those infrequent occasions when we did, the silence seemed altogether comfortable.

Perhaps not surprisingly, the closer we came to home, the quieter we became. It could be because we'd both grown tired of the endless fuel stops and steady diet of salami sandwiches choked down in roadside rest areas. More likely though, it was the unspoken regret that our Trans-Canada Highway transit was nearing its end.

Could we have enjoyed a similar connection if we'd just hopped on an airplane and gone to visit one another on our respective home turfs? Perhaps. But there's nothing like the challenge of finding your way through an utterly foreign landscape to create a deeper, more long-lasting bond that's hard to come by in more familiar surroundings.

Which leads me to my point here: Whether it's someone you hit the highway with regularly or a friend you rarely see, take the time to really appreciate your travel companion. Because, more often than not, where you're going doesn't matter nearly as much as with whom you share your adventures along The Road Ahead.

"There's nothing like the challenge of finding your way through an utterly foreign landscape to create a deeper, more long-lasting bond that's hard to come by in more familiar surroundings."





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