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# MotorHome

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October 2017

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With stately sights like Bodie Island Light Station, North Carolina's Outer Banks makes for a great visit in October, after most of the crowds have left (see page 24).



Covering your motorhome when it's not in use is an added layer of protection from harsh weather and a great way to help retain that showroom shine. **Pg. 34**

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Winnebago's 2018 Vista at Normandy Farms Campground ([www.normandyfarms.com](http://www.normandyfarms.com)) in Foxborough, Massachusetts (see test on page 28). Photo by Michael Gordon. Special thanks to the Scoville family.





Kirby Yutzy | Welder | 23 years with Newmar



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By Kristopher Bunker

# Cover Your Assets

**RV** sales are currently enjoying the most lucrative era in the industry's long and storied history. The Recreation Vehicle Industry Association (RVIA) reported that 430,000 RVs were sold last year, which represents an increase of 15 percent over the previous year. And, 2017 continues the trend; RVIA estimates that a whopping 472,200 units will be sold by the time we turn the calendar page to 2018, again marking the highest annual total since such data has been collected. The most recent report saw overall motorized shipments up 14 percent as compared to 2016, thanks in large part to a strong showing by Class B and Class C motorhomes (Class A shipments have more or less held steady).

And RVIA expects shipments to continue to grow for 2018, which would mark an unprecedented record ninth straight year of improvement. Long story short, it's a great time to own a motorhome.

So, what's the point? Those are indeed some impressive numbers, but we already enjoy the lifestyle, and the majority of us own a motorhome and may not currently be in the market to purchase another. It helps to look at a motorhome as an investment, quite possibly the second-largest investment (behind a residential home) that you'll ever make. So, doesn't it make sense then to protect that investment to the best of your ability?

After all, RVers are traditionally repeat buyers, meaning that many of us may eventually decide to trade in our existing coaches for a new (or

new to us) model. Be it due to upsizing or downsizing, the quest for better fuel economy, or even simply to keep up with the Joneses, a motorhome owner is likely to own multiple rigs throughout his or her lifetime.

That means it's in our best interests, as investors in the motorhome lifestyle, to protect our vehicles to keep them in tip-top shape, including the exterior, interior and the chassis and its components. It only makes financial sense.

Protection begins on the outside, and the best way to keep the elements at bay is to purchase a quality cover for your motorhome when you're not out exploring. "Full Coverage,"

beginning on page 34, lists some of the top cover manufacturers and distributors to help defend against Mother Nature.

As for protection within, our popular Wheels & Gear department often showcases the latest in new products, and this month we have listed a couple items designed to battle two of the most damaging interior issues: pest invasion and humidity. Turn to page 14 for more.

And finally, all the protection in the world for your motorhome won't mean anything if you can't arrive at your destination. To that end, the second of our two-part series on diesel-chassis maintenance, this one highlighting the Spartan, discusses the ins and outs of owning and maintaining what is the foundation of a number of pusher motorhomes designed to last nearly half a million miles. You'll definitely want to check out page 40.

With a little cash up front — and due diligence on your part — it's easy to protect the investment in your motorhome, and doing so will no doubt yield high rewards throughout your life on the road. **M**

**“Doesn't it make sense then to protect that investment to the best of your ability?”**



Photo: Mercedes Morgan Photography

## Contributors | October



**Morey Edelman** and his wife, Ruth, are adventure-loving RVers who travel six months a year in their 2017 Winnebago Sunstar. They are continually amazed at the sights they encounter while on the road.



**Ann Eichenmuller** is a Virginia freelance writer who loves exploring the country with her husband, Eric, in their Minnie Winnie. Ann is the author of the novel *Kind Lies* ([www.hightidepublications.com](http://www.hightidepublications.com)).



**Bobbie Hasselbring** is an award-winning travel and food writer and editor of [www.realfoodtraveler.com](http://www.realfoodtraveler.com), which covers authentic food and travel. Bobbie owns a Class C 2003 Jayco Greyhawk SS.



**James Richardson** is a photojournalist who has lived in Tennessee most of his life. His interest in historical and scenic destinations has taken him to some of the most beautiful places in America.



**Bruce W. Smith** has had a respected career as an automotive/RV journalist. He started contributing to *MotorHome* nearly 30 years ago, and sees his home state of Oregon as a paradise for outdoor adventure.



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



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## For RVers who don't tow a dinghy vehicle, what's your preferred method of "getting around" once you've arrived at your destination, both to see the local sights and to explore the RV park? Do you have experience with electric bikes?

Those are the questions we asked in the July issue, and here are some of the replies we received.



### Can We Talk?

I'm a bit of a bike nut, and have just finished assembling a mid-drive electric bike, with a 750-watt 10.5 amp-hour lithium-ion battery on a mid-size trail bike. Most e-bikes utilize hub motors (where the motor is in the wheel, front or back) but the mid drive is becoming popular and allows the rider to take advantage of the gearing on the rear wheel.

These two-wheelers are a great way to get around the RV park, to and from the store and even on some trails where they are allowed. Most of the time, I use the pedal assist system (PAS), where you pedal and the motor boosts your effort, though the throttle is hard to resist just for the fun of it. I can easily cruise 20-plus miles on a charge. A good e-bike will reach speeds in excess of 25 mph, but there is little need to go faster than 20 mph for most purposes. After a hilly 10-mile ride I am not overly tired or worn out; if I have used the throttle I am fresh.

Prices vary for the production models from \$1,300 up to \$3,000 without going into the extremes at either end. ProdecoTech, EVELO, Pedego and Rad Power Bikes are four that I have tried and that seem pretty solid with good value. I have also found that [www.lunacycle.com](http://www.lunacycle.com) is a great resource for info and parts. The one I just built cost \$1,400 (\$350 for the bike and \$1,050 for the motor, battery, and bits and pieces). Using a bike you already own can result in significant savings. Here are a few of things I have learned (this is not my first e-bike):

1. Avoid sealed lead-acid (SLA) batteries, as they offer a low range, are heavy and feature a short lifespan.
2. Cheap foreign-made e-bikes are just that — cheap.
3. Ride with traffic, wear a helmet and don't wear ear buds.
4. Use a bell to announce your presence around pedestrians and other bikes; e-bikes are stealthy and fast.
5. Practice stopping, starting and

riding in general, as it's a bit trickier on an e-bike than on a regular bike due to increased speed and weight.

6. Take care with the lithium-ion battery, being certain to understand all safety concerns that surround these power sources.

**Bruce Niederberger | Tampa, Florida**

### Rent a Ride

I do most of my traveling by myself. If I need a car to do sightseeing at a location I check with campgrounds to see if there is transportation or if they recommend a car rental company that will pick me up at the campground. I have a gold Hertz card and some of its rental locations will pick you up at the campgrounds. I have also used Enterprise, which will pick you up at the campgrounds.

When you look at the pros and cons of dinghy towing, I decided that it was more cost-effective to rent a car when needed. Also, I don't have to worry about hooking and unhooking the car,

## Featured Letter

### One of Each

We often take one battery-powered electric bike and one regular bike when we go camping in our motorhome. My wife, who has heart issues, rides the e-bike if we ride together. If I am running an errand by myself, I really enjoy riding the e-bike around the area. In "twist and ride" mode, it will go about 13 miles with no assist pedaling by the rider. In "pedal assist" mode, the electric motor makes



pedaling much easier and will let you go uphill with little to no additional difficulty than pedaling on level ground. In the pedal assist mode you can travel about 26 miles before the battery will need recharging. We find using the e-bike around campgrounds to be a very fun way to get around locally.

**David Kleinhardt | Laingsburg, Michigan**



especially if I can't find a pull-through spot to park.

**Dorothy Vale | Nicholasville, Kentucky**

### Cozy Bikes

We have been RVing since 2008. I have not wanted to tow a dinghy, so in 2009 I purchased two electric Cozybikes and a double motorcycle carrier. We have had great success with them. They travel 12 to 15 mph, depending on terrain. When we were in Sedona, Arizona, we traveled around 35 miles from the RV park to town and back on a single charge. It's a little hairy on a highway, just stay on the side, like a bike. They are great fun to tool around the campground. They look like a small Moped, and the bike and battery weigh about 70 pounds. While traveling, I remove the battery (40 pounds) and place it in the cargo hold. The two bikes ride on the hitch

receiver carrier. You can ride them on most bike trails. You can pedal or use electric assist, and while you are pedaling you are also charging the battery a bit.

We still have the bikes although my wife has a balance issue, so we purchased a Royale two-seater mobility scooter. Now I use an electric lift on the hitch receiver to transport the scooter. It's not as fast as the bikes, but then we need to slow down a little at 70 years of age. Hope to still be RVing at 75.

**Gene Lindstrom | Cottage Grove, Minnesota**

### Need a Lift?

I am wondering if anyone of your readers has had an experience with the lifts available for persons who are in wheelchairs? We have a 36-foot 2007 Monaco Cayman motorhome.

I have a muscle problem with my legs and because the steps are

quite steep, I have a problem lifting my legs to reach the next step. We have traveled 30,000 miles in the past four years in this motorhome and it is getting more difficult to get into the motorhome once I am out. I use a rollator inside the motorhome and an electric chair when I am outside. They both work really well; the big problem for me is getting in. I would appreciate any pros and cons to the various lifts that are available and what your readers' experiences have been.

**Carolyn Brasier | Via email**

### Question of the Month

Do you use a wheelchair lift with your motorhome? What do you like/dislike about the experience?

Send your comments to:

MotorHome, 2750 Park View Court, Suite 240, Oxnard, CA 93036; or email [letters@motorhomemagazine.com](mailto:letters@motorhomemagazine.com)



For even more reader responses, visit:

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## The Spookiest Campground in America

The spirit of Halloween brought to you by the magic of Disney

By Morey Edelman

**T**he Campsites at Disney's Fort Wilderness Resort in Florida has always been a terrific place to set up a motorhome and experience true Disney magic. To make it even more special, be sure to arrive in time for the resort's annual Halloween celebration. It seems like every campsite is trying to outdo that of its neighbors with Halloween decorations, including pumpkins, Disney characters in spooky dress, inflatables and lights.

As the sun goes down, the trick-or-treaters come out to walk the campground. If you're lucky, you will even spot Chip and Dale out collecting candy. What a must-see event!

Fort Wilderness encompasses 750 acres of pine and cypress forest, with amenities that include swimming pools, woodland trails, evening cookouts and a stress-free boat ride to the Magic Kingdom. All sites have full hookups.

As amazing as Halloween is at Fort Wilderness, during that evening the elves work feverishly so that when you arrive at the Magic Kingdom the following morning, all the Christmas decorations are already in place. It's truly a magical place!

For more information, call 407-824-2900 or go to <https://disneyworld.disney.go.com/resorts/campsites-at-fort-wilderness-resort>.



By Bobbie Hasselbring

# Kinkaider Onion Rings

**F**rench-fried onion rings are often greasy and too heavily breaded for me, so I've never been a big fan. That is until I tasted the onion rings at Kinkaider Brewing Co. just outside Broken Bow, Nebraska.

Kinkaider Brewing has an unlikely story. It's in the middle of lonely Sandhills farm country, yet it features finely crafted beer and outrageously good food.

Starting a brewery was the brainchild of four friends who chose the unlikely location because one of them owned a large, metal building, and rent would be cheap. The next closest brewery is at least an hour away. The beer and food are enough to bring fans to this out-of-the-way spot and, especially on weekends, the place rocks.

"I turned a hobby into a business," says co-owner/brew master Dan Hodges, grinning broadly. Hodges brews a dozen different beers twice a day, seven days a week.

The Kinkaider name comes from a law passed in 1902 that gave Sandhills immigrants 640 acres of land. The brewery's ambiance is industrial-cool, with a friendly biker bar vibe and black-and-white metal walls, rustic wooden tables and beer art posters. Out back are a volleyball court and stage for live music.

"We didn't know how we'd be accepted in a rural area where most people drink domestic light beer," says Dan. "They taste our beer and keep coming back."

Since Chef Michelle Paris joined the team, food is a big draw. A year ago, when a job came up for her husband, she followed him to the Sandhills. She'd been cooking in Portland, Oregon, where pairing beer and food, and cooking with craft beer are commonplace. Judging by the rave reviews, it's a hit with locals too.

In a tiny kitchen off the bar, the chef whips up a sophisticated bar menu that includes salads, sandwiches and burgers, loaded flatbreads, flat-iron steaks and more. She pairs Kinkaider beers with dishes, and often incorporates beer into recipes such as battered fish and chips, and light-as-air onion rings.

## Have a favorite beer recipe you'd like to share?

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



Top: Onion rings made with a beer and vodka batter are light as air. Above: Kinkaider Brewing Co.'s tasting room has a friendly ambiance.

## KINKAIDER ONION RINGS



These delicate onion rings are easy-to-make and perfect for a fall football gathering at your favorite RV park. Use cake flour for a super-light batter.

- ½ tablespoon kosher salt
- ½ tablespoon baking soda
- 8 ounces cake flour (or pastry flour, low gluten)
- 1 ounce vodka
- 7½ ounces beer
- 1 large yellow onion, cut ½-inch thick and separated into rings

► Mix salt, baking soda and flour in a bowl. Whisk in vodka and beer. If the batter is too thin, add a little more flour; if it's too thick, add a little more beer. The consistency should be a little thicker than pancake batter. Submerge onion rings in batter. Tap off excess batter on the side of the batter bowl and fry in hot oil at 350 degrees Fahrenheit. When they start to turn golden brown (about 45-60 seconds), flip over and cook the other side. Once completely golden brown, remove from oil and season with salt and pepper. Serve immediately.

Recipe courtesy Chef Michelle Paris, Kinkaider Brewing Co., [www.kinkaiderbrewing.com](http://www.kinkaiderbrewing.com).





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## Silver Streaker

Airstream has partnered with Pedego Electric Bikes to offer the new Pedego Airstream Electric Bike. Propelled by Pedego's rugged motors and powered by strong lithium batteries, the Airstream bikes are available in the company's classic brushed-aluminum style, and feature Airstream's name on the chain guard as well as the company's badge for the front emblem. In addition, the bikes feature classic and step-through designs with a stylish 26-inch frame; wide, swept-back handlebars that promote a comfortable upright riding position; a 48-volt lightweight lithium battery providing an average of 25 to 60 miles distance per charge; five levels of automatic pedal assist mode and a twist-and-go throttle for full power on demand; and an LCD display with USB charging port for a phone and other devices. The bikes are available at Airstream dealerships and Pedego stores. MSRP: Starts at \$2,995.

**Pedego | 800-646-8604,  
[www.pedegoelectricbikes.com/airstream](http://www.pedegoelectricbikes.com/airstream)**

## Rodent Shield

When your motorhome is in storage, one of the most important precautions to take is to keep mice and other pests out of the interior. Mouse Free's unique formula is said to stop mice and other pests from entering through the small holes and cavities on the underside of motorhome. Mouse Free is a lubricating non-drip coating scented with natural essential oils that is applied to the entire undercarriage of the motorhome. The oily coating is environmentally friendly and results in a barrier that is too slippery for critters to travel across, according to the company. Plus, Mouse Free works to lubricate all moving parts, prevents plastic and rubber from drying and cracking, and protects the metal from the elements, according to the company. Mouse Free is either applied professionally by a dealer (including Camping World), or a do-it-yourself version is available for \$129.99 at Camping World, which includes a gallon of the coating and an application gun.

**Mouse Free | 877-902-2730, [www.mouse-free.com](http://www.mouse-free.com)**



## Patriot Gains

Fresh off its acquisition of Midwest Automotive Designs, REV Group is adding a new Class B to its lineup, the all-new 2018 American Coach American Patriot, the company's first diesel Class B built on the Mercedes-Benz Sprinter chassis. The Patriot delivers sleek styling and intuitive features in four floorplans. The Patriot features a long list of comforts in a nimble luxury van conversion, including a private lavatory and fully outfitted galley, plus plenty of overhead storage. The American Patriot offers luxury features like ultraleather seating, elegant dark wood detail, a 2,000-watt inverter, an 11,000-Btu roof air conditioner and more. MSRP starts at \$122,194. Also new is the Patriot Cruiser, designed for upscale travel with up to six bucket seats. MSRP starts at \$126,737.

**American Coach | 800-854-1344, [www.americancoach.com](http://www.americancoach.com)**

## Halt Humidity

We all know that excessive, prolonged condensation in a motorhome's interior can lead to musty odors, mold and mildew. The best defense against these potentially harmful buildups is prevention via dehumidifying the interior. Dri-Z-Air is odorless and nonflammable, and comes in a compact 6-by-5½-inch package. Dri-Z-Air proactively removes and absorbs excess moisture from the air. The crystals in the Dri-Z-Air dehumidifier container absorb the moisture from the air with quiet efficiency. Dri-Z-Air dehumidifier containers provide superior airflow and are the only units that provide unobstructed 360-degree coverage, according to the company. Available at Camping World. MSRP: \$10.99.



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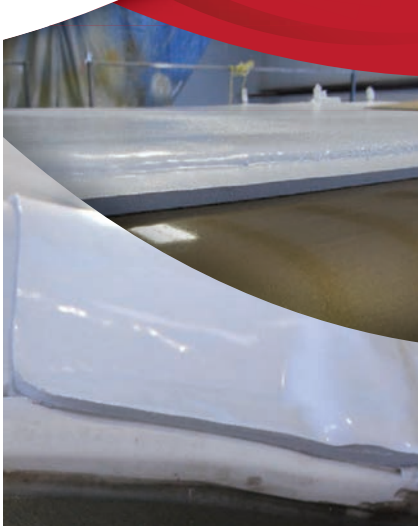


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Clark County, Nevada/Arizona border

### A Feat of Engineering

Hoover Dam, located along the border of Nevada and Arizona, is definitely worth a stop if you're driving by on your way to or from Las Vegas. Completed in 1936, the dam was one of the great construction projects of the Depression. Built into the Black Canyon Gorge, it rises 726.4 feet, forming Lake Mead, which is the largest man-made lake in America. On average, Hoover Dam supplies more than 4 billion-kilowatt hours of hydroelectric power yearly, enough power for 1.3 million people.

To learn more, park your motorhome in the lot on the Arizona side, and walk to the visitor center where the tours begin. Both the 30-minute Powerplant Tour and the one-hour Dam Tour start with a 10-minute video. The longer tour then takes you inside the internal passageways, all the way down 530 feet to the power generating plant at its base.

Located less than an hour from Las Vegas, there are many camping

opportunities in the area. We stayed at the National Park Service's Boulder Beach Campground, which offers great views of Lake Mead, Boulder Basin and the Mojave Desert. There is a dump station and water, but no hookups or showers. An added benefit is the 3.7-mile walking/biking trail on the former Hoover Dam Railroad to the dam. We left our motorhome at the campground, and biked to the Hoover Dam tour.


**For more information**, call 866-730-9097 or go to [www.usbr.gov/lc/hooverdam](http://www.usbr.gov/lc/hooverdam). — *Morey Edelman* 



Photo: Morey Edelman





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Cana Island Lighthouse, located along the Lake Michigan shoreline on Door County's eastern coast, has been helping ships navigate safely since 1869.

## Door County Delights

This bucolic 70-mile-long peninsula in northeastern Wisconsin combines natural beauty and outdoor recreation with art galleries and traditional Scandinavian cuisine

By Pam Windsor

**D**oor County, Wisconsin, has been a popular vacation spot for Midwesterners for years. However, if you live in other parts of the country, it's quite likely you've never heard of it.

If you look at a map of Wisconsin and go to the northeast tip, you'll see a peninsula that juts into Lake Michigan. That peninsula is Door County, and all along the shoreline, up one side and down the other, you'll find a number of quaint waterfront towns and villages, each with their own special attractions.

"The very first tourists up here were wealthy folks from Chicago and Milwaukee who would hop on a steamship and steam up here

to get away from the summer heat," explains Jon Jarosh, with the Door County Visitor Bureau. "They would go to Fish Creek and Ephraim. Those were two of the first places that people started visiting."

Popular spots today include Egg Harbor, Sister Baby, Ellison Bay and others. These small waterfront communities offer swimming, sailing, kayaking, charter boat fishing and guided boat tours to view the bluffs and some 11 lighthouses throughout the region.

"The county is about 70 miles long," notes Jarosh. "It consists of the county itself, but then the surrounding islands. We've got 34 named islands up here in Door County, with the largest being Washington Island. That's our only year-round island community. It has about 700 residents."

While the shoreline and the islands offer many recreational activities, the area's charm extends

DOOR COUNTY, WISCONSIN



### ← Getting There

To reach Door County from the south, take Interstate 41 or 43; from the west, use state Route 29; and from the north, take U.S. Highway 41. The county starts just north of the town of Algoma and the first major city is Sturgeon Bay. It takes more than an hour to drive from the county line in the southern part of the peninsula to the end of state Route 42 at Northport, the peninsula's northern tip.





Photo: Boyd Fellows

beyond the water. There's something appealing about the relaxed lifestyle, the warmth of the people who live here and the way they do business. As you drive through Door County, you'll find unique shops, restaurants, wineries, distilleries and one-of-a-kind artists. There are no chain restaurants, chain convenience stores, or even chain grocery stores. Sturgeon Bay, the area's only incorporated city, may be the one place you see a business or two you recognize. There is a Walmart here, but it's the exception and not the norm.

The small specialty shops offer the opportunity to take your time, ask questions and learn more about what you're seeing or buying. For example, everyone knows Wisconsin is famous

Above: Door County has a variety of full-service RV parks, including Egg Harbor Campground & RV Resort. First opened in 1935, Peninsula Players Theatre is America's oldest professional resident summer theater and performs six days per week from mid-June through mid-October.

for its cheese — it produces more than 25 percent of all cheese made in the U.S. So, it's nice to pop in to a store like Wisconsin Cheese Masters in Egg Harbor, and take the time to find out more about the history and what's uniquely available. Cheeses here are all handmade. There are only 52 Master Cheese Makers in the world, and all of them are in Wisconsin.

Most operations in Door County feature a friendly feel. You'll note that in area restaurants you often get to speak to the chef or the restaurateur while you dine. If you make it to a traditional fish boil — and you absolutely

should — you may hear from the boil master himself as the meal is prepared. You'll learn how locals have, for years, prepared this popular dish made with whitefish caught in nearby waters. The boil master adds salt, potatoes, onions and then the whitefish, and finally throws kerosene on top, burning it off in a magnificent fiery blaze. And after you eat the entrée, you'll want to top it off with a piece of cherry pie.

Cherries are a big deal in Door County. You may notice the many cherry orchards in the area and even stop to accept an invitation to pick



A view of the Egg Harbor shoreline in Door County.

Photo: Pam Windsor





Left: Glass artists Jeremy Popelka and Stephanie Trenchard operate their glass studio and gallery in downtown Sturgeon Bay.

some. In the mid-1900s, the region was the largest producer of tart cherries in America. Today, it's the fourth largest. Part of the fun of your visit might just be the many cherry items you'll get a chance to sample while you're here. There's a wide array of cherry-flavored foods and sauces, as well as cherry wine, cherry vodka, cherry brandy and much more.

Whether it's the inspiration of the scenic surroundings or the longstanding support from throughout the region, artists seem to be drawn to Door County. And once they come, they tend to stay. As you travel from town to town, you'll come across out-of-the-way studios and galleries showcasing a variety of artists, some of whom are doing cutting-edge work you won't see anywhere else. Jeremy Popelka and Stephanie Trenchard are masters in the field of glass art. They own the Popelka Trenchard Glass Gallery in Sturgeon Bay, where you can take classes or watch Popelka blow and design glass right in front of you. You can also see pieces Trenchard has designed that involve first sculpting a figure from glass, then encapsulating it inside another, bigger glass structure. They're called sandcast glass with inclusions.

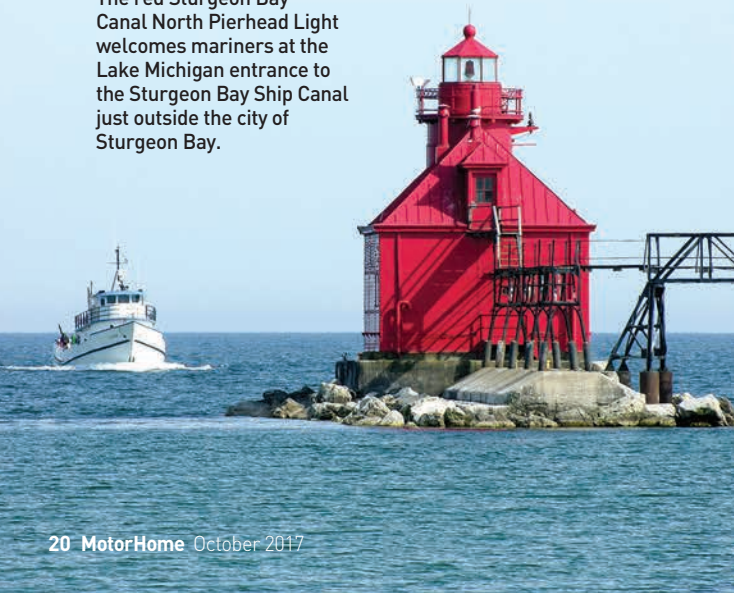
"I sculpt the interior piece first on a blow pipe," she says as she describes the process. "I either sculpt it with Jeremy's help or he sculpts it with my help. You start out with a blob [of glass] and all of a sudden you see a figure. You see a personality." She paints the figures with glass paint, then later creates the larger glass structures to house them.

Chad Luberger is a porcelain artist in Egg Harbor. He traveled to China, the home of porcelain, to learn his craft. "Porcelain is a raw material that comes from millions of years of erosion in rocks. One of the things I love about the



Above, from top: Established in 1974, Door Peninsula Winery offers more than 45 different wines to guests at their tasting bar, along with tours of the facility. Handmade cheeses on display at Wisconsin Cheese Masters in Egg Harbor.

The red Sturgeon Bay Canal North Pierhead Light welcomes mariners at the Lake Michigan entrance to the Sturgeon Bay Ship Canal just outside the city of Sturgeon Bay.







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# GETAWAY

DOOR COUNTY, WISCONSIN

material is the vibrancy of color I get with the glazes, as well as the thinness I can get because of its strength.”

His Plum Bottom Pottery & Gallery, like many studios and galleries in Door County, features the work of both local artists and artists from around the country. As he points out, loyal customers know that and come back year after year.

Many who visit this part of Wisconsin do return. For RV owner Jim Wagner of McHenry, Illinois, this was his first visit after hearing so many good things over the years. He, too, is likely to come back.

“It’s a relaxed atmosphere, there’s a lot of fun stuff to do. We’ve seen a lot, like the lighthouses and state parks.”

Wagner added that he’d also been to a traditional fish boil and had sampled cherry doughnuts, confirming, “There’s everything cherry up here.” And while there are some narrow roads when driving through some of the smaller towns, Wagner says he hadn’t had any problems with an RV.

“Obviously, some of the towns have two-lane highways so you’ve got to be a little careful, but other than that I haven’t had any trouble at all and I’ve got a big rig.”

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

### Baileys Grove Campground

920-839-2559,  
[www.baileysgrovecampground.com](http://www.baileysgrovecampground.com)

### Door County Visitor Bureau

920-743-4456, [www.doorcounty.com](http://www.doorcounty.com)

### Egg Harbor Campground & RV Resort

920-868-3278, [www.eggharborcampground.com](http://www.eggharborcampground.com)

### Fish Creek Campground

920-495-2267, [www.fishcreekcampground.com](http://www.fishcreekcampground.com)

### Plum Bottom Pottery & Gallery

920-743-2819, [www.plumbottompottery.com](http://www.plumbottompottery.com)

### Popelka Trenchard Glass Gallery

920-743-7287, [www.popelkaglass.com](http://www.popelkaglass.com)

### Quietwoods South Camping Resort

920-825-7065, [www.quietwoodscamping.com](http://www.quietwoodscamping.com)

### Rustic Timbers Door County Camping

920-868-3151,  
<http://rustictimbersdoorcountycamping.com>

### Wisconsin Cheese Masters

920-868-4320, [www.wisconsincheesemasters.com](http://www.wisconsincheesemasters.com)

Wagner stayed at the Egg Harbor Campground and RV Resort, but Door County has a number of campgrounds available. Other full-service RV parks in the area include Baileys Grove Campground, Fish Creek Campground, Quietwoods South Camping Resort and Rustic Timbers.

When planning a visit to the area, be aware that the peak vacation season stretches from May to October

and that many local shops, businesses and restaurants are closed during winter.

Autumn is a great time to take in Door County’s fall foliage or one of the many harvest festivals, including the Fall Fun Fest & Cider Pressing Party (October 7-8), the Pumpkin Patch Festival (October 7-8), and the Sister Bay Fall Festival (October 13-15). Peak fall foliage occurs in mid-October. **M**



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# OCTOBER IN OBX

North Carolina's Outer Banks is a great shoulder-season getaway

**A**merica is blessed with so many beautiful spots, it's difficult for me to pick a favorite, but one of my top choices is the Outer Banks of North Carolina. My bride of 50-plus years and I recently revisited the Outer Banks (OBX) in mid-October, which is a good time to go because there are less crowds, the weather is mild and most everything is still open. Stretches of public beaches invite sunbathers to enjoy the solitude.

The OBX is a 130-mile-long string of narrow barrier islands off the coast of North Carolina. It covers most of the state's coastline, separating the sounds of Currituck, Albemarle, Roanoke and Pamlico from the Atlantic Ocean.

We chose to travel the eastern route via Highway 64 through Manteo on Roanoke Island. The area has a lot of historic attractions — the North Carolina Aquarium on Roanoke Island, Fort Raleigh National Historic Site,

Elizabethan Gardens, the Lost Colony and the 16th century ship Elizabeth II are just some of them. After a visit to Roanoke Island and Manteo, we crossed Roanoke Sound and landed on OBX near Nags Head (one of the many OBX towns with a colorful name) and North Carolina Highway 12, which would take us the entire length of the barrier islands.

North of Nags Head, along NC 12, were our first two stops: the Wright brothers National Memorial

and Jockey's Ridge State Park. The importance of the first is obvious. This is the exact location of the first flight of the Wright brothers, Orville and Wilbur. The brothers actually completed four flights, although the first three lasted 15 seconds or less and covered a distance of 200 feet or less (the first, on December 17, 1903, covered 120 feet in 12 seconds). However, the fourth flight of 852 feet remained airborne for 59 seconds.

Located near Kitty Hawk, the memorial consists of a visitor center with exhibits and a full-scale reproduction of the Wright brothers' planes, markers denoting the location of the four flights, a reconstructed hangar and workshop and a sculpture recreating the original 1903 flight. But,



Ⓞ Manteo's Roanoke Marshes Light is a replica of the cottage-style screw-pile lighthouse that stood at the entrance to Croatan Sound. The lighthouse contains exhibits highlighting the area's maritime history and guides boats into Shallowbag Bay.





Clockwise, from above: Every night, the beam from Bodie Island Light Station — located south of Nags Head — helps light the way for sailors in the waters known as the “Graveyard of the Atlantic.” Hang gliding is a popular attraction at Jockey’s Ridge State Park. A stand-up paddleboarder plies the waters of Silver Lake Harbor on Ocracoke Island.

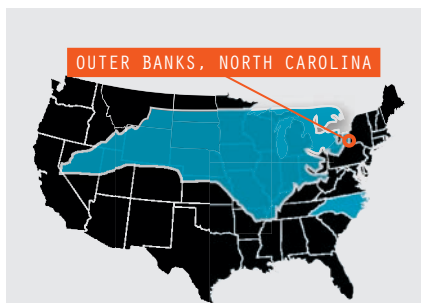


atop Kill Devil Hill, for which the town gets its name, is a very prominent 60-foot monument honoring the Wright brothers and their accomplishments.

Incidentally, if visitors possess a National Park Senior Pass, entrance to the Wright Brothers National Memorial is free. Otherwise, the entrance fee is \$7.

Our second stop was Jockey’s

Ridge State Park. The significance of this 420-acre state park is not so obvious. It is located in Nags Head, and its claim to fame is that it contains the tallest living sand dune on the Atlantic coast. For the same reasons the Wright brothers chose Kitty Hawk for their attempts, many kites and hang gliders choose Jockey’s Ridge and its dunes for their adventures — the high dunes, great winds and soft sand landings. Kite-flying is very popular for visitors to Jockey’s Ridge. Some larger kites take in enough wind to pull the kilters along the sandy dunes in practice for kite surfing



## Getting There

There are three options for entering the OBX. The northern route enters via U.S. Highway 158 from the Norfolk, Virginia, area crossing the Currituck Sound. The eastern route enters via U.S. Highway 64 through Manteo and arrives just south of Nags Head. The route from the south requires a ferry ride from either Cedar Island or Swan Quarter; take U.S. Highway 70 to access the Cedar Island ferry port and U.S. Highway 264 for the Swan Quarter port. Ferry reservations are recommended ([www.ncdot.gov/ferry](http://www.ncdot.gov/ferry)).

Nags Head offers stunning views of the Atlantic coastline.





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## OCTOBER IN OBX



Photo: Courtesy VisitNC.com Bill Russ

Above: This aerial view of Ocracoke illustrates the village's beach-centric vibe, including shopping, restaurants and water-based activities.

(similar to water surfing, but using a special board and a four-string kite for propulsion). In addition, the view from the approximately 90-foot-tall dune offers a panorama of Nags Head and the coastline.

Not only do kites dot the sky over Jockey's Ridge State Park, but hang gliders also take advantage of the tall dunes and great wind. An unusual sight along the coast, hang gliders are usually spotted at higher elevations. But the conditions along the OBX make hang gliding another popular activity. There is even a hang gliding school at Jockey's Ridge operated by Kitty Hawk Kites. We did not bring a kite,

and certainly did not sign up for hang gliding.

Next we picked up NC 12 and headed south along the Cape Hatteras National Seashore and through Pea Island National Wildlife Refuge.

Lighthouses are always favorite stops. Of the several lighthouses on the OBX, four are accessible by motorhome or dinghy vehicle. We visited three — Bodie Island, Hatteras and Ocracoke. The first stop out of Nags Head was the Bodie Island Light Station.

According to the Outer Banks Lighthouse Society, the present lighthouse is the third to be built near

**“October is a good time to visit OBX because there are less crowds, the weather is mild and most everything is still open.”**





the present site. "The first light was a 54-foot tower that began to lean after only two years in service. The second, a 90-foot tower that was blown up by the Confederates, lasted only until 1861. The present tower was built in a new location north of Oregon Inlet. Construction began on the present light in 1870, and it went into service in 1872."

Farther south of the Bodie Island Light Station, we crossed the impressive Oregon Inlet bridge and arrived in the town of Rodanthe, where we visited the Chicamacomico Life-Saving Station (say that three times fast!). This station commemorates the valiant efforts and the service of the little-known surfmen who braved the waters of the stormy Atlantic to rescue crew members of sinking ships along the stretch of waters known as the "Graveyard of the Atlantic." Because of newer navigational aids, electronics and helicopters, the need for such stations was reduced. The life-saving stations began in 1848 and Chicamacomico was decommissioned in 1952.

The notable Cape Hatteras Light Station was our next stop. The daymark of its black-and-white spiral stripes is a familiar sight. This is the lighthouse that in 1999 was moved from near the coastline to a safer location 2,900 feet inland due to erosion. Both the Cape Hatteras and the Bodie Island Light Stations are open for self-guided climbs seasonally, usually the third Friday in April through Columbus Day. The third lighthouse, the Ocracoke Island Light Station, is not open for climbing.

The Graveyard of the Atlantic Museum, in the town of Hatteras near the ferry dock to Ocracoke, is a good

place to visit while waiting for the Hatteras/Ocracoke ferry, which runs every half hour to one hour, depending on the season. There is no fee for the ferry and this route does not require reservations, but do arrive early to avoid longer waits. Schedules can be found at [www.ncdot.gov/ferry](http://www.ncdot.gov/ferry).

Ocracoke Island is a quiet, slow-paced village with plenty of shopping, restaurants and water-related activities. The Ocracoke Island Light Station is one of the most visited spots on the island, but don't expect to drive the motorhome and park to view the lighthouse; there is very little parking and zero turn-around room. Getting around Ocracoke is best done by bringing or renting a bicycle or the ever-present golf carts.

The village of Ocracoke surrounds Silver Lake, where the ferries to Swan Quarter and Cedar Island depart. We had reservations for a 7:30 a.m. ferry to Cedar Island. It's suggested ticketed passengers arrive at the ferry 30 minutes early. Boarding all the ferries is a very efficient operation, and the ferries provide a pleasant and comfortable ride. We were concerned about boarding the ferry with a motorhome, but it was not a problem in our case.

There are plenty of campgrounds scattered along the Outer Banks. The Cape Hatteras National Seashore has four campgrounds, all without hookups, which are on a first-come first-served basis and close seasonally. Full-service RV parks in the OBX include Camp Hatteras RV Resort & Campground, Cape Woods Campground & Cabins, Frisco Woods Campground and Hatteras Sands Campground.

If you visit the OBX, we think you just might discover that it is in fact one of America's most beautiful spots. Who knows, it might even become one of your favorites. **M**

### For More Information

**Cape Hatteras National Seashore**  
252-475-9000, [www.nps.gov/caha](http://www.nps.gov/caha)

**Camp Hatteras RV Resort & Campground**  
252-987-2777, [www.camphatteras.com](http://www.camphatteras.com)

**Cape Woods Campground & Cabins**  
252-995-5850, [www.capewoods.com](http://www.capewoods.com)

**Chicamacomico Historical Association**  
252-987-1552, [www.chicamacomico.net](http://www.chicamacomico.net)

**Frisco Woods Campground**  
252-995-5208,  
[www.thefriscowoods campground.com](http://www.thefriscowoods campground.com)

**Hatteras Sands Campground**  
888-987-2225,  
[www.hatterassandsrvpark.com](http://www.hatterassandsrvpark.com)

**Outer Banks Visitors Bureau**  
877-629-4386, [www.outerbanks.org](http://www.outerbanks.org)

**Wright Brothers National Memorial**  
252-473-2111, [www.nps.gov/wrbr](http://www.nps.gov/wrbr)



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From far left: The Elizabeth II — a replica of the ships that brought the original colonists to the area — is docked at Manteo harbor on Roanoke Island and is open for tours during the summer. The ferry from Ocracoke to Cedar Island accommodates motorhomes with ease. Wright Brothers National Memorial is on the exact site of the famous first flight in 1903.







# Buena Vista!

Winnebago dual-slide 27PE offers great space in a more compact package **By Chris Dougherty**

**O**ne of the most alluring aspects of RVing is traveling and seeing new places. Larger Class A motorhomes are great, but can be difficult to maneuver around many destinations, and parking while touring and shopping can be a concern. Not to mention that for many folks who are looking at their first Class A, the available sizes — and the related jump in price and complexity — can be daunting.

With seat belts for six and sleeping positions for up to eight, the 2018 Winnebago Vista 27PE may be shorter on length at just under 29 feet, but it's great on space. Additionally, with solid build quality coupled with a slightly simpler feature set, the Vista makes getting into a Class A more affordable, in an easy to handle and operate package that's great for touring.

We tested the new Vista 27PE at Normandy Farms Campground in Foxboro, Massachusetts, a Good Sam RV Travel and Savings Guide 10/10\*/10 park, and arguably one of the nicest RV resorts in New England, if not the country. Owned and operated by the Daniels family since 1759 — yes, that's right, since before the American Revolution — Normandy Farms has grown over the decades to include

some incredible facilities and services, and even a spa.

The Vista 27PE has a dual personality; it's both a good couple's coach and a fine family motorhome. It has two slideouts, both on the driver's side. When deployed, the interior has an abundant amount of living space. The front slide contains the kitchen and dinette, while the rear has a fold-up king bed. Add to this a folding sofa bed and an optional drop-down bunk over the front driver and passenger seats, and you have a suitable floorplan for plenty of people to sit or sleep, without taking up the extra floor space typical in a bunkhouse model.

Stepping into the motorhome reveals an attractive and comfortable space. The 2018 Vista is available in four interior motifs and two exterior applique treatments. The test unit featured the Infinity interior, with tans, grays and blacks, combined with a gray wood-plank style vinyl floor and cherry cabinetry with laminated counters.

The kitchen and living area have generous room for a small campground party. Meal prep is easy on the neo-angled kitchen counter, which has plenty of open space to place items needed for cooking behind a stainless-steel,

**ABOVE:** The Vista 27PE is long on space in a short package, and is great for families or couples with occasional guests.



double-bowl sink. The 17-inch Atwood range, to the left, below the 1-cubic-foot High Pointe microwave oven, worked well; however, there is no range-top vent, which is a bit of a disappointment. Be careful what you cook because you'll be smelling it for awhile. There is a crank up roof vent (no-fan) in close proximity that could be replaced with a Maxx-Fan for optimal ventilation. The cabinetry is well-made and abundant, and includes a vertical, fixed-shelf pantry next to the Norcold 8-cubic-foot refrigerator; a stacked, three-drawer base cabinet under the sink; and plenty of overhead storage space throughout.

Just forward of the kitchen is the dinette, which features a large 40-inch wall-mounted Insignia HDTV, and the standard fold-down two-bench dinette with storage underneath. Also, the dinette has a connectivity port under the table with AC, DC and USB power ports, as well as two cup holders for use by the seat belted passengers while heading down the road. The dinette folds down into a small bed, which is good for kids or smaller adults.

Across from the dinette is a jackknife sofa bed, clad in a soft vinyl. This seat is comfortable and includes two matching pillows in lieu of armrests for the ends. These aren't particularly useful, as they have nothing holding them to the couch and fall off when you sit next to them. This is one of those pieces of furniture that makes

you ask "Didn't an interior designer or engineer sit on this sofa/bed before choosing to use it in this coach?" A good fix would be to have an attached plate or board extending from the pillow to slide down between the cushion and couch frame to hold them in place. As with the dinette, the sofa is a bit on the shorter side, but still comfortable for an average sized adult.

The driver and passenger seats are comfortable and also clad in the white soft vinyl. These manual captain's chairs spin around, adding to the seating in the living room, and a removable pedestal table that's stored in the closet can be set up between them. Above, a feature harkening back to motorhomes of decades past is an optional ceiling-mounted bunk (\$2,393), but unlike the spring-loaded version of yesteryear, the new version is electrically lowered, using a key-switch by the OnePlace Systems Monitor. This bunk is surprisingly large, with enough room for a couple of kids or even small adults. And, in another nod to the old Class A's, there is a wraparound cubby system mounted above the windshield for those little necessities that need to be accessed while in the bunk. While we missed having a 120-volt AC outlet accessible to the bunk, it did have two reading lights, and a 12-volt DC receptacle is just below on the dash.

Access to the bunk is via a ladder, which is kept in a coat closet near the



Above: Rear corner bath has plenty of room for taking care of necessities. The shower features a Nautilus retractable shower door that's easy to use and stays out of the way when open.

entry door. The ladder hooks onto two brackets on the bunk structure. The downside is that the ladder will not clear the sofa when the sofa is deployed as a bed, but this can be easily remedied by adding a third bracket, which will allow the ladder to be placed more to the left when necessary.

The driver's compartment is well laid out and comfortable. The driver's seat and steering column adjust so that the pedals and dash controls are within easy reach. The driver has his or her own cup holder on the left, as well as two more mounted on the center engine doghouse; the passenger has a wall-mounted cup holder as well, with a switch for an overhead map light. Visibility through the one-piece windshield is great and the electric

Below: With the front slideout open (left) the living area has lots of space and plenty of seating. The bedroom (right) has a king size bed with side tables. The mattress folds to allow the slideout to retract.







Above: The Vista's cockpit (left) is comfortable and is afforded great views from the one-piece windshield. The first black-tank valve (right) feeds into a macerator in a compartment on the passenger side.

sideview mirrors are easy to see. The center pod of the dash is fitted with a Pioneer MVH-AV290BT touchscreen stereo with Bluetooth. This unit allows hands-free communication through a compatible iPhone or Android phone, as well as playing music, etc. This is strictly a stereo, and this motorhome doesn't have a DVD/CD player; however, an entertainment center console lowers from the ceiling over the entry door where one can be installed. This is fine because it allows the owners to pick the style of Blu-ray or DVD player, or simply not have one at all.

The rear third of the motorhome features the aforementioned king bed, closet with drawers and bathroom. The bedroom is separated from the kitchen by way of a telescoping sliding door, and a curtain that separates the bed from the bathroom to give guests privacy.

The king bed is an interesting design in that the lower third of the mattress folds over to allow the slideout to be retracted. Each side of the bed features a shelf and

overhead storage. The foam mattress is thick and firm. Across from the bed is an optional 32-inch Insignia TV (\$471). Some 120-volt AC outlets are accessible from both sides of the bed.

The corner bathroom is functionally spacious, and has adequate room to handle all the necessities. A standard plastic Thetford foot-flush toilet is placed next to the vanity, beneath a multispeed MaxxFan roof vent. Ample storage is provided by the vanity cabinet, a wall cabinet and a triple-towel rack built into the door.

The shower has enough vertical room for this 6-footer to get clean and features an overhead skylight and an interesting Nautilus retractable shower door. The door rolls up into a box when open, and clips to the opposite wall when closed. This is a nice, clean-looking option that works well, eliminating the bulky glass surround and the daily fight with a regular shower curtain.

The exterior of the 27PE is clean and attractive, with tan fiberglass side and rear walls, standard tinted radius

WHAT'S HOT

Size and drivability, great interior space, excellent carrying capacity, basement storage, optional overhead bunk

WHAT'S NOT

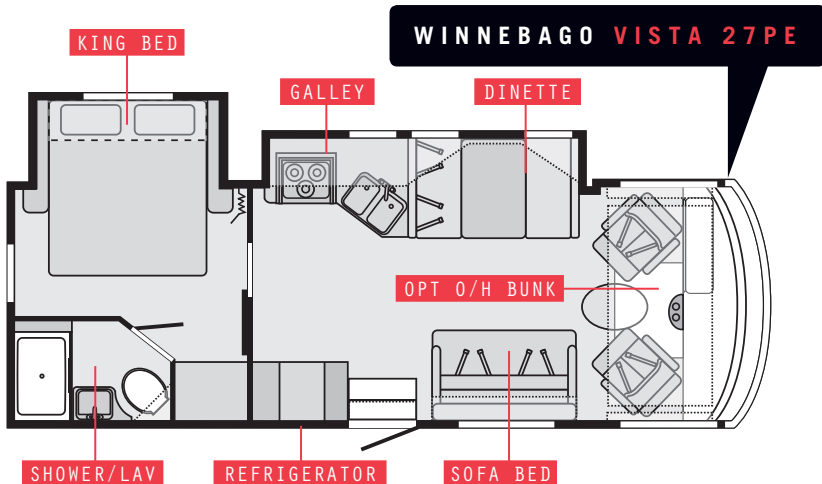
No 120-volt outlet for overhead bunk, arm-rest pillows on couch, 6-gallon water heater is LP-gas-powered only (no electric)



corner windows and a fiberglass front cap. The test coach had the Solar Flare exterior graphics, one of two choices for 2018. The 27PE comes with a standard Dometic 19-foot electric awning with LED lighting, under which is an optional (\$1,225) exterior entertainment center that has a 32-inch Insignia TV tied to a pair of wall-mounted speakers. A switch next to the articulating TV mount allows the user to switch speaker input from the TV to the dash stereo.

Basement storage is generous in this motorhome, and it offers more than 2,800 pounds of realistic occupant and cargo carrying capacity (ROCCC), so loading the basement shouldn't be a problem. Access to the compartments is via radius cornered, side-hinge doors with twist locks, and several of the compartments are of the pass-through variety. All are lined with Ozite carpet, and one of the compartments under the awning has an AC outlet for plugging in patio lights and other accessories. There is also a large exterior compartment under the bedroom slide.

The utilities in the Vista are straightforward, with a standard 30-amp shorepower cord that users manually plug into an onboard receptacle when using the 4kW Onan generator (no automatic transfer switch). The water utilities are basic with the exception of the black-water







Above: From the optional overhead bunk to the convertible dinette to the jackknife sofa, guests (or kids) have plenty of sleeping choices in the Vista 27PE, which can sleep up to eight.

dumping system. Because of the short stature of this motorhome, the black tank terminates on the passenger side. To make this palatable, a dump valve and macerator system mounted in a compartment on the passenger side is piped across the chassis to a 1½-inch black-tank dump valve in the utility compartment. To dump the black tank, you must first open the passenger-side valve, hook up the sewer hose, pull the black-tank dump valve in the utility bay, then push and hold the momentary switch to engage the macerator, and listen for it to run dry. This is a small inconvenience that's offset by the livability of this coach. When you're used to seeing a 1½-inch gray-tank valve and a 3-inch black-tank valve on 99 percent of RVs, seeing it in reverse can be momentarily disconcerting. The handles and stickers are color coded to make it easier. Winterizing the motorhome will take a few extra steps to make sure the macerator is protected. One thing we'd like to see is a black-tank flush system, which is common on most RVs, but unfortunately is not included on the Vista.

Lighting throughout the Vista is LED, and there are plenty of fixtures for general and task lighting. The motorhome is kept comfortable via the standard Coleman 15,000-Btu air conditioner and the 30,000-Btu furnace.

The Vista comes with a 6-gallon LP-gas water heater with electronic ignition; while this is OK, a gas/electric model would have been preferable for increased flexibility and faster recovery, and an option for a 10-gallon model would be even better.

Engine access is pretty standard. Most maintenance points are accessible from the front hood, with the exception of the batteries and the hydraulic leveling system. The batteries are easily accessed under the entry step, and the hydraulic pump and reservoir are hidden behind a panel in the front driver's-side basement compartment.

The drivability of this coach is very good, especially for a short wheelbase gasser. While there is the usual low-speed sway, it was pretty stable on the highway, even in crosswinds and when confronting passing big rigs. Engine noise was customarily loud when the engine hit higher rpm. We did have some shake above 60 mph, but this is commonly attributed to wheel alignment and balance, which should be easily rectified.

We were impressed with the Winnebago Vista 27PE. It is a solid, comfortable motorhome that's easy to use and enjoy. And isn't that what RVing is all about? **M**

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

## Specifications

### Chassis

Model	Ford F-53
Engine	6.8-L Triton V-10
SAE HP	320 @ 4,000 rpm
Torque	460 lb-ft @ 3,000 rpm
Transmission	Automatic 6-speed w/overdrive
Tires	70R19.5 LRG
Wheelbase	178"
Brakes	Disc
Suspension	Tapered multileaf spring with front and rear stabilizer bars
Fuel Capacity	80 gal
Warranty	3 years/36,000 miles

### Coach

Exterior Length	28' 8"
Exterior Width	8' 4"
Exterior Height	12' 2"
Interior Width	8' 1"
Interior Height	6' 8"
Construction	Aluminum framing, fiberglass skin, crowned, one-piece fiberglass roof, laminated side walls
Freshwater Capacity	51 gal
Black-water Capacity	50 gal
Gray-water Capacity	45 gal
Water-heater Capacity	6 gal
LP-gas Capacity	18 gal
Air Conditioner	15,000 Btu
Furnace	30,000 Btu
Refrigerator	8 cubic-foot
Converter	55 amps
Batteries (2)	12-volt chassis, 12-volt house
AC Generator	4 kW gas
MSRP	\$123,865
MSRP as Tested	\$127,954
Warranty	12-month/15,000-mile basic limited warranty, 36-month/36,000-mile limited warranty on structure, 10-year limited parts and labor warranty on roof skin.

### Wet Weight

(Water and heater, fuel tanks full; no supplies or passengers)

Front Axle	5,400 lbs
Rear Axle	9,740 lbs
Total	15,140 lbs

### Chassis Ratings

GAWR, F/R	7,000/12,000 lbs
GVWR/GCWR	18,000/23,000 lbs
ROCCC	2,860 lbs
GAWR	Gross Axle Weight Rating
GVWR	Gross Vehicle Weight Rating
GCWR	Gross Combination Weight Rating
ROCCC	Realistic Occupant and Cargo Carrying Capacity (Full Water, No Passengers)

### Special Thanks To:

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# Full Coverage

Protecting your motorhome is easy with a quality cover from one of these manufacturers

**W**hen buying a new motorhome, the fact that you'll likely have to store it for long periods of time is far from your mind. In the heat of the purchasing process, you are no doubt blinded by visions of leaving your stick home behind and traveling the open road quite often. But, try as we might, over the years most of us are faced with having to store our favorite motorhomes at some point and return to our residential homes.

When the time does come, the ideal setup is a nearby climate-controlled storage facility with 24/7 surveillance and security. But here in the real world, that may not be a viable option, so we are forced to select the nearest open-air parking-lot style facility, carport or, if allowed, our very own pad or driveway. All of which is fine, but results in our prized investment being exposed to the elements. Things like UV rays, rain, snow and bird droppings all add up

to an accelerated deterioration of the motorhome's roof, side walls, seams and tires, and even the interior furnishings that are exposed to the reach of the sun.

In order to help slow down the motorhome's aging process and help retain resale value, you'll need to purchase a quality cover. And while it may seem like a considerable chunk of change up front, even the most

expensive cover will likely set you back only the same amount that a few months' rent in a storage facility would.

Covers are available with a variety of construction techniques, using polypropylene, polyester, Tyvek synthetic material and Sunbrella woven acrylic fabric, and are often designed in varying protection levels depending on the severity of the climate. Be sure to select a cover that has been manufactured for the climate in which you live.

To help you with that process, the following pages include some of the top cover manufacturers and suppliers in the RV industry.



Photos courtesy of the manufacturers

Available at Camping World, Elements All Climate Covers are water-resistant and feature a heavy-duty Tyvek roof.



## Designer Series Tyvek Plus Wind



## Designer Series SFS Aqua-shed

### ADCO

ADCO, a division of Covercraft Industries, is the oldest and largest branded RV cover manufacturer. Cover applications are available for virtually every Class A and Class C motorhome ever produced with solutions for full vehicle covers as well as protection products for windshields, tires, vents and air conditioners.

ADCO's most popular RV cover is called **Designer Series Tyvek Plus Wind**. This all-weather cover features a patent-pending slip-seam strapping system to minimize premature wear from wind, and allows the cover to form a contour-fit on the motorhome. Prices average between \$300 and \$500 for most Class A's and Class C's.

For storage in moderate climates, ADCO offers the **Designer Series SFS Aqua-shed**. This line also carries the designer aesthetic and comes at a cost of \$200-\$400 for most motorhomes.

For the ultimate in protection, ADCO offers **custom-fit covers**, which are outfitted with DuPont Tyvek and Glen Raven Sunbrella, combining two of the most respected names in the outdoor-fabric industry. They are backed by a four- or five-year warranty, depending on fabric. Contact ADCO directly for pricing.

ADCO's **RV Roof Cover** weighs a fraction of what full-size RV covers weigh and installs with a unique anchoring system. These covers drastically reduce internal temperatures during storage and prolong the life of the motorhome's roof. Prices range from \$200-\$300.

**ADCO Products | 800-541-2326, www.adcoprod.com**

## RV Roof Cover



CalMark Cover

### CalMark Covers

CalMark has been in the RV cover business for 35 years. Many components of the covers are military-compliant quality, and all fabric and parts are made in the USA.

CalMark utilizes Sunbrella material because it is water-resistant, breathable, mold and mildew resistant, and non-abrasive. All **CalMark covers** come complete with exclusive fabric stress reinforcement (FSR) roof construction for longevity/strength. FSR is a 2-inch wide, 1,000-pound rated webbing sewn on the inside of the roof. Other features include a zippered door entry with invisible backed zipper to prevent scratching, double-stitched seams for added strength, oxidized tie down straps with quick/easy release buckles and extra fabric patches, and a repair kit. The covers are customized to the measurements provided by the customer. CalMark covers are backed by a six-year warranty. MSRP: Starts at \$550.

**CalMark Covers | 800-838-7236, www.calmarkcovers.com**

### Camco

Camco offers two lines of covers for different levels of protection for motorhomes.

The company's **Ultra Guard** covers are available for Class A and C motorhomes, in addition to vans up to 18 feet in length. Designed especially for cold, snowy regions, Ultra Guard covers feature a triple-layer SFS top panel that beads water to provide resistance to rain and snow. The vented design is said to resist mold and mildew growth, while vented flaps reduce wind lofting. The covers also feature



Ultra Guard





Ultra Shield

interlocking seams, heavy-duty polypropylene sides, a self-adjusting hold-down strap system and heavy-duty integrated zippers that allow easy access to doors and storage bays with the cover in place. MSRP: Starts at \$372.99.

The newest addition to Camco's RV covers lineup is the **Ultra Shield**, available for Class A and C motorhomes exclusively at Camping World. Ultra Shield premium RV covers make use of ultrasonic welding to reinforce and extend the life of the cover. Ultrasonic welding is the practice of joining two surfaces by applying high-frequency acoustic vibration under pressure to create a weld, meaning there are no needle perforations or worry of thread deterioration (as there is no thread). Each Ultra Shield cover is made of two layers of spun-bond polypropylene, with an additional layer of triple-stitched Tyvek on the roof area to reflect damaging UV rays. Elasticized corners hold the covers in place, while front and rear cinching straps combine with a buckle system to keep things securely fastened. Zippered entry doors allow for easy access, while covered air vents help reduce billowing. Each cover includes a ladder cover and gutter protectors, a patch kit and a carrying bag. Camco backs Ultra Shield covers with a three-year warranty. MSRP: Starts at \$506.99.

**Camco | 800-334-2004, [www.camco.net](http://www.camco.net)**  
**Camping World | 888-626-7576, [www.campingworld.com](http://www.campingworld.com)**

### Classic Accessories

Classic Accessories' collection of RV cover styles and sizes extends to the three collections available, using the good-better-best model.

The **PolyPRO1** collection is designed to be a light



PolyPRO1

but strong dust cover, performing best when the motorhome is under a canopy or inside a garage. PolyPRO1 provides a single-ply of polypropylene capable of absorbing UV



PolyPRO3

rays and preventing rain damage. This reasonably cost-effective RV/motorhome cover may need to be replaced more often than other Classic Accessories collections. This collection is backed by a two-year limited warranty. MSRP: \$135.99-\$167.99.

The "better" **PolyPRO3** collection utilizes a durable triple-ply polypropylene fabric providing all-season protection against rain and sun. The triple-ply is on the top of the cover and is designed to prevent UV rays from

### ☞ PRO TIPS

#### MEASURING

When measuring your motorhome for a cover, do not rely solely on manufacturer specifications. To determine which size of cover you need, measure the complete length of the motorhome from the front bumper straight back to the rear of the motorhome. Be sure to include any spare tires or ladders in this measurement. For complete height, measure from the base of the motorhome to the top of the roof, but this time exclude all A/C units, vents, satellites, etc.

#### INSTALLATION

Covering your motorhome will become easier with a little practice. Before you begin, be sure to protect the covers from any sharp edges on the motorhome and its components; wrap any offenders (such as antennas, gutter spouts or solar panels) with a towel or foam scraps.

It's best to have a helper while covering your motorhome, especially while you're on the roof. First, make note of the front, which is usually identified with a label or sewn-in tag. Next, unroll the cover behind the motorhome, which will make handling the cover easier. Once that's done, fold the sides of the cover inside out before climbing the ladder. Once on the roof, hold the cover by its front, and pull the entire cover forward to the front of the motorhome. Next, starting at the front and moving down both sides, drape the cover off the roof and all the way to the rear. Use caution while descending the ladder. Pull the sides of the cover down to the bottom of the motorhome, secure the cover in place and you're all set.





PermaPRO

damaging the roof's texture and color. This collection is backed by a three-year limited warranty. MSRP: \$225.99-\$504.99.

The top-of-the-line **PermaPRO** collection features ripstop technology (the same material used in parachutes). Ripstop essentially means that there are additional woven threads against the weave of the material to add strength, helping to prevent and mitigate tears. The polyester material on the PermaPRO is said to be less bulky than most RV covers and is designed for storage in any climate. PermaPRO covers also come with air vents, tension panels and extra-long zipper pulls. These covers are backed by a limited lifetime warranty. MSRP: \$255.99-\$598.99.

**Classic Accessories | 800-854-2315, www.classicaccessories.com**

## CoverQuest

CoverQuest is a distributor that carries popular brands of full motorhome covers, in addition to a variety of more application-specific accessory covers. Full covers are offered for all motorhome classes, and prices range from \$163-\$803. ADCO roof covers are available starting at \$179, while ADCO Tyre Guards range from \$18-\$46.



CoverQuest also offers ADCO motorhome windshield covers to help keep the motorhome's interior cool on hot summer days, in addition to adding a level of privacy. The covers are available in a variety of sizes, and do not require the installation of snaps or drilling holes, according to the company. MSRP: \$39-\$80.

**CoverQuest | 888-726-9300, www.coverquest.com**



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S2 Expedition



S2 Expedition

## Eevelle

Eevelle has been manufacturing high-quality RV covers since 1994. All Eevelle covers offer heavy-duty reinforced corners to resist snagging and tearing, along with multiple zippered panels at entry points to allow easy access during storage. Eevelle's most popular RV cover brands are **Goldline** and **S2 Expedition**.

The S2 Expedition is available for Class A and Class C motorhomes and is constructed using three breathable layers of X-Strength fabric and a Durapel finish for water-resistance.

Elements Premium



It is treated with a UV-ray inhibitor, and its microporous film allows for increased breathability to prevent mold and mildew. Unique full height front and rear tension wings simplify installation and help create a customized fit. Expedition covers include a three-year warranty. MSRP: \$333.99-\$445.99.

Eevelle's flagship Goldline covers are available for all motorhome classes and are crafted from woven marine-grade fabric and embedded with a UV inhibitor to stand up to harsh climates. Integrated dual-flow vortex vents reduce lofting in high winds, while sizing straps ensure a snug, custom fit. Goldline covers come with a five-year warranty. MSRP: \$359.99-\$719.99.

**Eevelle | 800-757-3090, [www.eevelle.com](http://www.eevelle.com)**

Elements All Climate



## Elements

Elements covers are available for Class A and Class C motorhomes exclusively at Camping World, and are offered in two levels of protection.

Elements **All Climate** covers are water-resistant covers that feature a heavy-duty Tyvek roof for easy use and improved durability. All Climate covers have been constructed with reinforced roof panel handles to help with cover positioning; poly-formed grommets that won't rust or corrode; reinforced solid vinyl panels behind grommets and buckles; unique elastic inserts plus adjustable straps on the front and rear for a snug fit; and reinforced vinyl front and rear bumper corners for extra wear protection. The covers come complete with a storage bag and six Tyvek Gutter Gard protectors to protect the cover from sharp edges. Zippered panels allow for easy entry and access to storage areas while the cover is in place, and the cover is backed by a two-year warranty. Prices start at \$371.99.

Elements **Premium** RV covers offer even more protection against UV

Goldline





rays, rain, snow and environmental hazards. The Premium covers offer all the benefits of the All Climate covers, plus water-repellant Poly-Oxford fabric that has been tested for superior strength and durability. The Premium covers are actually lighter than the All Climate models for easier handling and coverage, plus the integrated vents feature mesh insets for better ventilation. The Premium covers add lock-stitched UV-protected straps and buckles, and are also backed by a two-year warranty. And, Premium covers store up to 50 percent more compact than the All Climate covers. Premium Covers start at \$466.99.

**Elements by Camping World | 888-626-7576, www.campingworld.com**



Empire Premier

### Empire Covers

Empire Covers offers covers for each motorhome classification. For short-term outdoor and long-term indoor storage, the **ProTECHtor** covers are made from spun-bonded polypropylene material. Full-height zippered panels offer complete access, while elasticized corners and a buckle system ensure the cover will stay put in windy conditions. Prices for the Class A start at \$168.86; Class B's begin at \$128.32; and Class C's begin at \$154.91.

For storage in more harsh climate conditions, Empire's **Premier** covers are made out of a long-lasting 300-denier polyester material to provide long-term, all-weather protection for the vehicle. The cover is waterproof, with an added durable water repellent (DWR) coating for ultimate water protection, and is manufactured with taped seams to help ensure that no moisture penetrates through to the RV.

Air vents are strategically located on the top of the cover to prevent air billowing, and a buckle system helps secure the cover to the motorhome. Class A prices start at \$362.99; Class B's start at \$219.99; and Class C's start at \$351.07.

**Empire Covers | 888-872-6855, www.empirecovers.com**



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# SPARTAN CHASSIS

THESE DIESEL-PUSHER PLATFORMS ARE DESIGNED TO GO 450,000 MILES; PROPER AND TIMELY MAINTENANCE STACKS THE ODDS IN THE OWNERS' FAVOR

*This article is the second in a two-part series on diesel motorhome chassis maintenance. For this series, we visited the plants to get firsthand information on the maintenance resources, requirements and major misses that RV owners need to know about. While we can't cover all the required maintenance in this article, we'll tell you how easy it is to find it, and how simple your maintenance can be.*

**I**t's easy to fall in love with a big, beautiful new Newmar Essex, Entegra Aspire or one of the nine other motorhomes built on a Spartan platform. They're all high-end machines with lots of space and residential appeal. However, get into the driver's seat, and it's another world. Driving these motorhomes requires a whole new approach from tooling around in a passenger car, and robust instrumentation and controls make it evident that there will be a learning curve in how to handle these heavy — and expensive — vehicles. Fortunately, it's not as difficult as owners might think.

We recently had the opportunity to visit the home of Spartan Motors in Charlotte, Michigan, to ascertain what customers should know about maintaining Spartan chassis. We were greeted by Greg Rinehart, service development and training lead, and Mike O'Neil, the company's

tech trainer, who is familiar to many RVers as Big Mike. At just shy of 7 feet, Big Mike is a towering fellow, but one of the nicest guys you'd ever want to meet. He has been training coach owners for 21 years through the company's Spartan Academy for RV Owners.

Spartan Motors is best known for its fire apparatus chassis business, but has been building motorhome chassis since 1985. Currently, the company builds five, and soon to be six, chassis models, all with different frame styles and powertrains, Rinehart says.

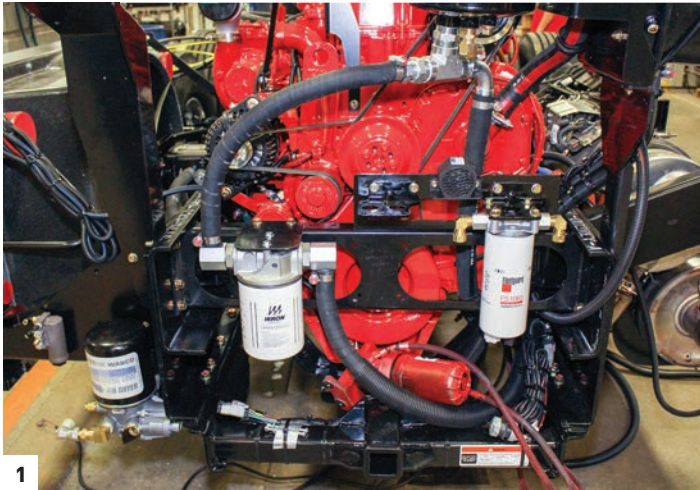
These chassis models include the K2-450 (two versions,) the K3-500, K3-605 and the K4-605, powered by 450- to 605-hp diesel engines. Rinehart says the chassis are built for the specific coaches, and even floorplans, specified by the manufacturers. Currently, they can be found under the Entegra Anthem,



## DIESEL POWER

Spartan's K2-450 chassis with rear tag axle features a Cummins L-9 450-hp engine, an Allison 3000MH six-speed transmission and independent front suspension.





[1] On this engine, all the filters are easily accessed, including the fuel filter (on its side, as it hasn't been mounted yet), the fuel/water separator, the hydraulic filter and the air dryer. The oil filter is around the side of the motor. [2] Hub oil, on the steer and tag axles (if so equipped) is essential for keeping the bearings from seizing. It's easy to check; if it's low, pull off the red cap and fill with the special bottle that's provided with the hub oil.

Aspire, Cornerstone and Insignia; the Newmar Dutch Star, Mountain Aire, London Aire, Essex and King Aire; and Foretravel's Realm FS6 and ih-45.

Purchasing a coach with a sophisticated diesel chassis like the Spartan does require owners to be proactive about maintenance to ensure the longevity and reliability of their vehicles.

The chassis warranty starts with a basic three-year, 50,000-mile transferable coverage. The Cummins engines have a five-year, 100,000-mile warranty and the Allison transmission is protected for five years or 200,000 miles. The frame carries a lifetime transferrable warranty. All models utilize a Selective Catalytic Reduction (SCR) type exhaust system, which uses a urea-based fluid as the catalyst.

All new owners will receive a CD

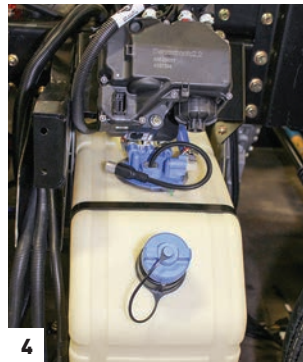
that includes the owner's manual and the maintenance schedule, plus suggested intervals and fluids. Supplier information is also on the CD, but filter and part numbers are not provided. "Our chassis are not cookie-cutter," says O'Neil. "They're built around a particular floorplan and contain different components. A call to our customer service center will get you the specific parts you need based on your VIN." The customer service number (800-543-4277) is answered by factory personnel during business hours. Coach Net (888-890-1741) is available for roadside assistance 24/7, and the customer should have the last eight digits of the

VIN and the mileage when they call either number.

Online training courses for owners are coming soon. In the meantime, the company's Connected Care smartphone app is an all-inclusive resource that has contact information, maintenance intervals, diagnostic codes, a pre-trip inspection checklist, warranty information, training, parts and accessories, and more. Also, the company's parts website, [www.rvchassisparts.com](http://www.rvchassisparts.com), includes parts not just for Spartan, but every other chassis manufacturer, including Monaco's old Roadmaster chassis.

The company has more than 400 Spartan RV-friendly service centers, including the 45 Cummins Coach Care centers, which can be found at [www.funroads.com](http://www.funroads.com). These centers have technicians trained to work on RVs and offer overnight facilities; many of

[3, 4] The Selective Catalytic Reduction (SRC) system converts nitrogen oxides into harmless nitrogen and water using urea, which is stored in a separate tank (inset). The newest version [5] combines all the components (VOC, DPF and SCR) into one space-saving canister, also allowing the full cleaning procedure to be extended to between 600,000 and 800,000 miles.



the sites are equipped with hookups.

As with other chassis companies, Spartan is proud of its owner-training program. The company runs, on average, 21 sessions on the main Michigan campus from May to October, and five regional classes, which for 2017 were in Georgia, Texas and Arizona. Thirteen of these are done in partnership with Entegra Coach, with a four-and-a-half-day chassis course and a one-day coach course (led by Entegra). Newmar has also participated in these courses. To keep the classes as informative as possible, each is limited to seven coaches, so the company has a continual waiting list for attendance, according to Rinehart.

The company's basic maintenance schedule, which is outlined on its app and owner CD, lists specific activities that must be done every three months or 5,000 miles, six months or 15,000 miles, 12 months or 15,000 miles, 24 months or 30,000 miles and finally at 200,000 miles. In addition, the company recommends a 34-point pre-trip checklist for the chassis, and a specific startup procedure, which ensures the air-brake system is operating properly.

The startup procedure is interesting. It includes a walk around to check for RV-related equipment being properly stowed, and determining whether the coach is sitting at proper ride height. Then a test is performed: holding the brakes firmly down to the floor, to hear the ABS modulators cycle and purge. The test only takes 10-15 seconds to complete. Third, listening for the air dryer to purge after starting the coach, which happens once the system has come up to full pressure. Lastly, and this is important for

any coach with air drum brakes, explained Rinehart, is to perform an automatic slack adjustment. After releasing the parking brake, perform two or three full service brake applications, pushing the pedal fully to the floor. This allows the rear drum slack adjusters to automatically adjust for proper braking force application, he says. The disc brakes will adjust automatically during normal braking.

From a maintenance standpoint, there are several important areas that need attention. The dash message center will flash codes and illuminate the standard lights should a malfunction occur. "We recommend the owners turn off the maintenance monitor on the engine," says O'Neil. "It is mileage-based, and for big trucks that's fine, but for RVs time is more important because most RVs don't go the mileage. Use the schedule." Alternately, the Allison transmission keypad is a useful tool to monitor the transmission, which keeps tabs on many of its own functions, including fluid level and temperature, and even tests the condition of the fluid. This data can be read through the shift pad.

Owners have historically missed a number of service points, according to Spartan, which in some cases have led to very expensive repairs. Here are the top 10 items on the list:

**1. Tire pressure** — A common theme among RV manufacturers is to weigh the coach and adjust the tire pressure according to the tire manufacturer's charts, which are available on the Spartan Connected Care app.

**2. Air filter** — In the previous article ("Diesel Chassis Maintenance: Freightliner," in the September



**[6]** Spartan uses a coolant reservoir that has a window to show the level of the coolant. The color makes it easy to see, but is not a true indication of condition, so the coolant should be changed according to the maintenance schedule for the chassis.

issue) we mentioned the \$30,000 air filter, which had "dusted" an entire engine as the innards of the filter were sucked into the engine. Replace at the stated intervals and watch for animal intrusion.

**3. Hydraulic system** — There are two filters that need changing.

**4. Hub oil** — The front and tag axles utilize hub oil for lubrication. There is a window that shows the level of the oil, which should be checked regularly. A failed seal and loss of the oil can result in severe damage. Oil is easily refilled at the hub window.

**5. Rear differential** — The fluid is often ignored, but should be changed annually.

**6. Air tanks** — Drain the air tanks at least once per month during use. Halyards that connect to the pull valves on the tanks are accessed through the chassis rails. Some have two locations; others, as shown in picture 7 (right), have them all up front. Pull and hold for 15 seconds to ensure all moisture is released.

**7. Coolant checks and change interval** — O'Neil hears from many RVers that they look at the window and see red and think all is OK, when it's not. The coolant degrades over time,

**THE DASH MESSAGE CENTER WILL FLASH CODES AND ILLUMINATE THE STANDARD LIGHTS SHOULD A MALFUNCTION OCCUR.**



builds up acids and needs to be flushed. While there are test strips for the new type coolants, according to O'Neil, they're so expensive that it's better to flush the coolant rather than test it.

**8. Battery maintenance** — Many RVers do not maintain their batteries properly, resulting in breakdowns and often annual battery replacements in some parts of the country, advised O'Neil. Make sure batteries are kept clean and corrosion free, fully charged and filled with distilled water, if applicable.

**9. Rubber boots** — Spartan utilizes rubber boots around tie-rod ends, and the ball joints need regular inspection, just like on an automobile.

**10. Wash the chassis** — Everybody worries about how the body looks, but especially if driving the motorhome where roads are treated, washing the underside is essential to keeping the rust and corrosion to a minimum.

O'Neil claims that a lot of owners question the frequency of changing fluids. While testing of some fluids, like motor oil, can be done, the accuracy in an RV environment is poor. Moisture collects in the fluids, as well as other contaminants and acids, often from just sitting. This is

why performing this maintenance is so important.

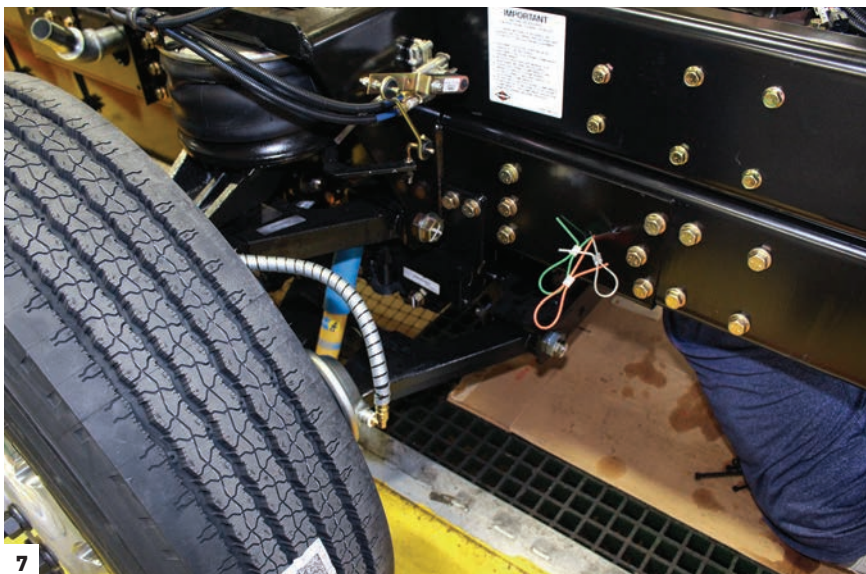
While the company will not sell service manuals to consumers, Reinhart says the component service literature is readily available online. For owners intent on performing their own service, the team recommends having a maintenance logbook where each procedure is recorded and receipts are kept. In many cases, it is better, if possible, to scan or copy receipts and print them out, as originals will fade quickly and become illegible.

Lastly, Rinehart says Spartan's maintenance schedule is a guide, but to always follow the schedules set by the manufacturers that supply the specific components for the chassis. These schedules are available online.

Owners who have any questions about maintenance, want to order parts for maintenance or get specific part numbers are encouraged to call Spartan at 800-543-4277.

A big diesel motorhome is a sizable investment, and maintaining it properly will help ensure that it is always ready for the next trip, and will help to lengthen trouble-free longevity while at the same time maintaining maximum resale value. **M**

[7] Spartan has automatic air dump valves; however, the owner needs to manually open the valves for 15 seconds once a month to ensure all the water is released. On this chassis, all the halaryards are accessed through the frame in one spot and are color-coded.



7



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By Bruce W. Smith

# SMOOTH SAILING

A simple yet well-engineered suspension upgrade from Source Engineering takes the rock-and-roll out of Freightliner XC-based motorhomes with I-beam front suspensions, improving handling and reducing driver fatigue

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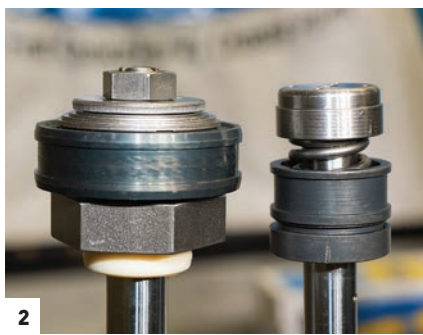
A few Source Engineering suspension modifications on motorhomes sitting atop the popular Freightliner XC chassis make a dramatic difference in handling and ride.







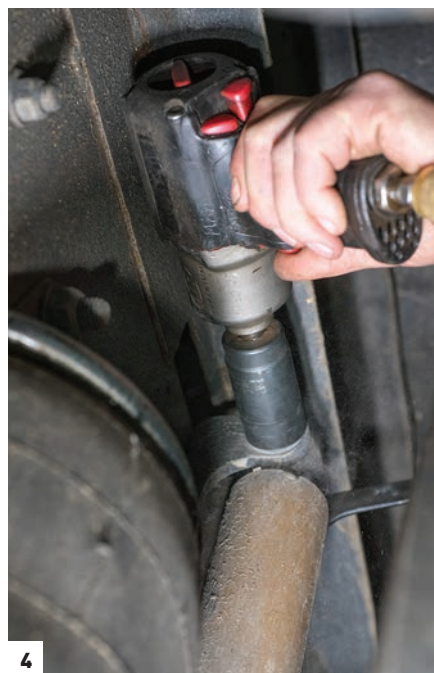
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**W**e seldom equate driver fatigue with the way a vehicle motors down the highway. But ride and handling have a direct impact on how we feel after spending four, five or six hours piloting a motorhome toward our next destination. That fatigue is both mental and physical.

Even though we aren't breaking a sweat or trying to openly solve brainteasers while we drive, our body is hard at work multitasking. Each time the motorhome is rocked by a gust of wind from a passing semi, pitches slightly fore or aft from the undulating road or shudders as it rolls over uneven surfaces, muscles all over our body automatically react to keep us stable in our seat. Flexing muscles in response to these movements is taxing, although we may not realize it.

At the same time, the driver's brain is making thousands of tiny cal-

[1] Source teamed up with Bilstein engineers to custom tune/build these exclusive Platinum Series high-pressure-gas shocks. REK-206 kit provides a pair of 60mm front shocks and 46mm rear shocks to replace the smaller, 40mm factory Sachs hydraulic shocks. [2] Source Platinum Series Bilstein shocks (left) utilize a much larger piston inside the shock tube than the factory hydraulic shocks on the Freightliner XC chassis. The Bilsteins also provide far more suspension compression and rebound damping control under all driving conditions. [3] About the size of a pack of gum, this Ride Control Valve regulates airflow in and out of each air spring to smooth out the chassis rocking and rolling. The proprietary metering design lets air out quickly, but slows it down returning into the air bag. [4] Removing the OEM Sachs rear shocks on the Discovery only required dexterity and an air impact with a 1 1/8-inch socket.

culations every minute to counteract the motorhome's movements so it stays in control, telling arms and hands instantly how much input is needed in the steering wheel to keep between the lines. That subliminal thought processing is just as taxing on the body as flexing muscles.

We don't realize how much work the brain and body are doing until

driver fatigue starts creeping into the picture. At what point during the road trip that level of tiredness and lack of concentration happens, and to what degree, is totally dependent on how the motorhome rides and handles.

### Stabilizing the Ride

The owners of Source Engineer-

[5] Master technician Todd Hill showed us how Source's Platinum Series shock (left) compares to the factory Sachs rear shock. The two look similar in size. But the Sachs shock (right) is a twin-tube, while the Bilstein is a high-pressure-gas single tube, so the piston and valving, which control the suspension, is about 50 percent larger on the Bilstein. [6] Hill leaves the retaining band on the high-pressure gas-charged Bilsteins during installation. This eases the install. The thin plastic band breaks as soon as the motorhome suspension flexes.

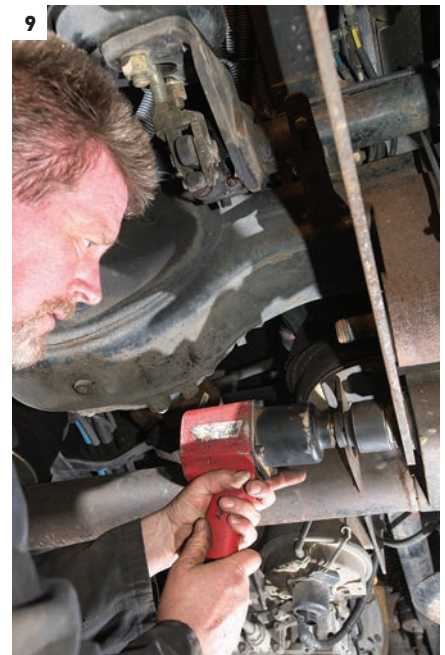


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6





Oregon's RV manufacturing hub of the Willamette Valley, capitalized on 50 years of combined experience in chassis development, drivetrain packaging and maintenance of Class A motorhomes before starting their own company.

The company now focuses on the development, manufacturing and installation of suspension components that improve the ride and handling of certain diesel pushers. Its newest offering, the REK-206 suspension kit, is designed to smooth out and stabilize the ride of motorhomes built on the Freightliner XC chassis with the I-beam front axle. The kit, which retails for \$1,825, consists of custom-calibrated Bilstein shocks, Source-proprietary air-spring valves and

[7] After the new shocks are installed, a Comfort Ride Control Valve is placed on each feed line to the rear air springs. The air lines were cut and the ends then inserted into the valves to lock them in place. Valves are directional, so they must face the proper direction (indicated by the arrows) for correct airflow. [8] Swapping out the front factory Sachs shocks for the bigger 60mm Source Platinum Series Bilsteins requires using a 3/4-inch socket up top and a 1 1/8-inch for the bottom mount. Hill installed the Comfort Ride air spring control valves after the new shocks were mounted on each side. [9] Installation of Source Engineering's Freightliner XC rear sway bar only requires removing the four 43mm nuts from the trailing-arm bolts. A special wobbly socket is used to handle this task.

Source's rear anti-sway bar.

Installation time is about four hours, as we saw firsthand when Source's master RV technician Todd Hill turned the roly-poly, porposing ride of a 39-foot 2004 Fleetwood Discovery 39L, with only 23,000 miles on the odometer, into a smooth-sailing machine. Hill was the chassis supervisor with Monaco for some 22 years.

How can just changing shocks, adding valves to the air bags and installing a rear sway bar make such a big difference? It's basic Suspension 101: The air springs take the initial impact, pushing air out to help soften the change in the direction the tires are heading; meanwhile, the shocks help control the up/down motion of the air springs, and the sway bar fights against body lean.



[10] Source Engineering's REK-206 sway bar assembly is lifted up and over the exposed trailing arm bolts, where it will stay positioned by itself until the bolts are reinstalled. The design is simple, yet efficient in reducing body roll on big motorhomes. [11] After the sway-bar assembly is in place, the trailing-arm nuts are replaced and torqued to spec. Installing the sway bar takes less time than replacing one of the rear shocks. [12] Source Engineering's Freightliner XC rear sway bar contributes a significant amount to the overall ride improvement. The side plates are 3/8-inch steel and the torsion tube is a hefty 1 1/4-inch diameter.



All three components are intertwined, and all three need to be tuned to work in harmony to maximize ride quality and vehicle handling. If one or more components are not functioning adequately, improperly tuned, or are missing all together, ride suffers.

## Custom Chassis Tuning

In the case of the 39-foot Fleetwood we used as a test platform, there isn't a rear anti-sway bar, and the factory Sach's twin-tube hydraulic shocks seemed barely adequate in controlling the six air springs. The resulting handling during our city/highway test loop showed a significant amount of porpoising when the brakes were applied, a very boatlike side-to-side oscillation as the motorhome entered main thoroughfares from parking lots, and a significant amount of buffeting from crosswinds and passing big rigs on the interstate. And that's driving in a very docile manner.

The ill-handling antics kept the driver busy sawing the steering wheel, and both driver and passengers adjusting to the multitude of motions, not to mention what was going on with items stored in the coach's cabinets. It's the typical ride and handling of this particular Freightliner XC chassis, according to the company, and the reason it came up with the components in the REK-206 kit.

The shocks in the REK-206 kit have been custom-tuned by Bilstein engineers who spent a lot of seat time with Source Engineering's design team so the internal valving of the high-pressure, gas-charged, single-tube performance shocks worked in concert with the addition of the rear sway bar and the special Source valves plumbed into lines feeding the factory air springs.

The pistons in the Source/Bilstein shocks are much larger in diameter than those found in the factory Freightliner XC's twin-tube hydraulic shocks, have a far greater range of fluid control on both compression and rebound, and the single-tube, high-pressure gas Bilsteins maintain their damping under the harshest

road/driving conditions because the fluid doesn't overheat or foam up, according to the manufacturer.

## Controlling Roll

Body roll is brought under control with Source Engineering's patented Comfort Ride Control valves, which allow full outflow of air from the springs under compression, but meter incoming air as the bag tries to rebound. This improves the overall ride, and significantly reduces the residual side-to-side rocking that's common to the stock XC chassis.

The last element to controlling the XC chassis' ride and handling is the addition of Source's rear anti-sway bar that bolts to the trailing arms on the rear-axle housings. It's a stout piece of fabrication, consisting of 5/8-inch steel side plates with a 1 3/4-inch 3140 steel tube in between. When the sway bar is bolted in place, which is a very simple task, excessive body roll is all but eliminated.

These three components make a significant suspension change that greatly improves the ride of any motorhome built on the Freightliner XC I-beam chassis, reduces driver fatigue and results in a very pleasant ride for passengers. (The sea-sickness medicine can now be left at home.)

The photos in this article show how the above was accomplished when RV Sales of Oregon brought in a 2004 Discovery 39L to get its suspension upgraded. The install is an easy, straightforward job, requiring nothing more than an air gun and the sockets/wrenches any motorhome tech would have within easy reach. Hill says it usually takes him less than four hours to install the kit on customers who bring in their coaches (by appointment only) to have Source do the upgrade. It's time and money well-spent. **M**

### Sources

**RV Sales of Oregon**  
888-389-3678, [www.rvsalesoforegon.com](http://www.rvsalesoforegon.com)

**Source Engineering Inc.**  
541-343-0293, [www.sourcerv.com](http://www.sourcerv.com)

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# DREAM WEAVER

A HOPEFUL RVER CONVINCES HIS SPOUSE THAT THEIR RV ASPIRATIONS ARE ATTAINABLE WHILE MAKING OVER A WELL-BUILT 1997 FORETRAVEL U320

*This article is part of a continuing 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."*

**B**uying a motorhome often begins with a dream — although in Rich Smith's case, the word dream was a synonym for unattainable. For years, every time a large luxury coach would pass them on the highway, he would turn to his wife, Shana, and say, "Now that's what we need." Unfortunately, her response was always the same: "In your dreams."

While a new motorhome did not fit the couple's budget, Rich knew he had the skill to refurbish a used model. He also understood that the most crucial factor in making his dream a reality had nothing to do with transmissions or tires — it was all about getting spousal support. Rich had an E-250 box van that he had converted to transport bikes and

riders, and also to use as a living space when traveling for his off-road oriented motorcycle shop. He decided to introduce Shana to camping by planning a trip in the van over a long June weekend. The couple headed to Cedar Point, Ohio, where for four days Rich made his wife coffee each morning, grilled steaks over charcoal every evening and lit a campfire each night.

"After just one day she said, 'Ahh, this is the life,'" Rich laughs. "She was hooked."

In 2009, armed with his wife's

support, Rich began the search for a used Class A. He knew he wanted his motorhome to fit inside his garage, which was 45 feet deep but had a door only 12 feet tall, and he also wanted to stay within a budget of \$50,000-\$75,000. A friend (and lifelong motorhome owner) suggested he look for a Foretravel U320, and went over a list of telltale signs that could signal potential problems later, like leaks and side-wall delamination. Rich did some research on the Foretravel and liked what he saw, particularly the Cummins M-11 450-hp turbodiesel engine.

"I think the biggest mistake most



Shana and Rich Smith have realized their long-standing dream with the purchase — and subsequent makeover — of this 1997 Foretravel U320.

# The Classic Ride

people make is getting too small of a motor," Rich says. "The larger motor works less and gets just as good mileage," he adds, pointing to his rig's average of 8-9 mpg.

In addition to ample horsepower and torque, the U320 boasts an Allison six-speed automatic transmission with an integral hydraulic retarder system, solid-wood cabinets, large storage bins with sliding drawers and doors that open bus-style, and window awnings. Foretravel also has a 50-year reputation for producing high-quality custom handcrafted coaches. After hours of online investigation and quite a few phone calls, Rich narrowed his search to six units, all located within a 300-mile radius of the Foretravel plant in Nacogdoches, Texas. He flew out from his home in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and looked at each. As is often the case, pictures can be deceiving.

One of the most promising motorhomes had been photographed on only one side, thus effectively hiding



Above: Tile with glass block inserts, set in a herringbone pattern, give the living area an open feel.

wheel wells and lower side walls that had been damaged by highway debris. Even the coach in the very best condition, a 40-foot-long 1997 Foretravel listed for \$65,000, had two cracked windshields. Undaunted, Rich made a low offer, and the seller eventually agreed on a price of \$53,000.

"I called Shana, had her wire the money, and I headed home with my new pride and joy," he says, smiling at the memory.

Of course, their new pride and joy needed some work. The original white gelcoat finish included two belt lines of decals that were faded and weather-checked. When the Smiths called the factory to check on getting replacements, they were told the decals were no longer produced. The body shop

manager, Justin Lindsey, explained that new decals could be custom-made at a cost of about \$5,000, but he warned that the old decals were a nightmare to get off. Instead, he recommended full-body paint.

"I wasn't prepared for that answer," Rich says, but after weighing the options, he headed for Texas.

In addition to new paint, the factory also applied a durable roof coating, installed a new lower front cap panel with a sprayed-on rubberized coating that included modern headlights and fog lamps, and replaced the windshields and all the side windows with dual-pane dark-tinted units from Peninsula Glass. The total cost for all the work was about \$23,000, and the difference it made in the U320's appearance was nothing

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## AFFORDABLE EXCELLENCE

In 1997, a luxury Foretravel U320 like the Smiths' would have cost close to \$400,000. Today, units in good condition (but with the original white gelcoat and decals) can be found on the used market for between \$50,000 and \$70,000. While full-body paint is costly (estimates for a 40-foot motorhome can range from \$12,000 to as much as \$25,000 without additional repairs), the quality construction of the Foretravel makes it a good choice for refurbishing.



► New full-body paint, completed at the Foretravel factory in Nacogdoches, Texas, updated the exterior of this 1997 U320.





Left: Groutable luxury vinyl tile in a neutral shade helps brighten up the bathroom.

short of amazing.

With the exterior in like-new condition, Rich began work on the rest of the motorhome. Fortunately, many high-quality systems came standard with the 1997 Foretravel, including a Power Tech 10-kW generator, an Aqua-Hot hydronic heating system, ducted low-profile air-conditioners with heat options and even Bose surround sound. With these major systems all in excellent condition, Rich started his coach's update by refurbishing the house battery compartment and installing AGM batteries. He then installed a tire-pressure monitoring system and also replaced all of the air bags, belts and coolant hoses, and re-cored the radiator and replaced the air charge cooler.

Inside, the walnut cabinets and solid-surface counters were in excellent shape, as were the appliances. To give the coach a more modern look, the galley and living area floors were fitted with groutable luxury vinyl tile in a herringbone pattern with 3-by-3-inch glass block insets at the corners. The same tile was used in the bathroom, this time in a brick pattern, and the bedroom was re-carpeted. The Smiths also reupholstered the valances with ultraleather and contemporary print cloth inserts, and the blinds were replaced with Bali pleated shades.

In terms of entertainment, the Smiths did a flat-screen conversion up

front and added a 42-inch flat-screen TV in one of the exterior storage compartments. Rich also lined the storage compartments with a gray indoor/outdoor carpet, and refurbished the water/sewer compartment for clean and efficient use.

Of course, all of these modifications weren't made at once. Rich notes that he and Shana now have about \$85,000 invested in their motorhome, but it was made affordable by tackling just a few projects each year. One major cost-saving factor is that Rich did everything, except the exterior paint and windows, himself.

"You need to be either really rich or mechanically inclined to refurbish a motorhome," he notes with a laugh.

While some owners of older motorhomes regret the lack of slideouts, both Rich and Shana are happy with their Foretravel as it is. They appreciate having the full use of space when they are on the road, particularly as Shana is a Type I diabetic who needs to get up and get something to eat frequently while traveling. And while they currently have no aspirations of full-timing, they do hope to make the time to take more trips.

"We love this motorhome," Rich says emphatically.

Of course, I had to ask — how did reality compare to the idyllic picture of the RV lifestyle that Rich painted on that first camping trip? Let's just say that husbands everywhere who would like a bigger RV might want to consider trying Rich's approach.

"He gets up and makes the coffee and he does all the cooking. He more or less waits on me hand and foot," Shana laughs. "It's the only time I get this kind of break, so I love it!"

This 1997 Foretravel proves that, with a little hard work, it is possible to fulfill the dreams of both partners without breaking the budget. That makes the U320 a worthy addition to our list of classic rides. **M**

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## Recliner Retainer

The original recliner in my motorhome had become worn, and took up a lot of room. And, being bolted down too close to the overhead TV, it wasn't being used much. I bought a new Euro recliner, which I found online; it is more compact, adds less weight to the coach and can be moved to other locations. It posed a new problem, however: How could it be held securely in place when on the road? After lengthy deliberation, I came up with a solution using a piece of hardwood, two universal knobs with  $\frac{5}{16}$ -inch hex-head bolts and a couple of furniture leg brackets — all from the home-improvement store. To fashion an effective hold-down clamp, the leg brackets are screwed to the floor directly over two of the bolt holes from the original chair, and plastic plugs cover the other two. The hardwood bar can be finished to match the new chair's frame, and either screwed to the frame or it can simply rest atop when clamped.

**Tom Becker | Los Lunas, New Mexico**



## Red Solo Lights

In the December 2016 issue, an RVer offered a great suggestion for using an upside down clay flowerpot to hold solar lights (Solar-Light Night). Since we have a Roadtrek 210 Class B, we don't have as much storage space as larger motorhomes, but the flowerpot suggestion gave me an idea.

I cut a hole in the bottom of a red plastic cup and put the solar light in it. We can stack several cups together when not in use, and they are lightweight and easy to store.

**Sue Hankins and Pat Yacklon | Torrance, California**



## There's the Remote!

I needed a solution on where to keep the remotes for our motorhome's electronics. It needed to be handy, secure and accessible to all viewers. I finally hit on an idea that has met all my needs. I found a remote holder designed to straddle an arm rest. I folded it into thirds and attached this to the dinette table edge using washers and screws (I predrilled holes into the table edge to keep it from splitting). It holds four controllers, and now has an additional pocket to hold maps, guides or even magazines. Total cost was about \$10.

**Kathleen Ondrasik | Myrtle Beach, South Carolina**



### Have an Idea?

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



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†After 3 months you will be billed \$15/mo unless you call to cancel. HBO® and related channels and service marks are the property of Home Box Office, Inc.

Installation/Equipment Requirements: Monthly fees and limits on number and type of receivers will apply. All charges, including monthly programming, pay-per-view and equipment upgrades, must be paid in advance; failure to pay by due date will lead to service disconnection within 24 hours. Miscellaneous: Offers available for new and qualified former customers. Offers subject to terms of applicable Promotional and Residential Customer agreements. Taxes or reimbursement charges for state gross earnings taxes may apply. Additional restrictions may apply.

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# Crack Solution



Unhappy with the results of his motorhome's windshield repair — and in search of the gift card the repairing company advertised — a motorhome owner asked Hot Line to step in. He wrote:

“ On our way to a rally in Chandler, Arizona, in March 2017, a rock flew up and cracked the windshield on our motorhome. At the rally, we met with RV Glass Solutions and discussed having them repair it. They found time for us late Saturday afternoon and, after going back and forth with our insurance company about the deductible, RV Glass Solutions installed the windshield. It wasn't until we returned home that I realized that the windshield was not installed very professionally. The corners were pulling out, so I had to repair them. The ends where the gaskets meet were pulling out, and I had to repair those as well.

We had used RV Glass Solutions in the past for a small chip and it did an excellent job. Also, in its advertisements, the company offered buyers a \$125 gift card when you replace a windshield using its services.

When we returned home we called the office for two things: First, the gift card, which we hadn't received after a couple of weeks; and second, we had not received an invoice. The men who installed the windshield never left us anything and, unfortunately, we were not there when they finished the job.

We have made repeated calls to the company, and each time we were told that we would receive the \$125 gift card immediately.

**Gerald Rutch | Neenach, California**

It appeared to us that Rutch had valid cases on both points, as the repair was not up to his standards, and the gift card had never been awarded.

As you'll read in Rutch's follow-up letter, sometimes all it takes is presenting your case to the right person. In this instance that person was RV Glass Solution's customer service manager, who immediately diffused the situation and accommodated the customer beyond his expectations.

Rutch wrote:

“ This is a follow-up letter that we sent to Hot Line based on a misunderstanding between us and RV Glass Solutions. Soon after RV Glass Solutions received your letter, we received a phone call from Geno Allen, the customer service manager

for RV Glass Solutions. Allen was extremely apologetic and assured me that this should never have happened. After a lengthy conversation with him, I am convinced that had he been made aware of the situation, it would never have happened, and Hot Line would never have been involved.

A satisfactory solution was reached. As a matter of fact, it is a lot more than I expected or even asked for. There is no doubt in my mind now that RV Glass Solutions stands behind its company and services 100 percent,

which is something that has become rare these days.

To my fellow RV family and friends, let me suggest that if you ever need the services of RV Glass Solutions, do not hesitate to contact them.

**G.R.**

## Cover Calamity

When the seller didn't reimburse shipping fees on a returned RV cover, a reader sought our help. He wrote:

“ I ordered an RV cover from Car Cover Universe. The company guarantees that if the wrong size cover is sent, shipping charges to return the cover will be reimbursed. When I called to place my order, the salesman I spoke with agreed I should get the 29- to 33-foot cover to fit my 32-foot RV. However, the cover I received was about 2 feet too short. The company insists that the 33-foot cover was sent to me, but the size on the carton is 26 to 30. The company refuses to pay my \$66.20 shipping charge.

**Donnie McAvoy | Jacksonville, North Carolina**

Soon after we contacted Car Cover Universe on McAvoy's behalf, we received the following thank-you note from him.

McAvoy wrote:

“ Thank you for your service. Car Cover Universe sent me a check for shipping. If it hadn't been for your help, I don't think I would have gotten the check.

**D.M. M**

## 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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- 1.3 GPM
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**NEW** SAVE \$99

~~Compare \$179.33~~

**\$99.99**

ITEM 63255/63254 shown

85945640

LIMIT 3 - Coupon valid through 1/14/18\*

**PREDATOR** SUPER COUPON

8750 PEAK/7000 RUNNING WATTS  
13 HP (420 CC) GAS GENERATOR

- Includes GFCI outlets

Customer Rating **★★★★★**

**NEW** SUPER QUIET

~~Compare \$2700~~

**\$529.99**

Wheel kit and battery sold separately

ITEM 68530/63086/69671/63085 shown

ITEM 68525/63087/63088, CALIFORNIA ONLY

85947215

LIMIT 5 - Coupon valid through 1/14/18\*

**FREE** SUPER COUPON

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**PITTSBURGH**

1" x 25 FT. TAPE MEASURE

~~Compare \$6.99~~

**\$6.99** VALUE

ITEM 69030/69031 shown

85943814

LIMIT 1 - Cannot be used with other discount, coupon or prior purchase. Coupon good at our stores, HarborFreight.com or by calling 800-423-2567. Offer good while supplies last. Shipping & handling charges may apply if not picked up in-store. Non-transferable. Original coupon must be presented. Valid through 1/14/18. Limit one FREE Gift coupon per customer per day.

**20% OFF** SUPER COUPON

ANY SINGLE ITEM

85945428

LIMIT 3 - Coupon per customer per day. One item on any 3 items purchased. \*Excludes items with other discounts/coupons or any of the following items or packaging: 18.5 liter fuel containers, floor jacks, saw mills, storage cabinets, chests or carts, ballers, tractors, walk-behind mowers, chainsaws, generators, duplicators, excavators, trailers, jacks, ladders, Posture Pro, Predator, ShovelMaster, Tailgator, Viking, Vulcan, Zorich. Not valid on prior purchases. Non-transferable. Original coupon must be presented. Valid through 1/14/18.

**PORTLAND** SUPER COUPON

9.5", 7 AMP ELECTRIC POLE SAW

Customer Rating **★★★★★**

**NEW** SAVE \$34

~~Compare \$99.98~~

**\$64.99**

ITEM 68862/63190/62896 shown

85948674

LIMIT 5 - Coupon valid through 1/14/18\*

**PITTSBURGH** SUPER COUPON

#1 SELLING JACKS IN AMERICA

RAPID PUMP® 3 TON LOW PROFILE HEAVY DUTY STEEL FLOOR JACK

- Weighs 73 lbs.

Customer Rating **★★★★★**

**NEW** SAVE \$69

~~Compare \$149.98~~

**\$79.99**

ITEM 61253/62326/61282 shown

85948992

LIMIT 3 - Coupon valid through 1/14/18\*

**U.S. GENERAL** SUPER COUPON

44", 13 DRAWER INDUSTRIAL QUALITY ROLLER CABINET

- 14,200 cu. in. of storage
- 2633 lb. capacity
- Weighs 245 lbs.

Customer Rating **★★★★★**

**NEW** SAVE \$220

~~Compare \$349.99~~

**\$309.99**

ITEM 69387/62744 63271/68784 shown

85950170

LIMIT 4 - Coupon valid through 1/14/18\*

**CENTRAL PNEUMATIC** SUPER COUPON

21 GALLON, 2.5 HP 125 PSI VERTICAL OIL-LUBE AIR COMPRESSOR

Customer Rating **★★★★★**

**NEW** SAVE \$49

~~Compare \$179.99~~

**\$149.99**

ITEM 69091 61454/63635 61693/62803 67847 shown

85950254

LIMIT 5 - Coupon valid through 1/14/18\*

**THUNDERBOLT MAGNOLIA solar** SUPER COUPON

100 WATT SOLAR PANEL KIT

SAVE \$227

**2X MORE POWER**

**NEW**

RENEWABLE ENERGY ANYWHERE

~~Compare \$377.56~~

**\$189.99**

ITEM 63585

85951459

LIMIT 5 - Coupon valid through 1/14/18\*

**SUPER COUPON**

SOLAR ROPE LIGHT

Customer Rating **★★★★★**

**NEW** SAVE 66%

~~Compare \$29.97~~

**\$9.99**

- Great outdoor accent lighting
- Super bright light

ITEM 62533 63941/68353 shown

85954660

LIMIT 9 - Coupon valid through 1/14/18\*

**CENTRAL MACHINERY** SUPER COUPON

20 TON SHOP PRESS

- Pair of arbor plates included

Customer Rating **★★★★★**

**NEW** SAVE \$220

~~Compare \$369.99~~

**\$179.99**

ITEM 32879/60603 shown

85954977

LIMIT 4 - Coupon valid through 1/14/18\*

**drillmaster** SUPER COUPON

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

Customer Rating **★★★★★**

**NEW** SAVE 71%

~~Compare \$59.99~~

**\$16.99**

Includes one 18V NiCd battery and charger.

ITEM 69651/62868/62873/68239 shown

85956091

LIMIT 6 - Coupon valid through 1/14/18\*

**drillmaster** SUPER COUPON

4-1/2" ANGLE GRINDER

**SAVE 60%**

~~Compare \$24.98~~

**\$9.99**

Customer Rating **★★★★★**

ITEM 69645/60625 shown

85956408

LIMIT 8 - Coupon valid through 1/14/18\*

**PITTSBURGH** SUPER COUPON

TORQUE WRENCHES

• Accuracy within ±4%

DRIVE	ITEM
1/4"	2696/61277/63881
3/8"	807/61276/63880
1/2"	62431/239/63882

Customer Rating **★★★★★**

**NEW** SAVE 88%

~~Compare \$84.97~~

**\$9.99**

Item 239 shown

85959332

LIMIT 8 - Coupon valid through 1/14/18\*

**PITTSBURGH** SUPER COUPON

1 TON CAPACITY FOLDABLE SHOP CRANE

- Boom extends from 36-1/4" to 50-1/4"
- Crane height adjusts from 82" to 94"

Customer Rating **★★★★★**

**NEW** SAVE \$169

~~Compare \$269~~

**\$169.99**

ITEM 69512 61858/69445 shown

85959644

LIMIT 5 - Coupon valid through 1/14/18\*

**HaulMaster** SUPER COUPON

17 FT. TYPE IA MULTI-TASK LADDER

Customer Rating **★★★★★**

- Versatile - 23 configurations
- Safe + secure + stable
- Super strong - holds 300 lbs.
- Weighs 35 lbs.

**NEW** SAVE \$189

~~Compare \$298.99~~

**\$109.99**

ITEM 62656/62514/67646 shown

85961921

LIMIT 3 - Coupon valid through 1/14/18\*

**CENTRAL MACHINERY** SUPER COUPON

10 TON HYDRAULIC LOG SPLITTER

Customer Rating **★★★★★**

**NEW** SAVE \$899

~~Compare \$1199.99~~

**\$899.99**

ITEM 62291 67090 shown

85962174

LIMIT 4 - Coupon valid through 1/14/18\*

**BADLAND** Battle Tested SUPER COUPON

12,000 LB. ELECTRIC WINCH WITH REMOTE CONTROL AND AUTOMATIC BRAKE

- Weighs 83.5 lbs.
- 21-1/4" L x 10-1/8" H

Customer Rating **★★★★★**

**NEW** Voted Best Winches

~~Compare \$699.99~~

**\$289.99**

ITEM 61256/61889/60813 shown

85962859

LIMIT 4 - Coupon valid through 1/14/18\*

**HARDY** SUPER COUPON

POWDER-FREE NITRILE GLOVES

PACK OF 100

Customer Rating **★★★★★**

**NEW** SAVE 53%

~~Compare \$7.99~~

**\$5.99**

• 5 mil thickness

YOUR CHOICE

SIZE	ITEM
MED	68496/61363
LG	68497/61360
X-LG	68498/61359

Item 68498 shown

85964327

LIMIT 8 - Coupon valid through 1/14/18\*

**HaulMaster** SUPER COUPON

72" x 80" MOVING BLANKET

Customer Rating **★★★★★**

**NEW** SAVE 66%

~~Compare \$17.97~~

**\$5.99**

ITEM 69505/62418/66537 shown

85964678

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02	Colorado RV Adventure Travel Show	1/4/18 - 1/6/18	Colorado Convention Center
03	Wisconsin RV Show	1/5/18 - 1/7/18	Wisconsin Center District
04	Knoxville RV Show	1/5/18 - 1/7/18	Sevierville Convention Center
05	Savannah RV Show	1/5/18 - 1/7/18	Savannah Int'l Trade & Convention Center
06	Greater Atlanta RV Show	1/5/18 - 1/7/18	Georgia Int'l Convention Center
07	South Carolina RV & Camping Show - Greenville	1/5/18 - 1/7/18	TD Convention Center
08	Mid America RV Show	1/11/18 - 1/14/18	Kansas City Convention Center - Bartle Hall
09	Washington Camping RV Expo	1/12/18 - 1/14/18	Dulles Expo Center
10	Greater Chicago RV Show	1/12/18 - 1/14/18	Renaissance Schaumburg Convention Center
11	New Jersey RV & Camping Show - Edison	1/19/18 - 1/21/18	New Jersey Convention & Exposition Center
12	Lexington RV Show	1/19/18 - 1/21/18	Kentucky Horse Park
13	Cincinnati - Dayton RV Show	1/25/18 - 1/28/18	Dayton Convention Center
14	Greater Phoenix RV Show	1/26/18 - 1/28/18	Phoenix Convention Center
15	Magic City RV Show - Orlando	2/2/18 - 2/4/18	Orange County Convention Center
16	Minneapolis/St. Paul RV, Vacation & Camping Show	2/9/18 - 2/11/18	Minneapolis Convention Center
17	Richmond Camping RV Expo	2/9/18 - 2/11/18	Richmond International Raceway Complex
18	Chattanooga RV Show	2/16/18 - 2/18/18	Chattanooga Convention Center
19	Atlantic City RV & Camping Show	2/16/18 - 2/18/18	Atlantic City Convention Center
20	Gulf Coast RV Show - Mobile	2/16/18 - 2/18/18	Mobile Convention Center
21	Harrisburg RV & Camping Show - Pennsylvania	2/22/18 - 2/25/18	PA Farm Show Complex & Event Center
22	Columbus RV Show	2/23/18 - 2/25/18	Greater Columbus Convention Center
23	Colorado RV, Sports & Travel Show	3/1/18 - 3/4/18	National Western Complex
24	Central Illinois RV Show	3/2/18 - 3/4/18	Peoria Civic Center
25	Rhode Island RV & Camping Show	3/2/18 - 3/4/18	Rhode Island Convention Center
26	Virginia RV Show - Hampton	3/9/18 - 3/11/18	Hampton Roads Convention Center
27	Springfield RV & Camping Show	3/16/18 - 3/18/18	BOS Convention Center
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By Ken Freund

## Inflation Pressure Versus Altitude

**Q** We have a Class A motorhome. I maintain 100 psi air pressure in the rear tires and 95 psi in front (maximum is 110 psi). This is based on scale weights. I live at 9,200-foot elevation in Colorado. I normally travel in the Western states, between 6,000-10,000 feet in elevation. I'm planning a trip to the Eastern Seaboard and then down coast to winter in Florida. Will a 9,000-foot change in elevation have an effect on the tire pressure? My guess is it will be low at sea level. What are the facts?

**Chris Quaderer | Divide, Colorado**

**A** Yes, your suspicions are correct. Air density changes roughly 3 percent per 1,000 feet of elevation change. Tire-pressure gauges measure the difference between the pressure inside the tire and



outside (not absolute pressure). Therefore as you descend, the internal pressure, which was filled in the mountains, becomes relatively less, compared to the external air pressure of the denser air closer to sea level. I recommend checking (and adjusting) tire pressures at least two or three times as you descend. Pressure should only be checked and adjusted when the tires are cold.

### Slideout Adjustments

**Q** My Forest River FR3 has two cable-driven slideouts. I've owned several motorhomes before, but none had any slideouts. I have two questions. Since cables generally stretch, how long before they need to be adjusted to make up for the slack? Also, how much difference should there be between the right and left? I seem to have a 1/2- to 3/4-inch variation on one side versus the other when the slideout is closed. The one side is barely touching the seal, while the other side is tight.

The cable slideout mechanism seems similar to pop-up campers or boat lifts. Any information would be helpful.

**Andy Carter | Elkhart, Indiana**

**A** Cables don't stretch much once the system is in place and adjusted, unless something has happened. When the slideout is in for travel, both ends should be as tight as possible to help deter rainwater from

sneaking past the seals. In other words, the motorhome-wall to slideout-wall measurement you mentioned should be the same, instead of 3/4-inch off. I recommend that you first inspect the cable-drive path for any debris, snags, bent parts or anything that's abnormal, before attempting to adjust the cables. Also, mark the nut locations so you can go back to the original settings if needed. You didn't mention which system you have, but I believe it is a BAL Accu-Slide. There should be an instruction manual with the paperwork for the motorhome. Fortunately, the manual is also available online at [http://norcoind.com/bal/downloads/accuslide/accuslide\\_service-manual.pdf](http://norcoind.com/bal/downloads/accuslide/accuslide_service-manual.pdf). You'll find the adjustment procedure on page 6, but be sure to read the whole booklet first. Please follow this procedure and, if you are unsure how to do it, contact Forest River ([www.forestriverinc.com](http://www.forestriverinc.com)). Bryan Knight handles the service questions for this model motorhome, and can be reached at 574-206-7611 in your town of Elkhart, Indiana.

### Improving the View

**Q** We are the happy owners of a 2010 Winnebago View. In general, we are satisfied with its road handling, even while encountering light side winds. However, in strong wind conditions, especially when combined with passing trucks, the View demands constant attention and a steady effort on the steering wheel to keep it in its lane. I would like to know what I can do to improve this situation. Through my RV magazine readings, I see ads for steering stabilizers, torsion bars, specialized shocks, air shocks, etc. In your opinion, what is my best option in terms of quality/price-efficiency ratio?

**Yvan Jerome | Laval, Québec, Canada**

**A** You didn't note if this is your first experience driving or owning a motorhome. I say that because owner expectations will vary. Motorhomes are for the most part based on large box vans or truck platforms and as such they tend to ride and handle considerably

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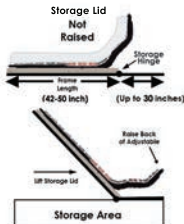
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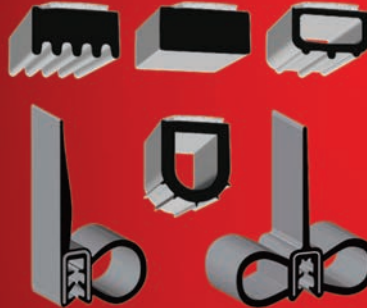


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worse than an automobile, particularly modern luxury models. There is a lot of surface area on a motorhome, and the tall sides provide plenty of leverage for the wind to act on. Therefore, when there's a strong crosswind, the forces generated are going to try to push the motorhome sideways and require steering input and correction.

Having said that, I believe the best single product for your situation would be a heavy-duty rear anti-sway bar. These resist against the vehicle lean without making the ride harsher, like heavier springs or torsion bars would do. Hellwig (800-435-5944, [www.hellwigproducts.com](http://www.hellwigproducts.com)) makes a rear replacement anti-sway bar for the Sprinter 3500. Roadmaster (800-669-9690, [www.roadmasterinc.com](http://www.roadmasterinc.com)) also sells a heavy-duty rear sway bar. A heavy-duty front anti-sway bar is available from Mercedes-Benz as an option and as an accessory through dealer parts departments. SuperSteer makes a rear track bar, an excellent hardware addition, that will also improve the vehicle's stability by mostly eliminating any lateral axle shift and resultant body reactions under crosswind situations. A rear anti-sway bar, or both front and rear anti-sway bars, together with some new Koni FSD shocks (or equivalent), should transform your ride.

### Question About Brakes

**Q** I own a 2011 Roadtrek. Last fall the brakes warped coming down a big hill into Lewiston, Idaho. I was told by the Les Schwab folks that I had half-ton brakes on a one-ton vehicle. I was also told that mine was the third rig the shop had encountered in a couple of weeks that had this problem. Is this brake downsize customary for Class B's?

**Dean Clark | Via email**


**A** Let me begin with a brief summary of terminology. The so-called half-ton van is denoted as a 1500 model. The commonly used name three-quarter-ton model is officially called a 2500, and the one-ton model is actually called a **(continued on page 62)**

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

## COACH & POWERTRAIN

(continued from page 59)

3500 series. You will find that all of the 3500 models have eight wheel studs. If your truck has eight lugs, and I'm sure it does, you can't possibly have half-ton brake discs because they simply wouldn't fit onto your vehicle's large hubs.

This problem of overheating brakes is not a unique problem to this model van. Getting the brakes hot, and warping, may not be able to be completely prevented in all cases, but it can be minimized. When you have brake service done, always insist on premium-quality brand rotors and brake pads. They withstand and dissipate heat better than the cheapo parts. When descending long steep grades, slow down as you crest the summit. Approach the down grade at a slow to moderate speed, and downshift to allow the engine to create more drag, which takes a large heat load off the brakes. If safety allows it, pull off onto the shoulder to allow the brakes to cool if you suspect they are getting hot.

I'm familiar with the Lewiston grade, and have traveled over it in a Sprinter van. It's definitely a good place to apply downshifting and engine braking as much as possible.

### Battery Goes Dead When Disconnected — Tip

This is in regard to the "Battery Goes Dead When Disconnected" letter in the July issue. I have a 2006 Itasca Class A, and had the same problem with the batteries going dead when in storage. The entry door is in the middle of the coach, and the battery well is under the steps and easily reached. I installed blade switches, purchased at an auto parts store, on the positive terminals on the two house and engine batteries and open them when storing the motorhome. No more problems. Monthly maintenance is always required, of course.

**John Gaines | Sacramento, California**

The switches you refer to are a simple and inexpensive solution to disconnecting batteries. I like simple and reliable solutions to problems.



## Camera Quit Along With Batteries

**Q** I, too, had trouble with the batteries on my 2016 Thor Chateau. Both the engine and house battery went dead when it was stored, and therefore had to be replaced. But now the rear camera is only showing static, although it was working when it was parked. The tech says it has nothing to do with the batteries, which I very much doubt. Any ideas?

**Don Belmer | Caldwell, Idaho**

**A** I agree with your mechanic that it is unlikely the camera system failed because of the batteries going dead. When they go dead, it happens slowly and there are no voltage spikes that might damage the camera circuits. They are designed to have the power switched on and off without damage occurring. The fact your monitor shows static indicates it's working to some extent. Start by inspecting the camera power-supply connections and the signal cable if it's not a wireless model. If the camera is mounted externally, exposed to the elements, it's especially vulnerable to corrosion and the like.

## Adding Solar Panels

**Q** My 2008 Winnebago Adventurer 38J came with a small factory-installed solar panel, but I plan to add another 150-watt panel. My question is, should I leave the factory charge controller alone and install the one for the 150-watt panel independently? Or should I connect the old and new panels together and feed the power through my new charge controller? The original solar panel is only a 10- or 15-watt unit.

**Norman Gunderson | Heffley Creek, British Columbia, Canada**

**A** That original 10-watt solar panel isn't good for much more than slowly trickle-charging your battery or maintaining a battery when the unit is in storage. I'd recommend you install a higher-rated charge controller with your new system, and keep your



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existing small solar panel connected as is through the Winnebago harness. It can't hurt anything, and will add a bit more juice to your charging setup. If you decide to add another solar panel later, the new larger-capacity charge controller will be ready for the load. Remember to maintain your motorhome's batteries, and consider upgrading the battery bank to take better advantage of all that free solar energy!

### Overheating Sprinter

**Q** We bought a used motorhome built on a Mercedes-Benz Sprinter chassis and drove it from Virginia to California. It ran like a champ, but on the third day it started overheating while idling. We pulled over, let it cool down and it seemed fine. The fourth day, again when we were idling, the air conditioner started blowing warm air and the coolant light came on again. The temperature outside was 100 degrees

Fahrenheit, and the air conditioner was going full blast. Why is it fine on the highway but overheats when idling?

**Nancy Hawkins | Via email**

**A** You didn't mention which year and model Sprinter you have; they came with several engines, and changes have occurred over the years. In general, when an engine gets hot when idling but not on the road, it's because of reduced airflow. At idle the only airflow is from the engine fan, so check its operation. Over time, the radiator may have also become clogged internally with rust, mineral deposits and crud from the water, as well as externally from bugs and dirt and debris that clogs the fins and reduces airflow. A radiator shop should be able to check both. Running the air conditioner adds a lot of heat to the cooling system and should be shut off if the engine is getting hot. In a pinch, to get the motorhome to a service facility, run the heater on full blast to get rid of engine

heat and prevent overheating damage.

### Old Tires

**Q** I purchased a motorhome that was always stored inside in a cool, dry place. The tires look great, with lots of tread and no sidewall cracks, and my tire dealer said he couldn't see any issues. But because of age he recommended replacing them. The tires are original from 1994. Should I replace them because of age?

**Steve Rose | Via email**

**A** Yes, definitely replace them, no matter how tempting it is to keep using them. When tires fail they not only do costly damage to the motorhome from chunks of rubber separating from the tire, but can also lead to a serious crash. Those tires are old enough to have graduated from college with a master's degree! Ten years is the absolute maximum for motorhome tires, and only then if they have been properly maintained and protected.

### Mystery Sound Solved!

This references the "Mystery Sound" letter in July. I own a 2011 Thor 37 KT, and it, too, had a noise. After months of checking, a smart technician finally took off the grille. He drove it in all the different noise-making ways and there was no more noise! The 2011 grille was replaced with the 2010 grille, which allowed more airflow.

**Judy Zeeb | Blythe, California**

Thanks for sharing that tip. It may help a number of frustrated readers. With all the heat where you live, more airflow is important, too. **M**

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#### Contact our experts:

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

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## Punkin' Chunkin'

Start a new post-Halloween tradition by watching everyone's favorite gourd get the old heave-ho

By Alan Rider

It's that time of year when pumpkins seem to be everywhere. And their uses would appear to be endless, from the traditional jack-o-lanterns and pumpkin pies, to more modern ideas like the seemingly unavoidable pumpkin chai tea lattes whipped up by your favorite barista.

But here's one application that might not have occurred to you: Using these lowly gourds as projectiles!

When it comes to human behavior, I'll be the first to admit that some things just don't make one lick of sense. But I can also attest that sometimes, it's those utterly nonsensical things that are by far the most fun.

Such is the case with the annual World Championship Punkin' Chunkin' festival. The post-Halloween pumpkin-firing fiesta, held each year in a vacant farm field on the outskirts of Bridgeville, Delaware, attracts more than 100 teams from around the world intent on using their home-built contraptions to send specially grown white pumpkins flying.

And fly they do. At the first annual Punkin' Chunkin' event, the winning shot was just 186 feet. Things have gotten a good bit more competitive in recent years, with participants regularly hurling 10-pound white orbs (which have thicker skins and are, therefore, less likely to disintegrate on launch than the orange variety) well over a half-mile.

If you decide to join the crowd of

roughly 30,000 fans that show up over the course of the three-day event (November 3-5; [www.punkinchunkin.com](http://www.punkinchunkin.com)), you'll see a few basic types of pumpkin-flinging machines in use. By far the most colorful are the catapults and trebuchets, replicas of the medieval siege weapons that once struck fear into the hearts of castledwellers. The current Punkin' Chunkin' records for these machines are 3,508 and 2,835 feet respectively.

The big guns of the Punkin' Chunkin' festival, though, are literally big guns. We're talking about air cannons, which have sent a pumpkin flying 4,694.8 feet through the skies over Delaware (the world record of 5,545.43 feet was set in Moab, Utah, in 2010 — that's more than a mile, folks).

To reach these impressive distance

records, teams have gone from machines cobbled together in the backyard to examples of sophisticated engineering with values approaching the \$200,000 mark. In their world-record attempts they're likely to employ the services of physics consultants from major universities to analyze everything from optimal firing angle to ideal release point; meteorologists to give them a read on local atmospheric conditions like wind speed and direction; horticulturalists to help them identify and select the best type of pumpkins; and aerodynamics experts to pick the best examples of that variety with enough ridges to give the pumpkin additional lift without being so prominent as to produce excessive aerodynamic drag (not unlike the dimples on a golf ball).

All in pursuit of bragging rights, not any prize money. And, of course, temporary possession of a huge wooden trophy, carved with a chainsaw, depicting an overalls-clad farmer holding a large orange pumpkin on his shoulders like some rural Atlas supporting the Earth.

Ultimately, it matters less who sets what new distance record at the event than that everybody has fun. Which makes the World Championship Punkin' Chunkin' festivities one of those good — if slightly wacky — times awaiting us all along The Road Ahead. **M**

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### Fire Away! ➔

From right: Air cannons are the literal big guns at the annual World Championship Punkin' Chunkin' festival, with the record “chunk” at the event exceeding 4,690 feet, set in 2013. The chunkers are vying for the chance to take home the 1,500-pound wooden trophy.



Photos courtesy Punkin' Chunkin'



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