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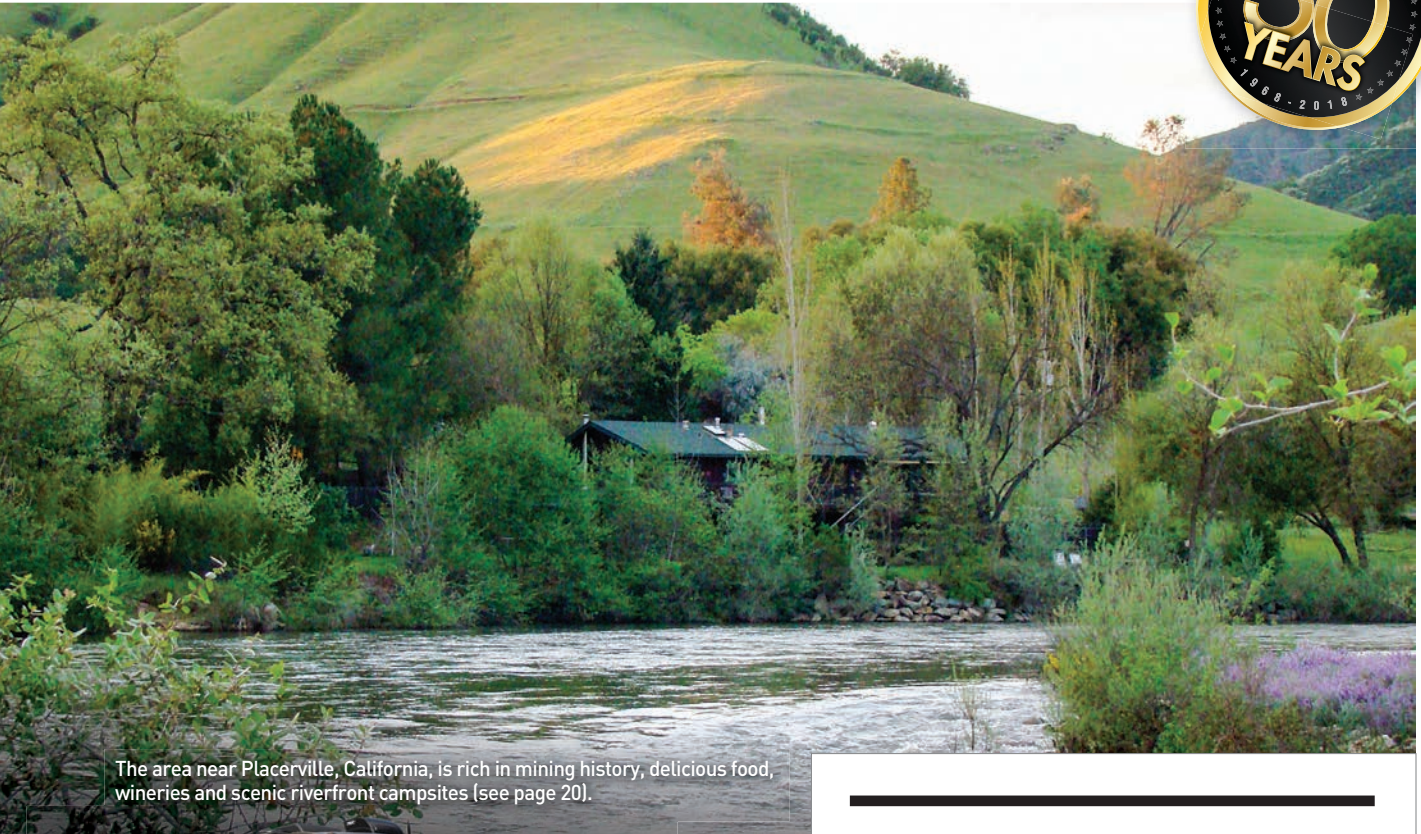


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The area near Placerville, California, is rich in mining history, delicious food, wineries and scenic riverfront campsites (see page 20).



The new 2018 Thor Quantum RC25 utilizes a full-wall slide and swiveling captain's chairs to expand the living area. Pg. 14

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The brand-new Wayfarer 24 TW represents longtime Class A manufacturer Tiffin Motorhomes' successful entry into the competitive Sprinter-based Class C market (see test on page 40). Photo by Shawn Spence.



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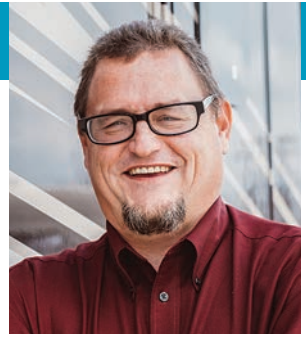


Photo: Mercedes Morgan Photography

By Kristopher Bunker

The Golden Age

Welcome to the new year! Now that the red and green (and blue and silver) of the holiday season is behind us, we can focus on a much more alluring color: gold. Gold can mean many things to many people, and this issue takes the element with Atomic Number 79 and thrusts it into the shimmering forefront.

Perhaps most importantly, 2018 marks the golden anniversary of *MotorHome* magazine. Hard to believe it has been 50 years since *Trailer Life* publisher Art Rouse recognized the booming motorized RV market and capitalized on its popularity by introducing a motorhome (or, housecar) buyers guide called *MotorHome Life*.

The original intent for what would eventually become our favorite RV magazine was to be an annual publication; at the time, Rouse wanted to be certain the idea would flourish as he thought it would. “Still just a baby, the motorhome and housecar industry will grow up to be a giant adult and no doubt about it,” said Rouse in his introduction to the magazine. And grow up it did. And every step of the way, *MotorHome* grew along with it. After a few redesigns and a new name — but never wavering from its original intention of providing honest, engaging expert content — *MotorHome* magazine became a monthly publication in 1983 (which makes this year the 35th anniversary

of that momentous occasion as well). Check out page 18 for “Pages From the Past,” our special section that will run each month this year, and join us as we celebrate 50 years of *MotorHome* with plenty of golden pomp and circumstance in each issue throughout 2018.

But our golden January doesn’t stop there. “Hit the Mother Lode” offers a glimpse into the past with a visit to Placerville, California, and an examination of the Gold Rush days and the mining boom that began when James Marshall discovered gold in 1848. It was near Placerville that Marshall struck gold at Sutter’s Mill, along the South Fork of the American River, and the resulting hysteria caused a population influx to the area of more than 80,000 dreamers with dollar signs in their eyes. Turn to page

20 to learn more.

And our final glint of gold this month goes to the winners of our annual Readers’ Choice Awards. “The Envelope, Please ...” lists the gold, silver, and bronze-medal winners of our yearly contest, spread across 29 categories of all things RV. From new motorhomes to dinghy-towing equipment to RV tires to sit-down restaurants, the Readers’ Choice Awards always offer a glimpse into our favorite products and services, as voted on by our readers. These awards represent the cream of the crop in our lifestyle, and are an accurate depiction of your voices and opinions. Turn to page 30 and let the campfire discussions begin.

Many of us are fascinated by gold, and it’s no wonder. Gold is shiny, it’s expensive, and most of all, it signifies the best of the best — much like this magazine has come to be the No. 1 choice for travel, tech and lifestyle for the RV enthusiast.

We think you’ll find it easy to strike gold in this issue of *MotorHome* and beyond. Here’s to 50 more years of success and prosperity. **M**

“Join us as we celebrate 50 years of *MotorHome* with plenty of golden pomp and circumstance throughout 2018.”

Contributors | January






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).



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



Bruce W. Smith has had a long, 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 adventurers.

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

Those are the questions we asked in the October 2017 issue, and here are some of the responses we received.

Have a Seat

I read the letter by Carolyn Brasier in the October 2017 issue asking for chair lift information. May I suggest a possible alternative? It sounds like she can transfer from a wheelchair to another seat. Our 95-year-old mother travels with us in our motorhome. To enable her to access the motorhome interior I installed a seat lift. She simply sits in the seat at ground level, I raise the lift, it swings into the door opening and goes in far enough that all she has to do then is stand up or transfer to another mobile seat. We bought the Travel Lift Chair after considerable research and are extremely happy with the price, simplicity and all interior installation. We highly recommend it.

George Gradek | Via email

Step and Repeat

My wife uses a walker and has difficulty ascending the stairs of our motorhome, so I bought an RV Step Assist from Life Essentials in Brookston, Indiana. It lifts a person, who can walk, from ground level to the level of the floor in the motorhome, which is a 3-foot distance

in the case of our Class C Winnebago. A friend and I installed the lift, which is connected to the coach battery. There are models that can lift up to 4 feet and also models meant for wheelchairs. The company's website (www.lifeessentialslifts.com) has a video of the lifts. The lift platform and upright rail, which contains the controls, must be removed and stowed for traveling. The cost of the lift, including shipping to my home in New Jersey, was \$3,325. A remote control is available at additional cost.

The platform is heavy, but I can handle it at the age of 88.

Hugh Murphy Jr. | Via email

Less How-to

I've been an avid *MotorHome* reader for more than 10 years and three rigs. In the last year or two, I've noticed a pronounced shift each month to articles featuring instructions on how to make major repairs. I have to believe that the vast majority of your readers are not dissimilar to me, in that we found a dealer we could trust, bought our coaches and trusted that dealership to make repairs as required.

I doubt that anyone who can afford to purchase a diesel pusher on a Spartan or Freightliner chassis is much inclined to crawl underneath it to do the kind of maintenance [the articles] discussed. They can most likely afford to have it done professionally, and at this point in their lives, are probably wise to do just that.

I think that the majority of your readers would like to see more feature articles on places worth visiting and exploring in their rigs rather than articles on how to spend precious weekends tearing their rigs apart and putting them back together again.

My family would much rather have more "Where to" and less "How-to."

Glenn Smith | Allentown, New Jersey

Question of the Month

What topics would you like to see more of in *MotorHome*? Travel articles? Maintenance and DIY? Coach reviews? Or, something else?

Send your comments to:

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

Featured Letter

Site Accessibility

We own a 2004 Itasca Sunova that was modified at the factory with a wheelchair lift and roll-in shower. We had a Play-Mor travel trailer with a lift prior to buying the used Itasca last year.

I've been a paraplegic for 39 years, and retired 3½ years ago. We now spend three or four months per year in our motorhome, mostly staying in state parks. I wish a smaller unit would work for us, but the wheelchair lift requires about 4 to 5 feet of width, which means we need a longer RV. Our 33-foot motorhome limits some of the campsites we can stay in. Additionally, we need about 7 feet of space for the lift to deploy on the passenger side. Many campgrounds have designated accessible sites, but people who have parking placards tend to take those sites even though they don't use wheelchair lifts. We are finding it more and more difficult to find and reserve wheelchair-accessible campsites.

Tony Sauer | Via email



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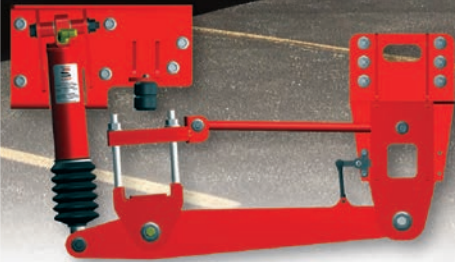
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Virginia's Historic Michie Tavern

A tankard of ale and a step back in time for a taste of the 18th Century

By A.M. Murphy

As I leaned against the log wall of the tavern, my belly full of fried chicken and peach cobbler, I listened to snippets of conversations taking place around me. Two women sitting near the stone hearth extolled the virtues of their purchases of sewing patterns and sweets from the general store, a man in the corner argued rather heatedly with his partner over a local political issue and a couple of young men discussed heading over to the armory to look at a collection of long rifles. I closed my eyes and imagined these conversations were not all that different from the ones that would have taken place in this very room more than 200 years ago. Picking up the chilled metal tankard in front of me I took a long draught of my ale ... OK, it was iced tea, but in the 1700s it would have been ale.

I was enjoying lunch at historic Michie Tavern in Charlottesville, Virginia, which does, in fact, have a selection of ales available — including one from a recipe brewed up by President Thomas Jefferson. The tavern was originally built and run by Scotsman and early American patriot William Michie. When Corporal Michie was encamped at Valley Forge in the winter of 1777 he received word to return home as a result of his father's passing. The young soldier then used his bequeathment of land to establish Michie Tavern.

The tavern quickly became a communal center of political debate and social interaction, and an inn for weary travelers.

In the 1920s the Inn and Tavern moved 17 miles to the present location, just a half-mile from Jefferson's Monticello. While Jefferson's home is nearby, Michie Tavern is a destination unto itself. The property offers a self-guided tour (for a nominal fee), that takes you straight back to life as a traveler, or an innkeeper, during America's fledgling years. Period-clad staff members answer questions and add to the ambiance of the experience.

After your tour, step into the tavern's dining room, the Ordinary, for lunch, where the bill of fare includes chicken, pork, black-eyed peas, stewed tomatoes and biscuits and cornbread. After lunch, there are four shops to visit, including the tavern shop, the general store, a metal smith shop that dates from 1882 and the armory, which includes antique flintlocks, swords, military memorabilia and many other authentic and historic artifacts for viewing and purchase.

The Tavern, a Virginia Historic Landmark, is located on Thomas Jefferson Parkway near Interstate 64. The property includes a designated area for RV parking. For more information, call 434-977-1234, or visit www.michietavern.com.

By Bobbie Hasselbring

Happy Cornish Game Hen!

It's time to pull out holiday recipes to celebrate 2018. Every January I face a New Year's dilemma: Do I make turkey or something else? Many of us cook turkey for Thanksgiving and/or Christmas — and still have leftovers on New Year's Day. And, cooking a big turkey in a motorhome oven isn't always practical. This year, I'm opting for a deliciously retro option: Cornish game hens.

If you're old enough, you likely remember that Cornish game hens were trendy in the 1950s (they did make a comeback in the 1980s). As a kid, I loved it when my mom cooked game hens. These tiny chickens are tasty and I got a whole one all to myself — so elegant and special.

Cornish game hens are neither Cornish nor game. They're often not even hens! In the U.S., Cornish game hens may be called poussin, Cornish hen, Rock Cornish or Rock Cornish hens. It's a young (28 to 30 days), hybrid broiler chicken, sold whole.

Rock Cornish hens were developed by crossing



A little butter on the skin of the hen results in crisp, golden skin.

Cornish gamecocks with different chickens, including the white Plymouth Rock hen and the Malayan fighting cock. The result was a succulent little bird weighing 2-2½ pounds, perfect for a single serving. Inexpensive and easy to cook, Cornish game hens became both an upscale restaurant dish and an everyday meal.

Cornish game hens are available fresh at some butchers and frozen in grocery stores. Their young age makes them more delicate in flavor than larger chickens, and they're fancy enough for a holiday meal.

Game hens are easy to cook. Simply rub with a little melted butter or olive oil and lemon juice, salt and pepper, and then bake until crispy and golden. Or go holiday crazy and stuff them.

NEW YEAR'S CORNISH GAME HENS

Cornish game hens are an elegant yet simple holiday meal. Cooking times vary depending on the oven, so begin checking the temperature after about 30 minutes. Yield: 2 servings.

Hens

- 1 large onion, sliced
- 2 Cornish hens; if frozen, thaw prior to cooking
- 1 tablespoon butter, melted
- Salt and pepper

Sage Apple Cranberry Stuffing

- 2 tablespoons butter
- ½ cup chopped onion
- ½ cup chopped celery
- 2 cups (4 slices) cubed multigrain bread, toasted in oven
- 1 large apple, cubed (1½ cups)
- ½ cup dried cranberries
- 1 cup chicken stock
- 2 tablespoons fresh flat-leaf parsley, chopped
- 2 tablespoons fresh sage, chopped
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ¼ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper

Stuffing

Melt butter in sauté pan. Add onion and celery and cook 5 minutes or until softened. In a large bowl, mix with all other ingredients.

Hens

Preheat the oven to 400 degrees Fahrenheit.

Place sliced onion in bottom of a roasting pan. Remove giblets from hens, rinse and pat dry. Place hens on top of the sliced onion. Pack hen cavities with Sage Apple Cranberry Stuffing. (Spoon remaining stuffing into a greased baking dish, cover with foil and cook for 20-25 minutes in the oven.)

Tie legs together with kitchen string and tuck the wing tips under body of hens. Rub hens with melted butter and sprinkle with salt and pepper.

Roast hens for approximately 40-50 minutes, or until the juices run clear when you cut between a leg and thigh, and the temperature on an instant-read thermometer reads 180 degrees for hens and 165 degrees for stuffing. Remove from oven and cover hens with aluminum foil for 15 minutes to allow juices to reabsorb.





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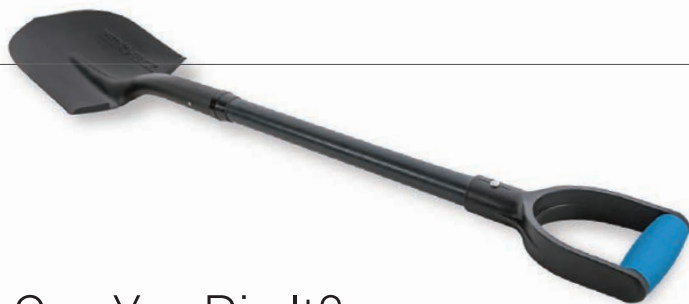
While cleaning your motorhome is an important task, packing a variety of single-purpose tools to do so can be a frustrating waste of space. The Duop system solves that problem by doing much more than a standard mop, allowing you to clean the interior from top to bottom with one tool. The Duop's reusable microfiber pad is washable up to 100 times and can be used wet or dry, according to the company. Duop's quick-ball system grips the cleaning head in virtually any cleaning position, allowing for cleaning of curved, vertical and overhead surfaces in addition to floors. The pole can be detached so the quick-ball head can be used alone for scrubbing and wiping, while keeping your hands out of the grit and grime. MSRP: \$29.99 for a single telescoping handle, a medium cleaning head and a medium microfiber pad. Kits with up to three head units of various sizes are available for additional cost.

Clean Design Co. | 413-274-4126, www.theduop.com

Quantum Physics

Thor's new 2018 Quantum RC25 employs a full-wall slide and swiveling captain's chairs to open up the interior living area. The RC25 offers livability and storage comparable to many larger motorhomes, while it's sub-27-foot length makes it easy to maneuver on the road or in camp. Focusing on energy efficiency, the RC25 features an on-demand water heater and is pre-wired for solar charging. The galley is equipped with a 6-cubic-foot double-door refrigerator, solid-surface countertops (with flip-up extension) and a large bowl sink sized for pots and pans. The rear master bedroom with queen bed is located within the full-wall slide, and there is plenty of closet space for mom and dad. The rear bath across the hall features a 24-by-36-inch shower, stainless-steel sink and porcelain toilet. A 40-inch LED TV in the living area is standard, with options available for a bedroom TV and exterior entertainment center. MSRP starts at \$103,350.

Thor Motor Coach | 800-860-5658, www.thormotorcoach.com



Can You Dig It?

If you're RVing in an area that gets a lot of snow — or simply visiting somewhere off the beaten path — bringing along a reliable shovel is a must. The new Spade from Rhino-Rack features solid dual-core construction, and is crafted and reinforced using heavy-duty heat-treated high-carbon steel. It has also been finished with zinc plating and a powder-coating to help with maximum strength and rust protection. The Spade is detailed with a slip-resistant grip designed for comfort, ease of use and convenience, according to the company. The compact 42-inch Spade is easy to store inside the basement compartment or with a mounting bracket. MSRP: \$59.

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For more information, call 575-525-4300, or go to www.blm.gov/visit/three-rivers-petroglyph-site — *Morey Edelman*



Photo: Morey Edelman

Gering, Nebraska

Legacy of the Plains Museum

The Legacy of the Plains Museum in Gering, Nebraska, is the result of a partnership between two regional museums — the Farm And Ranch Museum (FARM), and North Platte Valley Museum. The two facilities pooled their resources and artifacts in 2013 to re-envision telling the story of the people of the High Plains.

Inside the high-tech museum are seven themed zones where visitors can interact with displays and watch videos in small buildings scattered throughout the Exhibit Hall. We saw an exhibit on early medicine and Dr.

Georgia Arbuckle Fix, who made her house calls in a horse and buggy. Nearby is an interactive exhibit in the Gering Courier Print Shop that focuses on early printing presses. We also learned about water witches, who searched for underground water sources.

Outside, there's an Annex filled with historic machinery and equipment, as well as the Wiedeman Farmstead Home — a time capsule of the 1930s and the 1950s. Future plans for the property include a furnished sod house and an early log home. Eventually, the museum will offer a path along the Oregon Trail from the museum to the Scotts Bluff National Monument's visitor center.


For more information, call 308-436-1989, or visit <http://legacyoftheplains.org> — *Neala McCarten* 

Photo: Neala McCarten



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Pages From the Past

Revisiting *MotorHome's* inaugural issue

“It was only a couple of years ago that except for one-of-a-kind custom specials, mostly homemade, you could read through the entire roster of production motorhomes and housecars before a 3-minute egg was ready,” said *Trailer Life* publisher/editor extraordinaire Art Rouse, in the opening pages of his newly minted *MotorHome Life* magazine. It was 1968. In the Heat of the Night took home the Academy Award for best picture, the Detroit Tigers won the World Series and a gallon of gas was around 34 cents. But it would be Rouse’s realization that the motorhome industry was “growing like a weed” and “by far the boomingest part of the whole booming rec rig field” that proved to be more telling to his outlook of motorized RVs. Rouse, ever the savvy businessman and predictor of all things RV, had decided to branch out from his successful towable magazine “at the risk of my own survival,” because he viewed motorhomes as “the future.”

The result, of course, is the magazine you now hold in your hands, an impressive 50 years after it debuted as an annual publication. Reviewing the first issue now, with its listings of 88 models of motorhomes in a buyers guide format — plus features on motorhome testing, working from a motorhome, full-time living and overseas motorhome adventures, to name a few — it becomes obvious the passion for motorized RVs had existed for quite some time. But Rouse was the one with the foresight

to gather it into a consumer-friendly package, and to fill its pages with some of the best minds in the industry. Rouse’s vision would become a bimonthly publication in 1971, merge with *Camper Coachman* and adopt its volume number in 1975 (hence the discrepancy in chronological age), streamline to the present title *MotorHome* in 1982 and finally achieve monthly status in 1983.

The 96 pages of that inaugural issue of *MotorHome Life* feature plenty of wit and whimsy, ahead-of-their-time

technical features and a definite retro feel — not to mention some now-antiquated sensibilities (who really thought a scantily clad woman in a cowboy hat was necessary in an advertisement for portable toilets?). A few now-familiar faces also appear, as advertisements for Newell, Winnebago and Travel-Jon graced some of the pages. There had been nothing like *MotorHome Life* before its publication, and we hope that feeling of being on the cutting edge of something special continues to this day.

Please join us each month in 2018 as we celebrate the storied history of *MotorHome*, with a page each issue being dedicated to the magazine’s evolution over the years, plus other fun and nostalgic surprises here and there.

Rouse also stated in the debut issue that, “Having come so far so fast, the sky’s the limit for the next few years, and whatever estimates that are now made for the future can’t help but come out way short.” A half-century later, we can all agree he was on to something. **M**



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A view from one of the riverfront campsites at Ponderosa RV Resort.

Discover the Mother Lode

History lives on in Placerville, California, known during the gold-rush era as Hangtown

By Ken Reid

The name “Hangtown” was enough to pique my interest. To learn more about this location, I ran it in my internet browser and found a map showing a historically important gold-rush town (now officially named Placerville) nestled in the hills of the Mother Lode — a name historically given to a section of gold deposits in California’s Sierra Nevada. Considering the area’s rich history, my wife, Gayle, and I decided that it would be well worth a visit.

Though it only has a population of around 10,681, the number and variety of attractions to be found in and around Placerville will be a pleasant surprise to visitors. Whether going for a week or a weekend, young and old alike should have no problem finding plenty of fun things to do. Some of the things we wanted to do were to learn about the area’s history, see unusual work created by resident artisans, visit some of the many boutique wineries in the surrounding hills and sample the local cuisine that we’ve heard so many good things about.

Traveling in a 35-foot motorhome with a dinghy vehicle, we always

try to stay in a campground reasonably close to our primary points of interest. We chose Ponderosa RV Resort, which is located where California State Route 49 crosses the South Fork of the American River, about 10 miles north of Placerville. The RV park is also within walking distance of where gold was first discovered in California, at Sutter’s Mill. That finding led to the gold rush that altered history throughout much of the world.

Other RV parks can be found in the area, including a few along the river. But we haven’t discovered any that, in our opinion, can match the experience afforded by the riverfront sites at Ponderosa. For example, while listening to the nearby rapids from our chairs, we were able to watch a river otter in search of fish just below us, and see deer grazing on the far bank.

The discovery of gold by James Marshall at Sutter’s Mill, along the South Fork of the American River, figures prominently in the history



Getting There ➔

Placerville is located at the junction of California State Route 49 and U.S. Highway 50, between Sacramento and Lake Tahoe, in Northern California.



From far left: A rock monument in Marshall Gold Discovery State Historic Park marks the location where Sutter's Mill was actually located. Indoor and outdoor exhibits can be found throughout Marshall Gold Discovery State Historic Park, and detail the area's extensive mining and gold discovery history.

of Hangtown. Therefore we began our quest for knowledge by walking into the little town of Coloma, where a replica of Sutter's Mill is now included within Marshall Gold Discovery State Historic Park.

Visitors can easily spend most of the day on a self-guided tour, but the park also offers Gold Discovery Guided Walking Tours at 11 a.m. and 1 p.m. daily, with the exception of special-event days. Either way, those who take the time to see the park's many exhibits should come away with at least a basic understanding of how the gold rush changed the course of history, while radically impacting the surrounding area.

Next on our to-do list was a visit to downtown Placerville, especially the historic part through which Main Street runs. We began with a stop at the El Dorado County Chamber of Commerce and the Fountain & Tallman Museum. The museum is basically one small room of exhibits pertaining mostly to Hangtown/Placerville, but the Chamber of Commerce has a wealth of information about most anything of interest in all of El Dorado County. Either place can supply a pamphlet with the information needed for a self-guided walking tour of the five-block historical section. Plaques affording additional information are posted at each listed location. Naturally, we sought out more details about how and why the town was once known as Hangtown.

After news spread about the discovery of gold at Sutter's Mill on January 24, 1848, thousands began arriving from all over the United

States, and even from abroad. People from all walks of life wanted to make their fortune in the area's streams and hills. Merchants and others hoping to profit from the miners soon followed. The "gold rush" was born, and by 1849 it was going full bore.

It has been estimated that at least 39,000 people arrived in California by sea, and another 42,000 via overland routes, by the end of 1849. Though Coloma was the initial rendezvous point for those who became known as "Forty-Niners," camps soon sprung up elsewhere in the area, including what eventually became known as Hangtown (where an estimated 10,000 settled). What is now State Route 49 follows approximately the same course as the trail used by miners — and the merchants who supplied them — as they moved between Coloma and Hangtown. But mining was hard work, and not everyone was willing to do it for long. Some resorted to stealing gold from others, resulting in many robberies and even some murders.

Before the name Hangtown was applied to the camp, it was referred to as Old Dry Diggins (because the miners had to cart the dry soil to running water for washing out the gold). Details seem to vary by some accounts, but in 1849 an impromptu jury met there to decide the fate of three accused murderers. After a trial that lasted about 30 minutes, someone reportedly shouted "Hang them!" Up to 1,000 miners gathered, and the sentence was carried out. Those first

known hangings in the Mother Lode were carried out at a giant white oak near the center of the camp (where Coloma and Main streets intersect today). Word spread rapidly, and other hangings were later carried out at the same place. The location soon became known as Hangtown. Only the stump of that tree is still in existence: located in the cellar of what is now the Hangman's Tree Ice Cream Saloon (where California Historical Landmark No. 141 is posted). In 1851 the legislature of the newly formed state passed a bill establishing the death penalty for anyone who stole property worth more than \$100, which helped legitimize hangings.

By 1854, Hangtown was the third-largest town in California — behind only San Francisco and

Right: A replica of Sutter's Mill can be found in Marshall Gold Discovery State Historic Park.



GETAWAY

PLACERVILLE, CALIFORNIA

Sacramento in total population. Los Angeles, at 15th place, had a population of only 541 voters. That same year, Hangtown was incorporated and renamed Placerville. The name was chosen for the deep-reddish-brown soil that the gold was mined from. Some of the methods used included excavating pits, digging tunnels and hydraulics (eroding the soil by shooting large volumes of water under high pressure).

Many fortunes were made. Merchants from near and far flocked to the rapidly expanding town. Supposedly as late as 1903, enough gold was found while digging the foundation at the Fairchild Building to finance its construction, including Fairchild's Pharmacy. The financial impact on the region, and the state, was profound. Placerville became a major financial hub. It was also the western terminus for the Overland Trail.

Still a robust community today, Placerville also serves as the El Dorado County seat. Through a variety of attractions and sponsored activities that are put on within the historical section throughout the year, people can now visualize what it was like during that wild period. Though terrible fires tore through and destroyed most of the historical section, visitors can still see buildings of stone or brick that were constructed as early as 1852.

Some additional facts that really impressed us had to do with the hardy nature of the females who came to live in the area. In 1850, Lucy Wakefield traveled all the way from Connecticut, and bought a log cabin on Main Street. She baked and sold mince pies for \$2 and made a very profitable business out of it. Also, Jane Johnson drove a herd of horses West in 1859, then used the proceeds to purchase a lot and have a building constructed near the center of town.

After having learned about the town's history, we visited several shops along Main Street that display and sell a wide variety of arts and crafts created by local artisans. One of those was Gold Country Artists Gallery. It is a co-operative that purports to have work on display from 50 individuals in the area. Those who display their work either belong to the co-op or rent space. A wide variety of displays can be found on two levels, including photography, paintings, glass art, jewelry, fiber arts, pottery, stained glass, dye etched metal and many other unique works. Though we were most impressed with the variety and number of displays there, we encountered many more shops throughout the historic district that display work from local artists.

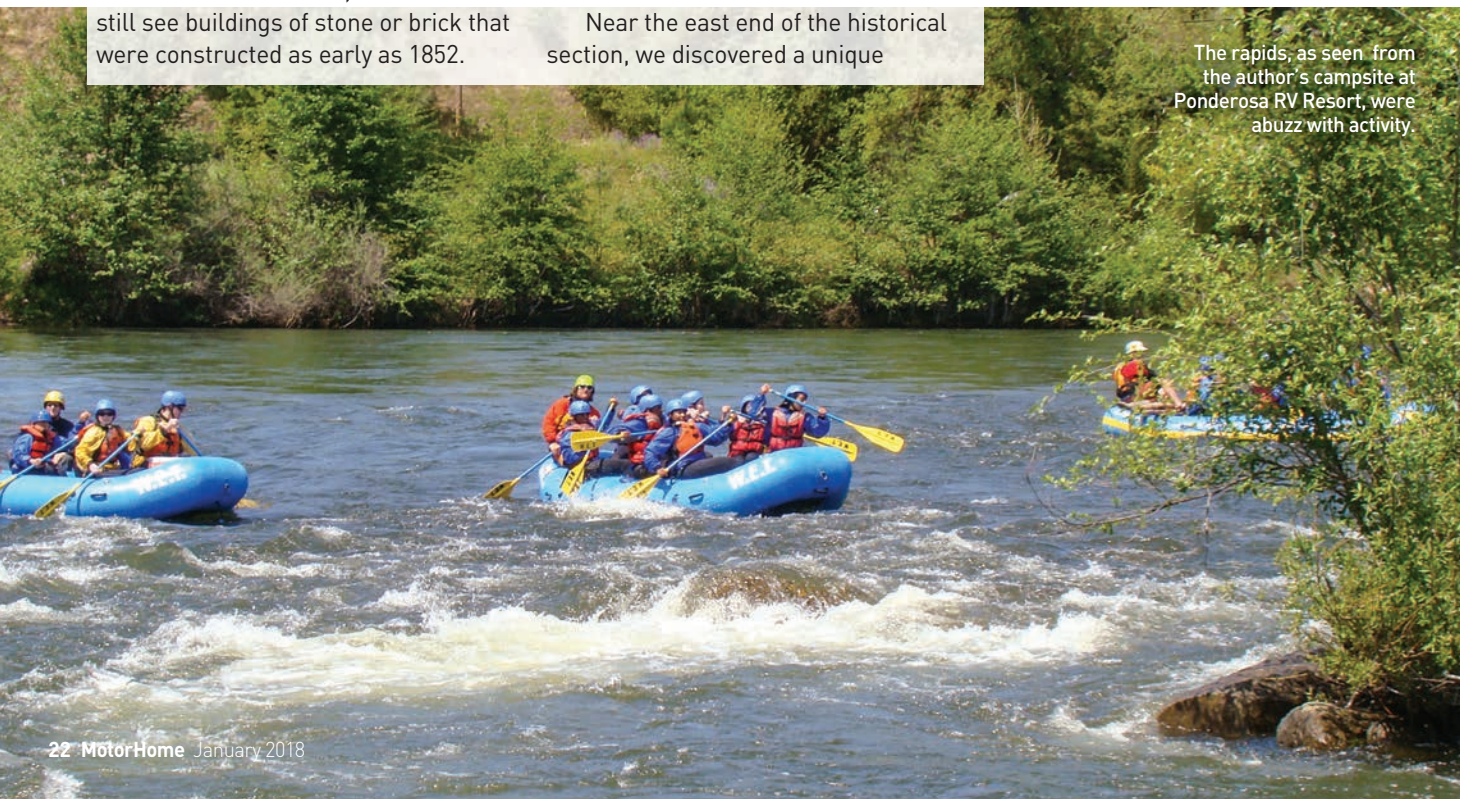
Near the east end of the historical section, we discovered a unique



Above from top: Ponderosa RV Park is located about 10 miles north of Placerville and offers scenic riverfront campsites. Old Hangtown's historic Bell Tower was formerly used to summon volunteer firemen when needed.

restaurant that should not be missed. It's named Sweetie Pies Restaurant & Bakery (www.sweetiepies.biz) and is open daily for breakfast and lunch. The building was constructed in 1865 and was reported to be home for the sheriff of Hangtown. The restaurant was established in 1991, and has been voted Best of El Dorado County every year since. You have to try the olallieberry pancakes and syrup. But bring an appetite: the pancakes are the size of dinner plates. We bought some of the olallieberry syrup to take home

The rapids, as seen from the author's campsite at Ponderosa RV Resort, were abuzz with activity.





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GETAWAY

PLACERVILLE, CALIFORNIA

because it was so good.

During our research, we learned that there are approximately 70 wineries in El Dorado County. Most of those are clustered in the hills to the east and south of Placerville; many clustered on both sides of Highway 50 heading toward Lake Tahoe, and some near Camino and Fair Play. Nearly all of them are small, independently owned boutique-style wineries.

Gayle and I have discovered some outstanding wines by visiting similar locations, and have gained a lot of knowledge about them during the process.

Apparently the nearby hills support the growing of grape varieties used in some renown wines originating in certain parts of Italy, France and Spain. Many seemed to specialize in Rhône varietals, Tempranillo, Barbera and the like. Unfortunately, we had to cut our trip short because the area was in danger of flooding, so we didn't get to visit any wineries. That will have to

wait for a future trip. For those who are interested in going, you can obtain a comprehensive pamphlet describing each — and showing their location on a map — by visiting the Chamber of Commerce Visitor Center on Main Street in Placerville.

Between Shingle Springs and Placerville, just off Highway 50, is one of the best casinos we've ever visited. The Red Hawk Casino (www.redhawkcasino.com) is owned and operated by the Shingle Springs Band of Miwok Indians. For those who are inclined to check it out, we found the entire experience very worthwhile. In addition to gaming, they have several restaurants — the Mexican cuisine at the downstairs Koto restaurant was outstanding.

Unfortunately, we missed out on several fun attractions offered within the historic parts of Placerville. Among those we hope to enjoy in the future include, "Wagon Train on Main" (June), "Bell Tower Brewfest" (June) and the

"Art and Wine Festival" (October). Monthly offerings include Stagecoach Rides and the Placerville Art Walk. And, of course, on our next visit we will visit some of the area's fine boutique wineries. **M**

FOR MORE INFORMATION

49er Village RV Resort, a Good Sam Park
800-339-6981, <https://sunrvresorts.com/community/far>

City of Placerville
www.cityofplacerville.org

El Dorado County Historical Museum/El Dorado Western Railroad
530-621-5865, <http://museum.edcgov.us>

El Dorado County Visitors Authority
530-621-5885, <http://visit-eldorado.com>

Fountain & Tallman Museum
530-626-0773, <http://eldoradocountyhistorical.society.org/fountaintallman2.htm>

Marshall Gold Discovery State Historic Park
www.coloma.com/gold/marshall-park.php

Ponderosa RV Resort
877-570-2267, www.rvonthego.com/Ponderosa-campground-profile.html

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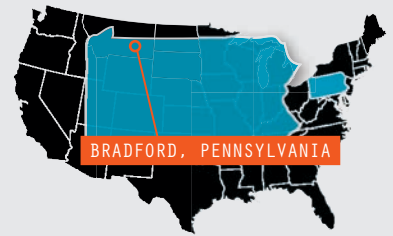


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A CUT ABOVE AND HOTTER THAN EVER

The Case knife and the Zippo lighter live on as icons of camping and RVing



Getting There

Bradford is a bit off the beaten path on the western side of Pennsylvania, just over the New York state border, but its rural location only serves to contribute to its charm as a destination. Nearby points of interest include the Kinzua Dam, the Seneca-Iroquois National Museum and Allegany State Park, where seasonal camping, boating, and fishing are popular recreational activities.

A rural and deceptively sleepy town, Bradford, Pennsylvania, offers visitors the chance to get an in-depth look at the history and manufacturing of two iconic products. Both the Case knife and the Zippo lighter are tools that have become as ubiquitous to camping and RVing over the decades as the campfire. Today these historic companies have merged into one entity and continue to produce their respective brands in Bradford, celebrated together at the Zippo/Case Museum. Located off U.S. Highway 219 on Zippo Drive, the Zippo/Case Museum is an impressive 15,000-square-foot modern facility whose entrance door is topped by a giant three-blade Case Canoe-style pocketknife, while the peak of the museum is adorned with a 40-foot-tall flickering Zippo lighter. Fresh off its 20th anniversary in 2017, the museum houses interactive exhibits and displays that detail the founding and manufacturing histories of both companies.

Case Knives

More than 100 years ago in a small, unassuming town in the northwestern corner of Pennsylvania, knife salesman John Russell Case opened the W.R. Case and Sons Cutlery Co.

When John Russell Case started his company, he was not a man unfamiliar with the craft of fine knife making; in fact he came from an entire

family of skilled knife makers. In the late 1800s his father, William Russell (W.R.) Case and his three uncles made and sold knives on the wagon trails of rural western New York just over the Pennsylvania line. In the late 1800s

W.R. Case and his brothers joined forces with local businessman John Champlin to form the Cattaraugus Cutlery Co.

Cattaraugus knives were soon known for their use of high-quality materials and fine craftsmanship. Their reputation got a national boost when the adventurous Admiral Richard E. Byrd chose Cattaraugus knives to take with him on his historic trip exploring the South Pole.

By 1900 the Case brothers had split from the Cattaraugus Cutlery Co. to make knives under the company name of Case Brothers Cutlery Co. This



Zippo/Case Museum features a giant three-blade pocket knife and a 40-foot-tall flickering neon Zippo lighter.

family business was originally based out of the sleepy town of Little Valley, New York. The next historic step for the company came in 1905, when John Russell Case relocated the family business just a few miles away to its current location in Bradford, Pennsylvania. Since that time, Case knives have become an iconic American staple carried by campers and collected by enthusiasts worldwide.

Case knives are best known for the two-step heating process used in their manufacture, and noted on each knife symbolically as XX. Each X in the trademark symbol signifies a distinct proprietary heat treatment of the blade, which imparts strength and durability to the knife.

The internal mechanisms and blades of the knives are made from steel, silver and brass. Each knife also bears a stamp on the tang of the master blade. The tang of any knife is the piece that connects the blade to the handle. A Case tang stamp allows collectors to determine the era in which each knife was crafted. Different groups of knife manufacturing years have differences in script, wording and shape. For example, a Case knife from the 1920s will likely have an artistic sweeping "C" that begins the name Case, while a 1970s Case knife has a tang stamp that says CASE in plain caps script followed by the trademark XX and U.S.A. While the design of Case tang stamps has varied widely, ask one of the registered 18,000 collector's club members and they will tell you that the knives' quality has remained reassuringly consistent. Fans of the knives also proclaim that they are as beautiful as they are durable. Some of the most popular exterior wood options are African ebony, curly maple and rosewood. Exteriors hailing from the sea include abalone and mother of pearl. The horn exteriors come from the naturally shed antlers of deer and the bone versions are sourced from Brazilian Zebu cattle. The overall shapes of the knives and their blades are creatively divided into families with unique monikers that include Baby Butterbean, Sod Buster, Cheetah,



Visitors to the Zippo/Case Museum can learn the manufacturing histories of both the Case and Zippo companies through a variety of interactive and static displays.



Photos: A.M. Murphy

Muskrat, Hobo and Sway Back Jack. In 2014 Case celebrated 125 years of handcrafted manufacturing.

Zippo Lighters

In the early 1930s, while Case knives were being carefully crafted just a handful of miles away, businessman and entrepreneur George Blaisdell was looking for his next big idea. While talking on the porch of the Bradford Country Club, Blaisdell took note of a friend's seemingly wind-proof Austrian lighter. Blaisdell recognized the advantage of the lighter's chimney-style design in keeping the flame lit, but was otherwise unimpressed with the lighter's clunky appearance, weak construction and requirement for the use of both hands to operate it. While it didn't necessarily strike his eye as particularly pretty, its functional elements inspired him to start imagining a whole new product.

The entrepreneur set to work creating a lighter of better design and stronger material. His altered design included a small rectangular case, a hinged flip-top that allowed for one-handed operation, and the flame protecting chimney that had first caught his eye. Beyond good design, Blaisdell would guarantee his lighter for life with in-house repairs and the trademarked slogan "It works or we fix it free." The name Zippo was devised as a clever modification of the word zipper. In the depths of the Great Depression, the Zippo lighter company took flight.

Only a few years into production, the events of World War II would

cement the company's place in American history. During the war years, commercial production of lighters was halted and all efforts went into manufacturing lighters for American servicemen.

Millions of soldiers, sailors and Marines took their Zippo lighter onto the ships and battlefields of Europe and Asia knowing they could count on the product's wind-proof nature to light their cigarettes and campfires. Zippo lighters became nearly inseparable from the image of the embattled American soldier. Zippos were used to warm rations, light explosives and signal other servicemen. One of the most famous and fascinating lighters in Zippo's own historic collection is a model that was hand engraved by American soldier Walter Nadler on his way to the D-Day invasion of Normandy. The serviceman lost his lighter in battle on the sandy beaches of France, only to have it mysteriously appear in the Bradford manufacturing facility 50 years later. The lighter is now displayed proudly as a tribute to the history of the lighter and the servicemen who carried them.



The Case Hobo knife can be a camper's best friend.

Photo: courtesy Case

Following the war, Zippo returned to commercial manufacturing and became a popular advertising item for companies throughout the 1950s and 1960s. The lighter was promoted across the country by a 1947 Chrysler Saratoga ingeniously designed to include the shape of two Zippo lighters with neon flames. The traveling car made appearances all over the country and then disappeared following some mechanical issues.

The 1970s and '80s saw increasing world-wide sales and notoriety. Zippo lighters and their familiar "click" sound began appearing in greater numbers of Hollywood films. From *Die Hard* to the *X Files*, the *Addams Family* to *Backdraft*, the lighter has performed as an important part in hundreds of movie story lines. In 1996 a second 1947 Chrysler Saratoga adorned with two giant-sized Zippo lighters reprised the original car's role, and can still be seen appearing at various public events around the country.

Today the lighter continues to be valued for its quality manufacturing, functional superiority and its lifetime repair promise. Owners tend to become emotionally attached to their personal lighter, and collectors worldwide have created an explosive demand for various special editions.

Lighters now bear not only traditional designs and company advertising, but everything from Elvis to Area 51 to butterflies to dragons. From intricate artwork, to an adorable panda face, to some seriously macabre skulls, there seems to be a style for just about everyone's tastes or interests. No wonder that the collecting of Zippo lighters has become both a hobby and an avocation for folks all around the world. Lighters can now also be customized with personal photos and engraving.

Zippo has begun moving beyond the classic wind-proof lighter and is manufacturing other handy outdoor products including a line of hand warmers, several variations of fire starters, grilling tools and a multiuse tool that functions, among other things, as an axe, saw and mallet.

Carrying on the Tradition

Naturally, the museum houses a very tempting gift shop. Selecting a favorite is an almost impossible task. The museum also provides a chance to watch technicians at work in the famous Zippo Repair Clinic, where the tradition of repairing lighters (free of charge) continues today. Among the many displays is a wall-size American flag constructed from 3,400 red, white

and blue Zippo lighters.

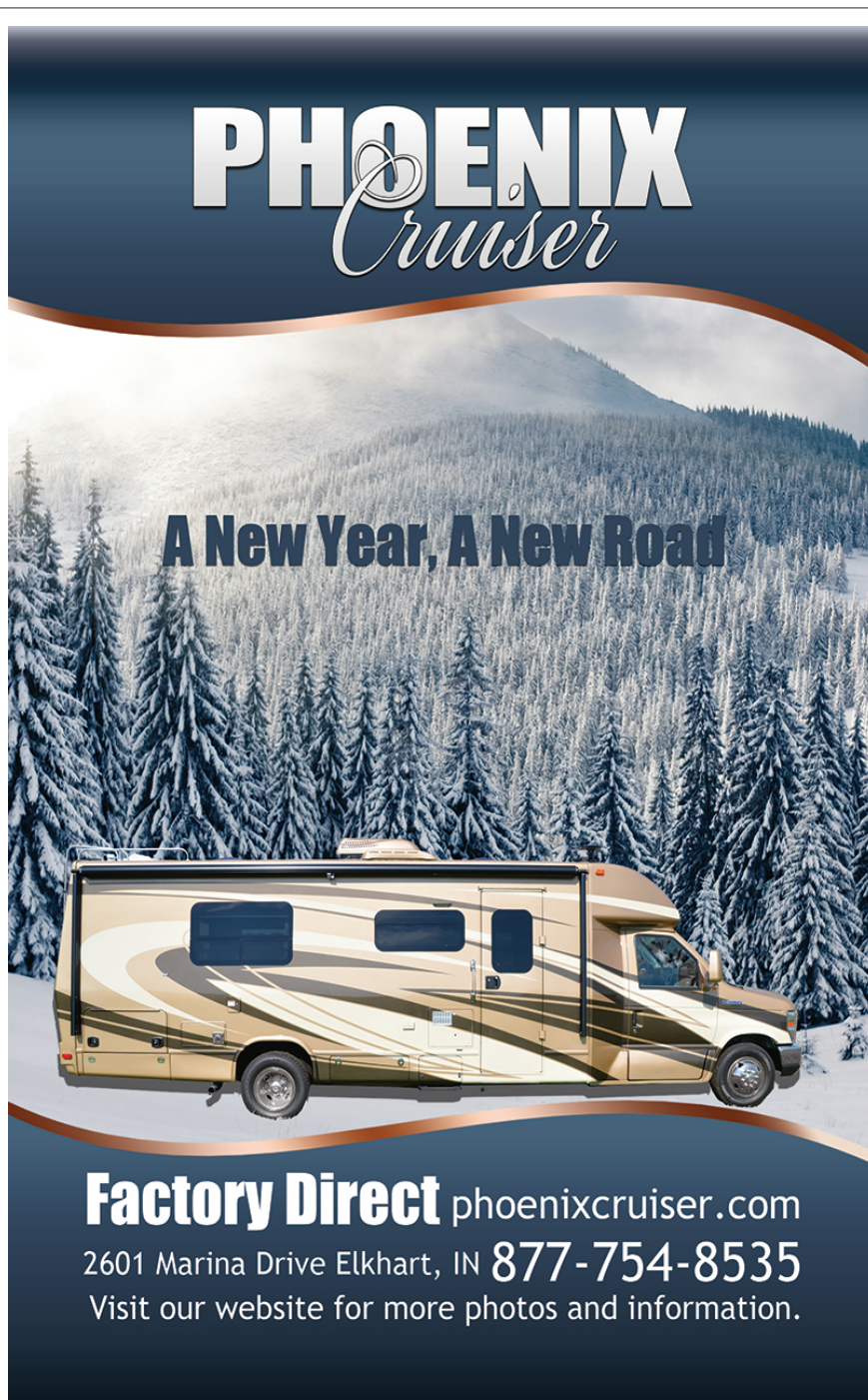
The museum is open Monday-Saturday, 9 a.m.-5 p.m. and Sunday from 11 a.m.-4 p.m. Both admission and parking are free. **M**

For More Information

Zippo/Case Museum

888-442-1932,

www.zippo.com/pages/zippo-case-museums



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THE ENVELOPE

2017 MOTORHOME READERS' CHOICE AWARD WINNERS



It's January, which not only means the beginning of a new year, but it's also time to reveal the winners of our annual Readers' Choice Awards. Every year, we hand the reins over to you, dear readers, to decide the best of the best from among the motorhome industry's top players, including vehicles, products, services and even destinations. And, as in years past, you didn't disappoint, with votes totaling in the thousands among the various categories. If you don't see your favorite company in the ranks (or believe it should have rated higher), be sure to cast your votes later this year. Until then, the winners are:

CLASS A MOTORHOME



● GOLD: Tiffin Motorhomes

Tiffin Motorhomes is proud to be one of the few family-owned manufacturers in the industry. And that's not just lip service: From general manager Tim Tiffin to head of research and development Van Tiffin to Lex, Leigh and Trent Tiffin, the Tiffin family continues its hands-on approach. And that, of course, includes founder Bob Tiffin, a member of the RV Industry Association's Hall of Fame, who is still the first one at the Red Bay, Alabama, plant every morning. Tiffin's Class A products include the Allegro, Allegro Breeze, Allegro Red, Phaeton, Allegro Bus and Zephyr. Tiffin Motorhomes | 205-487-4710, www.tiffinmotorhomes.com

- SILVER: Newmar Corp. 800-731-8300, www.newmarcorp.com
- BRONZE: Winnebago Industries Inc. 641-585-3535, www.winnebagoind.com

CLASS B MOTORHOME



● GOLD: Roadtrek

Roadtrek has been among the best-selling Class B motorhomes for more than 25 years. The brand was acquired by Erwin Hymer Group in 2016, leading to the creation of the Erwin Hymer Group North America (EHGNA). Today, Roadtrek offers a full line of Class B motorhomes built on Mercedes-Benz, Chevrolet or Ram ProMaster chassis. Roadtrek is one of EHGNA's four brands and offers 11 models offering innovative products including the EcoTrek Lithium power module system and VoltStart auto-start system. Roadtrek | 888-ROADTREK, www.roadtrek.com

- SILVER: Winnebago Industries Inc. 641-585-3535, www.winnebagoind.com
- BRONZE: Pleasure-Way 800-364-0189, www.pleasureway.com

CLASS C MOTORHOME



● GOLD: Winnebago Industries Inc.

Winnebago offers a number of popular Class C motorhomes including the View, Navion, Aspect, Cambria, Trend, Fuse, Minnie Winnie and Spirit. The new Minnie Winnie/Spirit 22M includes a U-shaped dinette that converts to a comfortable bed. The floorplan also features a private rear bedroom and cabover bunk for added sleeping flexibility, plus a large rear trunk for gear. The new View 24D expands living space with the touch of a button with a large slide and powered Murphy+ Bed. A full galley makes meal prep a pleasure, while swivel cab seats provide added seating options in the lounge and dining area. Winnebago Industries Inc. | 641-585-3535, www.winnebagoind.com

- SILVER: Forest River Inc. www.forestriverinc.com
- BRONZE: Thor Motor Coach 800-860-5658, www.thormotorcoach.com

P E , P L E A S E ...

DINGHY AUXILIARY BRAKING SYSTEM



● GOLD: BrakeBuddy

For more than 20 years, BrakeBuddy has been a leader

in portable braking. New BrakeBuddy Classic II and Select II units come equipped with push-button auto-start. A low-profile design makes them easy to carry, while the quick-connect clevis allows for easy attachment to the brake pedal. An easy-pull power cord with built-in break-away function creates a simple, one-plug connection. A 15-amp towed battery charger is included with both units. BrakeBuddy II units are backed by a new five-year warranty, with a 30-day money-back guarantee. BrakeBuddy, Hopkins Manufacturing Corp. 800-470-2287, www.brakebuddy.com

● SILVER: SMI Manufacturing
800-893-3763, www.smibrake.com

● BRONZE: Roadmaster Inc.
800-669-9690, www.roadmasterinc.com

DINGHY VEHICLE



● GOLD: Jeep Wrangler

With 13 models and an MSRP starting south of \$24,000, Jeep's Wrangler has once again captured the award for favorite dinghy vehicle. The 3.6-liter V-6 and six-speed manual transmission are standard, while on-the-fly part-time 4WD is available on some models. Options packages include an impressive array of add-ons like chrome, LED lighting, entertainment upgrades and leather seats, all

sure to make the Wrangler your own. Jeep | www.jeep.com

● SILVER: Honda CR-V

<https://automobiles.honda.com/cr-v>

● BRONZE: Jeep Cherokee | www.jeep.com

FUEL ADDITIVE



● GOLD: Lucas Oil Products

Available at auto-parts stores nationwide, Lucas Oil offers motor-sports products designed to

improve the performance of any vehicle, from motorhomes to dinghies and even motorcycles. The company's popular fuel additives include conditioners, boosters and stabilizers, but Lucas also offers motor oils, cleaners, detailing kits and greases.

Lucas Oil Products | 800-342-2512, <https://lucasoil.com>

● SILVER: Sea Foam Sales Co.
952-938-4811, www.seafoamsales.com

● BRONZE: Gold Eagle Sta-Bil | 800-367-3245, www.goldeagle.com/brands/sta-bil

FUEL STATION



● GOLD: Pilot Flying J

Every motorhome driver on every road trip needs a reliable place to rest for a spell, to fuel up and check the air in the tires. For more than 60 years, Pilot Flying J has been that oasis for drivers, and with more than 750 locations in North America, hopes to continue to do

so for many years to come. In addition to designated fuel lanes, overnight parking, LP-gas and dump stations, visitors can refuel their own batteries with snacks, entrees and beverages for all. Customers also enjoy on-site Wi-Fi and a membership rewards program. Pilot Flying J | 877-866-7378, www.pilotflyingj.com

● SILVER: Costco | 800-774-2678, www.costco.com

● BRONZE: Love's Travel Stops
800-655-6837, www.loves.com

HOLDING-TANK CHEMICALS



● GOLD: Thetford

Holding-tank chemicals are often unsung heroes; we never notice them when they're doing their

job. This year, Thetford's chemicals, including Aqua-Kem (fresh off its 50th anniversary in 2017) and Eco-Smart, have once again been voted to the head of the class. Thetford's chemicals are 100 percent biodegradable and are designed to work in all weather conditions to minimize odors, liquefy waste and break down tissue. Available in a variety of scents and forms (toss-in, granular and liquid).

Thetford | 800-543-1219, www.thetford.com

● SILVER: Walex | 800-338-3155, www.walex.com

● BRONZE: Happy Camper (SouthWest Distributors) | 928-478-4537, www.1-happycamper.com

MOTORHOME AWNING



● GOLD: Dometic Corp.

Dometic offers a wide range of

awnings and accessories, including wall-mounted awnings, roof-mounted awnings, slideout-topper awnings, awnings for doors and awnings for windows. The awnings are available in both manual and remote controlled models, with and without wind sensors. Made from high-quality fabric, Dometic awnings are easy to install, use and maintain, according to the company. Dometic Corp. | 800-366-3842, www.dometic.com

- SILVER: Carefree of Colorado www.carefreeofcolorado.com
- BRONZE: Girard Systems 800-382-8442, www.girardrv.com

MOTORHOME CHASSIS



● **GOLD: Freightliner Custom Chassis**
Freightliner chassis can be found on a number of popular motorhome brands (those from REV, Tiffin, Thor and Newmar, to name a few) and combine state-of-the-art craftsmanship and engineering with more than 450 branded service centers in North America to produce this year's favorite motorhome chassis. Offerings include the XC, SL and S2RV platforms. Freightliner Custom Chassis 864-487-1700, www.fccrv.com

- SILVER: Ford Motor Co. | www.ford.com
- BRONZE: Spartan Chassis Inc. 517-543-6400, www.spartanchassis.com

PERFORMANCE-ENHANCING PRODUCT



● **GOLD: 5 Star Tuning**
5 Star Tuning is a family-operated business in Florence, South Carolina,

specializing in custom tuning for motorhome and towable applications. Users can utilize a 5 Star tuner to help unlock their vehicle's potential with additional torque, horsepower, efficiency and refined shifting, even while driving through mountainous terrain, according to the company. 5 Star Tuning | 843-536-1244, www.5startuning.com

- SILVER: Banks Power | 800-601-8072, <http://bankspower.com>
- BRONZE: BD Diesel Performance | 800-887-5030, www.dieselperformance.com
- TIE
- BRONZE: Bully Dog | 940-783-9914, <https://bullydog.com>

RV BATTERY



● **GOLD: Interstate Batteries**
Interstate has been providing automotive power

since 1952. From starting batteries to house batteries, Interstate is a leading supplier of motorhome power. The company's dual-purpose RV batteries feature an expected service life twice that of conventional alloy AGM batteries, and they are backed by a three-year free replacement warranty. Interstate Batteries | 866-842-5368, www.interstatebatteries.com

- SILVER: Trojan Battery Co. 800-423-6569, www.trojanbattery.com
- BRONZE: Lifeline Batteries Inc. | 909-599-7816, <http://lifelinebatteries.com>

RV CAMPGROUND/RESORT



● **GOLD: Pala Casino RV Resort**
With a top Good Sam rating of 10/10*/10, Pala's RV resort has quickly

become a premier destination in Southern California. The 10-acre RV resort is just steps away from Pala Casino Spa Resort, and features 100 full-hookup sites with grass lawns and picnic tables. The facility is patrolled around the clock, and provides a free shuttle service to the casino. Visitors enjoy free Wi-Fi, cable TV, clean restrooms and showers, a fenced dog park, barbecue areas and a heated swimming pool. Table tennis and horseshoes are also available. Pala Casino RV Resort | 844-472-5278, www.palacasino.com

- SILVER: Pechanga RV Resort | 888-732-4264, <https://www.pechanga.com>
- BRONZE: The Campsites at Disney's Fort Wilderness Resort | 407-939-5277, <https://disneyworld.disney.go.com>

RV CASINO/RESORT



● **GOLD: Pala Casino Spa Resort**
Pala Casino in San Diego is a world-class gaming facility offering 2,000 cutting-edge slot and video machines, 80 table games, a 15-table poker room, 10 restaurants, two lounges with live entertainment and a 2,000-seat event center. The 10,000-square-foot full-service spa and salon features 14 treatment rooms, while the state-of-the-art fitness center and swimming pool with 12 private poolside cabanas and dual-temperature outdoor whirlpool are sure to keep your spirits up after a long day at the tables. Pala Casino Spa Resort | 844-472-5278, www.palacasino.com

- SILVER: Pechanga Resort Casino | 888-732-4264, <https://www.pechanga.com>
- BRONZE: Seven Feathers RV Resort 541-839-3599, www.sevenfeathersrvresort.com



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RV CLEANING PRODUCT



● **GOLD: Meguiar's**
 Keeping your motorhome looking good is not only a matter of pride, but it also goes a long way toward prolonging its life. Meguiar's has long been a popular option for interior

and exterior care and maintenance, from the tires to the side walls to the upholstery inside. Products designed specifically for the RV market help retain its value when it comes time to sell or trade up.

Meguiar's | 800-347-5700, www.meguiars.com

● **SILVER: Dometic Corp.** | 800-366-3842, www.dometic.com

● **BRONZE: Aero Cosmetics Wash Wax ALL** | 800-927-4929, www.washwax.com

RV COVER



● **GOLD: ADCO**

For more than 60 years, ADCO has remained the top supplier of protective products in the RV industry. ADCO offers a variety of covers, all of which can significantly reduce premature aging of the coach and help maintain resale value. The popular Designer Series DuPont Tyvek Plus Wind RV covers utilize a patent-pending Slip-Seam Strapping System that cinches tight for a snug fit while minimizing wind impact, and feature a triple-layer Tyvek top panel and triple-layer designer polypropylene sides.

ADCO, a division of Covercraft Industries
 800-541-2326, www.adcoprod.com

● **SILVER: Classic Accessories** | 800-854-2315, <https://classicaccessories.com>

● **BRONZE: Camco** | 800-334-2004, www.camco.net

RV ENGINE OIL



● **GOLD: Shell Rotella**

Engine oil is literally the life's blood of your motorhome's engine, so it's important to select a high-quality blend designed to keep things protected. Shell Rotella products feature triple protection to help control wear, deposits and oil breakdown, leading to improved emission control and better durability.

Shell Rotella | <http://rotella.shell.com>

● **SILVER: Mobil 1** | www.mobil1.com

● **BRONZE: AMSOIL** | 800-956-5695, www.amsoil.com

RV GENERATOR



● **GOLD: Cummins (Onan)**

Cummins has been providing quiet, reliable and innovative RV power for more than 80 years. The company offers a variety of diesel, gasoline, and LP-gas generators and accessories, many including technological advances such as remote-start controls and installation-friendly automatic start systems. Cummins generators and accessories are backed by a worldwide service network dedicated to enhancing the RV lifestyle.

Cummins (Onan) | 800-286-6467, <https://cumminsengines.com/motorhome>

● **SILVER: Honda Power Equipment**
 770-497-6400, <https://powerequipment.honda.com>

● **BRONZE: Generac** | 888-436-3722, www.generac.com
 TIE

● **BRONZE: Yamaha Power Products**
 800-962-7926, www.yamahamotorsports.com/power-product

RV REFRIGERATOR



● **GOLD: Dometic Corp.**

Dometic refrigerators come with features buyers cannot not find anywhere else, including automatic locking systems, versatile racking and adjustable shelf

guards. Dometic offers various sizes and styles of refrigerators that are reliable, efficient and stylish. All models are adaptable and have been designed to be user-friendly.

Dometic Corp. | 800-366-3842, www.dometic.com

● **SILVER: Norcold, a division of Thetford Corp.** | 800-543-1219, www.thetford.com

● **BRONZE: Whirlpool Corp.** | 866-698-2538, www.whirlpool.com

RV RETAILER



● **GOLD: Camping World**

Camping World is your one-stop shopping destination for everything an RVer needs, from accessories to appliances to a new motorhome. With more than 130 supercenters nationwide, plus an extensive online store, Camping World is sure to provide you with your motorhome needs. On-site RV repair and maintenance facilities offer skilled technicians trained in the latest RV service technologies.

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

● **SILVER: Local dealer**

● **BRONZE: Wal-Mart** | 800-925-6278, www.walmart.com



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RV TIRES



GOLD: Michelin Tires

The Michelin X Line Energy Z tire lineup offers improved fuel-efficient, all-position service. The tires feature a new tread compound which generates a 7 percent reduction in rolling resistance versus the Michelin XZA2 Energy 315/80R22.5 tire, according to the company. The full-width elastic protector ply helps protect against penetrations, impacts, breaks and shock for maximum casing durability.

Michelin | www.michelin.com

SILVER: Goodyear | www.goodyear.com

BRONZE: Bridgestone | 844-265-0320, www.bridgestonetire.com

RV TOILET



GOLD: Dometic Corp.

Leaving the comforts of home behind doesn't mean you have to be uncomfortable. Dometic's selection of toilets — including macerator, vacuum and portable units — have been specially designed for all mobile living bathroom spaces, from confined to refined. Dometic offers portable toilets as well as porcelain, foot-flush toilets that feel more residential for added comfort.

Dometic Corp. | 800-366-3842, www.dometic.com

SILVER: Thetford | 800-543-1219, www.thetford.com

BRONZE: Nature's Head Composting Toilet | 251-295-3043, <https://natureshead.net>

SATELLITE HARDWARE



GOLD: Winegard

You don't need to completely unplug when you're getting away from it all. Many RVers enjoy catching the big game, or the local news, from the comfort of their campsite. Winegard has designed more than 1,000 antenna models since its inception more than 60 years ago. From portable to permanent, Winegard offers satellite hardware to provide a clear picture and pure audio.

Winegard | 800-288-8094, www.winegard.com

SILVER: KING | 952-922-6889, www.kingconnect.com

BRONZE: DISH Tailgater (KING) 952-922-6889, www.kingconnect.com

SATELLITE PROVIDER



GOLD: DISH Network

DISH Network offers hundreds of channels in high-definition, perfect for turning your motorhome into a mobile home theater. The DISH Outdoor package is offered as a standalone, pay-as-you-go subscription, or as an add-on to your residential service. The standalone option results in more than 50 channels and advance, month-to-month billing in 30-day increments, which is ideal for the RV lifestyle.

DISH Network | 844-472-0872, www.dish.com

SILVER: DirecTV | 888-777-2454, www.directv.com

BRONZE: Shaw Direct | 888-554-7827, www.shawdirect.ca

SIT-DOWN RESTAURANT



GOLD: Cracker Barrel

If you're in search of a home-cooked meal, Cracker Barrel offers the next best thing: downhome dishes served in a friendly atmosphere. But Cracker Barrel is known for much more than its delicious biscuits and gravy, meatloaf or chicken-fried steak; the restaurant's Old Country Stores sell souvenirs, treats, apparel and even furniture, all of which add up to a unique dining and shopping experience at more than 600 stores in 40 states across the U.S.

Cracker Barrel | 800-333-9566, www.crackerbarrel.com

SILVER: Applebee's | 888-592-7753, <http://applebees.com>

TIE
SILVER: Denny's | 800-733-6697, www.dennys.com

BRONZE: Red Robin | 877-733-6543, www.redrobin.com

BEST STATE IN WHICH TO RV



Photo: Courtesy VISIT FLORIDA

GOLD: Florida

The Sunshine State has once again received top honors for RV destination, and it's little wonder why. Florida combines white-sand beaches, rich culture and history, unique wildlife, and world-famous theme parks and attractions to create a one-of-a-kind location. The tropical weather is a major draw year-round, and makes Florida a favorite among snowbirding RVers as well.

Florida | 888-735-2872,
www.visitflorida.com

- SILVER: California | 877-225-4367,
www.visitcalifornia.com
- BRONZE: Oregon | 800-547-7842,
www.traveloregon.com

TIRE-PRESSURE MONITORING SYSTEM (TPMS)



- **GOLD: TireMinder, Minder Research**

This year's Gold finish makes it six RCA gold medals in a row for the TireMinder. The popular TPMS is offered in either a smart-device based unit (Smart TPMS) or stand-alone system (TM-77). The systems come with lightweight transmitters that check tire conditions every six seconds. TireMinder also offers an annual Battery Replacement Program for transmitter maintenance, allowing owners to request batteries and O-rings from the company's website free of charge.

TireMinder, Minder Research | 772-463-6522, www.minderresearch.com

- SILVER: Hawkshead Systems Inc. 888-321-8767, www.tpms.ca
- BRONZE: EEZ RV Products 928-317-8888, www.eezrvproducts.com

TOW BAR



- **GOLD: Blue Ox**

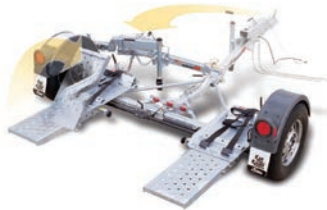
Blue Ox is once again the gold-winning choice for dinghy-towing

hardware and accessories. The Avail tow bar is 2 inches longer than standard tow bars, can accommodate wide or narrow towed vehicles, allows for safe maneuvers around objects like fuel-station pumps and keeps the dinghy vehicle safely away from the motorhome in the event of a tight turn. Blue Ox designed the Avail's low-profile, non-binding latch to release easily under any conditions. In addition to the Avail, Blue Ox offers a complete line of motorhome-mount tow bars to fit a variety of needs. Blue Ox is also excited to announce that a new tow bar will be joining its lineup early this year.

Blue Ox | 800-228-9289, www.blueox.com

- SILVER: Roadmaster Inc. 800-669-9690, <http://roadmasterinc.com/index.php>
- BRONZE: Demco | 800-543-3626, www.demco-products.com

TOW DOLLY



- **GOLD: Demco**

Founded in 1964, Dethmers Manufacturing Co. (Demco) began making the popular Kar Kaddy line of tow dollies in 1981. The current, most popular model is the Demco Kar Kaddy 460SS, which features a steerable axle allowing for tighter turns, chrome wheels and radial tires, folding ramps and a folding tongue to help store it in tight places. Hydraulic disc brakes help with controlled, safe stopping, and the galvanized frame leads to years of corrosion-free use.

Dethmers Manufacturing Co.
800-543-3626, www.demco-products.com

- SILVER: Master Tow | 800-522-2190, www.mastertow.com
- BRONZE: Acme Tow Dolly Co. 336-996-4396, www.cartowdolly.com

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Map#	Event Name	Dates**	Venue
01	Colorado RV Adventure Travel Show	1/4/18 - 1/6/18	Colorado Convention Center
02	Wisconsin RV Show	1/5/18 - 1/7/18	Wisconsin Center District
03	Knoxville RV Show	1/5/18 - 1/7/18	Sevierville Convention Center
04	Greater Atlanta RV Show	1/5/18 - 1/7/18	Georgia Int'l Convention Center
05	South Carolina RV & Camping Show - Greenville	1/5/18 - 1/7/18	TD Convention Center
06	Mid America RV Show	1/11/18 - 1/14/18	Kansas City Convention Center - Bartle Hall
07	Washington Camping RV Expo	1/12/18 - 1/14/18	Dulles Expo Center
08	Greater Chicago RV Show	1/12/18 - 1/14/18	Renaissance Schaumburg Convention Center
09	New Jersey RV & Camping Show - Edison	1/19/18 - 1/21/18	New Jersey Convention & Exposition Center
10	Lexington RV Show	1/19/18 - 1/21/18	Kentucky Horse Park
11	Cincinnati - Dayton RV Show	1/25/18 - 1/28/18	Dayton Convention Center
12	Greater Phoenix RV Show	1/26/18 - 1/28/18	Phoenix Convention Center
13	Minneapolis/St. Paul RV, Vacation & Camping Show	2/9/18 - 2/11/18	Minneapolis Convention Center

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Map#	Event Name	Dates**	Venue
14	Richmond Camping RV Expo	2/9/18 - 2/11/18	Richmond International Raceway Complex
15	Chattanooga RV Show	2/16/18 - 2/18/18	Chattanooga Convention Center
16	Atlantic City RV & Camping Show	2/16/18 - 2/18/18	Atlantic City Convention Center
17	Gulf Coast RV Show - Mobile	2/16/18 - 2/18/18	Mobile Convention Center
18	Harrisburg RV & Camping Show - Pennsylvania	2/22/18 - 2/25/18	PA Farm Show Complex & Event Center
19	Columbus RV Show	2/23/18 - 2/25/18	Greater Columbus Convention Center
20	Colorado RV, Sports & Travel Show	3/1/18 - 3/4/18	National Western Complex
21	Central Illinois RV Show - Peoria	3/2/18 - 3/4/18	Peoria Civic Center
22	Rhode Island RV & Camping Show	3/2/18 - 3/4/18	Rhode Island Convention Center
23	Virginia RV Show - Hampton	3/9/18 - 3/11/18	Hampton Roads Convention Center
24	Springfield RV & Camping Show	3/23/18 - 3/25/18	BOS Convention Center
25	Greater Tucson RV Show	3/23/18 - 3/25/18	Tucson Convention Center
26	Good Sam Indy RV Super Show	4/12/18 - 4/15/18	Indianapolis Motor Speedway

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New to the Class

Longtime Class A builder Tiffin Motorhomes enters the Mercedes-Benz Sprinter-based Class C segment with the Wayfarer, a luxury line with strong company DNA **By Kevin Livingston**

Within an extremely short time period, the Class C motorhome has evolved into a number of sub segments that have steadily grown in a market that's getting a lot of attention these days. At one time the Class C culture was popularized by families looking for versatile sleeping arrangements and a package that was easy to maneuver and value-priced. But the sea of Class C's has matured into offerings from small to big and Spartan to luxurious; vastly different, yet officially still the same class of motorhomes.

To be called a "Class C," a motorhome must be built on a cutaway van chassis and that can result in the classic cabover model with few amenities or a Super C with diesel-powered, executive-class, commercial underpinnings that rival luxury Class A coaches. But the most recent (and growing in popularity) iteration of Class C is the type built on the Euro-styled van chassis spearheaded by the Mercedes-Benz Sprinter. These newer, sleeker type Class C's — which now include chassis entries from Ram and Ford — are heavily inspired by the styling and space-saving motorhome design/size found overseas. Livability and road performance rival just about any motorized RV, and once you throw in automobile-like fuel economy potential, it's no wonder this field of motorhomes is growing so rapidly.

Seeing these more compact Class C motorhomes flying off dealers' lots was undoubtedly the key factor for the people of Tiffin Motorhomes in deciding to try their hand at creating a smaller luxury Class C, founded on the much-acclaimed Mercedes Sprinter chassis. The Wayfarer is Tiffin's entry into this market and the company is currently offering three floorplans. To see just how well Tiffin transitioned into the Class C arena, we tested a preproduction model 24 TW.

Starting life on the Mercedes Sprinter foundation was no accident. The Sprinter platform has been proven for its great design, comfort, drivability and excellent fuel efficiency in Europe and the U.S., as well as in the automotive commercial markets. Much of the success can be attributed to the small but sporty 3.0-liter, six-cylinder turbodiesel engine boasting a mere 188 hp but enough torque at 325 lb-ft to propel the motorhome aggressively down the road. Tied to a pleasantly shifting five-speed automatic transmission, the motorhome is certainly a product of good power-to-weight balance. What this translates to in real-world driving terms is a fully equipped luxury motorhome that easily averaged more than 17 mpg with no problems climbing hills or keeping up with traffic on all road types.

While the cockpit is not fancy, it is ergonomic and the seats are supportive, but not super soft. Long stints in the

ABOVE: Wayfarer's handsome full-body paint and graphics blend nicely with the Mercedes Sprinter-based exterior profile.

driver's seat can be accomplished with little complaint, which can be partially attributed to the SumoSprings Ride Assist System. These springs use micro-cellular urethane technology, which absorb some of the shock and help support the suspension for improved handling and ride comfort. Since these springs have no moving parts to speak of, there is no maintenance, and longevity will usually parallel the chassis service life. Driving the Wayfarer took no more effort than that of a large SUV and simply felt like a solid motorhome with a hidden sports-car personality. The big benefit here, and probably a big reason for the Sprinter-based motorhome popularity, is the lack of driving intimidation for veterans and newcomers alike. Adding to the short acclimation period is a little extra safety insurance in the way of Lane Keeping Assist, Collision Prevention Assist, the High Beam Assist and a set of heated electric mirrors to complete that Mercedes equipment list.

In keeping with the Tiffin reputation for handsome graphics and the super shiny Obsidian full-body paint job, the exterior of the Wayfarer features swept-back smooth and subtle curvy lines that follow the body shape and a classy color scheme, consisting of dark gray, black and white hues. Blended into the front, top portion of the body is a uniquely contoured outcropping that adds more interior space and enhances the exterior styling. On the outside, you'll quickly notice hints of everything you want and nothing you don't in the way of features and accessories. Some of these options are concealed behind a number of slam-latch equipped compartments housing items like an RV QD 3200 Cummins Onan diesel generator,



Above, from left: The cozy two-person sofa tucked into the slideout offers additional sleeping accommodations for guests. For its compact size, the kitchen is very workable. The solid-surface countertop adds a touch of class, while the sink and appliances are well-placed in the curvy structure.

exterior entertainment system, easy-to-manage and use plumbing/filtration center and just enough storage space to match the motorhome's smaller stature. Blissfully blended into the rolled and contoured upper edges are the 14-foot Carefree awning and the convenient back-up camera.

Upon entry there's an immediate inviting and warm feeling enhanced by the impressive assortment of European elegance that focuses on functional design and pleasant décor gracing the abundance of curved cabinetry throughout the span of the 25-foot, 7-inch floorplan. Up front and positioned right behind the cockpit seats, the vast majority of the compact living area is dependent on the slideout fitted with a plush and lush 52-inch tri-fold Ultraleather couch. The khaki-like light-beige Ultraleather-appointed living room takes full advantage of the cockpit's driver and passenger swivel chairs, for expanding the seating

surfaces for more than two people when entertaining.

It's evident, by way of furniture and luxury living components, that the 24 TW and the rest of the Wayfarer line was directed at couples seeking extended weekend adventures. The only extra bed is tucked away into the smaller-than-average sofa because the cabover space is devoted to an entertainment system complete with an appropriately appointed, significantly sized LG flat-screen TV and coordinated Jensen stereo system with all the app, Bluetooth and connectivity needed. And once again, targeting couples, the entertainment center is best enjoyed on the two seats of the very comfy sofa bed, as there are no seats for guests in view of the TV.

The widely splayed, artistically laid out and flowing Amber Glazed curvaceous cabinetry stands out dramatically, showing not only a quality fit and finish, but great looks and plentiful space for provisions. Storage space



From far left: The exterior TV, concealed behind a flush-mounted door, allows easy viewing from the patio. A 3.2-kW diesel-fired generator provides power on the road or in locations where hookups are not available.



WHAT'S HOT 👍

Attractive full-body paint and graphics, contoured front cap for additional interior headroom, abundance of cabinetry, suspension upgrade, chassis safety features

WHAT'S NOT 🐼

Small bathroom facilities, limited weight capacity, hardware for positioning twin beds



Above, from left: The split-bathroom design is on the snug side, but works with some acclimation. The toilet and sink are in a streetside room, while the shower is located in one on the curb side. The twin beds, surrounded by copious cabinets, can be pushed together when desired.

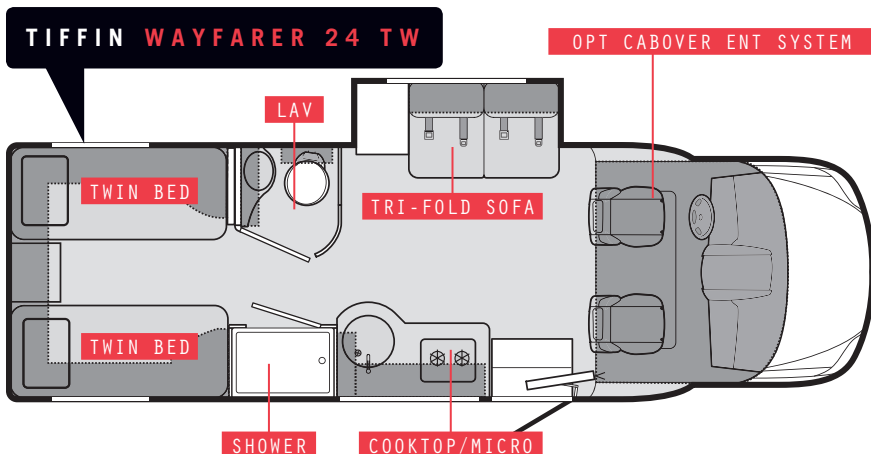
is well thought out and placed exactly how and where you'd want it. Take, for example, the kitchen cabinets, both overhead and low lying, which create far more room and usable cooking space than imagined. Luxury continues with the use of a solid-surface kitchen countertop, which is home to the flush-mounted two-burner stove and the nicely sized — and actually usable — deep, round sink, both stainless-steel. Topping off the sink, literally, are the matching solid-surface sink covers and tall stainless sprayer faucet. And residing just below the counter is a clean-looking stainless convection microwave unit to handle any baking or heating require-

ments. This kitchen counterspace, albeit technically small, is quite usable for nearly any culinary task and super simple to use, thanks in part to the tons of correctly placed and sized aforementioned cabinets and drawers, which include a handy little pull-out pantry at arm's reach. Directly across from the business end of the kitchen is a very unique, but efficient (and possibly ideal for the motorhome this size) 5-cubic-foot three-way refrigerator nestled neatly next to the couch and consuming the remaining bits of the slideout.

En route to the master bedroom is a passage which can best be described as a clean corridor leading to the

bathroom area. The split-bathroom design might be on the small side for some occupants, since all water features are snugly spaced. There is just enough room to pull off the necessary cleaning and priming, but if you're a little long legged, like me, it's going take some preplanning to sit on the toilet. It's not unusual for a compact motorhome to have bathroom facilities that are somewhat challenging, but in this motorhome it almost felt as if the door system needed its own GPS with detailed directions. Again, space is at a premium here, noted by the cramped shower stall and difficulty reaching for a towel. A little reorganizing or even a slideout expansion could help cure these imperfections — or simply an attitude adjustment when considering the overall benefits of easily tooling around town or camping in tight, primitive locations.

The master bedroom could easily be labeled as "Cabinet land with beds." At the entrance point of the bedroom a sufficiently sized wardrobe is parked at the foot of each twin bed, which leads the healthy portion of overhead wraparound cabinets. Just below rests the opposing sliding twin bed frames, each outfitted with an incredibly cozy, sleep supporting memory foam mattress. The matched beds are intended to slide together and meet in the middle to make up



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TEST

TIFFIN WAYFARER 24 TW

a king-size bed, which affords great sleeping versatility. Twin beds are not found that often in motorhomes these days, but there is a contingent of owners who prefer the separation. Mating the two beds is not as straightforward as you would hope and when in position there's a small void in the center of the two structures. There's potential for this to system to work very well, but the hardware can use some help from nylon glides, or even a motorized operation. Recognizing this model was a prototype, we believe refinements will be part of Tiffin's ongoing process to improve its newest entries.

Assisting the living capabilities are a number of key components that help make the Wayfarer 24 TW a logical competitor in this Class C segment. The ducted 15,000-Btu air conditioner with heat pump and 30,000-Btu furnace highlight the HVAC system, which for the size of the motorhome does a more than credible job of keeping the interior cool and warm. You'll also have use of an on-demand Girard tankless water heater, which is coupled to 40-gallon freshwater and 33-gallon gray-water tanks. And to light the way, all LED lighting has been strategically placed, along with some mood lighting.

One caveat to any well-equipped motorhome is weight, and the Wayfarer prototype was on the heavy side when compared to its gross vehicle weight rating (GVWR). Since the motorhome was only able to take on another 450 pounds before exceeding the GVWR, we'll give Tiffin the benefit of the doubt that this situation will be addressed in production models.

With some "edge-smoothing" (which we expect will be the case) here and there, Tiffin's Wayfarer 24 TW will make for an exceptional couples' getaway rig that's fun to drive, economical to live in and maintain, with just the right amount of class and luxury. And it's backed by a company that has a legendary reputation for building quality motorhomes and an almost cult-like following. **M**

Tiffin Motorhomes

256-356-8661, www.tiffinmotorhomes.com

Specifications

Chassis

Manufacturer	Mercedes-Benz
Model	Sprinter 3500
Engine	3.0-L V-6 turbodiesel
Sae HP	188 @ 3,800 rpm
Torque	325 lb-ft @ 1,400-2,400 rpm
Transmission	5-speed auto
Axle Ratio	3.92:1
Tires	LT215/85R16
Wheelbase	170"
Brakes	Disc
Suspension	Front struts, rear leaf springs w/SumoSprings ride assist
Fuel Capacity	26.4 gal
Fuel Economy	17.15 mpg
Warranty	Chassis: 3 years/36,000 miles Engine: 5 years/100,000 miles

Coach

Ext Length	25' 4"
Ext Width	7'7"
Ext Height	11' 4" with A/C
Int Width	7' 3.5"
Int Height	6' 8"; Bubble 7' 4"
Construction	Aluminum roof/side walls, steel floor, laminated walls with foam insulation, seamless fiberglass roof, full-body paint
Freshwater Capacity	40 gal
Black-water Capacity	27 gal
Gray-water Capacity	33 gal
Water-heater Capacity	Tankless/Instantaneous
LP-gas Capacity	20 gal
Air Conditioner (1)	15,000 Btu
Furnace	30,000 Btu
Refrigerator	5 cu-ft
Inverter/Charger	1,000 watts/30 amps
Battery (2)	12-volt, Group 27 house
AC Generator	3.2 kW diesel
MSRP	\$129,998
MSRP as Tested	\$133,515
Warranty	1 year/12,000 miles comprehensive 3 years/36,000 miles delamination

Wet Weight

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

Front Axle	3,540 lbs
Rear Axle	7,040 lbs
Total	10,580 lbs

Chassis Ratings

GAWR, F/R	4,080/7,060 lbs
GVWR/GCWR	11,030/15,250 lbs
ROCCC	450 lbs (deduct weight of passengers for net cargo capacity)

GAWR	Gross Axle Weight Rating
GVWR	Gross Vehicle Weight Rating
GCWR	Gross Combination Weight Rating
ROCCC	Realistic Occupant and Cargo Carrying Capacity (Full Water, No Passengers)



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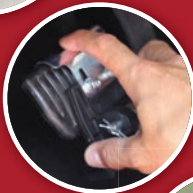


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By Chris Hemer

DRY PLACES

Reducing humidity inside a motorhome is key to preventing mold, mildew and costly damage

As the winter season hits full stride, our thoughts begin to shift from motorhome travel to motorhome storage. In fact, depending on where you live, you may have already put your motorhome away for a long winter's nap. Though most *MotorHome* readers know what is involved with winterizing (or at least are familiar with the subject) there are many aspects of winterizing that can change depending on how and where a motorhome is stored. In cold, damp areas of our country, one concern that arises with regularity is interior humidity, and how it can be controlled.

Though it may not seem like a big deal from the outset, excess interior humidity can cause a lot of damage that you may not discover until you get ready for the next travel season. Electrical connections in your appliances can corrode, cabinet doors and furniture can swell and/or warp, and mold/mildew can create permanent stains as well as health issues. If left unchecked for three or more months, damp interior air can easily cause thousands of dollars in damage and seriously delay your future travel plans.

In our permanent residences, moisture problems are typically easier to solve for one simple reason: We are connected to electricity and have

climate control systems running almost constantly to keep the air circulating and to maintain a consistent temperature. Even in problem areas, we have the option of connecting electric dehumidifiers and fans, or consulting with a specialist who can provide myriad solutions for ridding our home of moisture.

In a motorhome, it may not be that easy. Unless you're one of the lucky few who can store the motorhome at your residence or in a climate-

controlled facility, you won't have the option of an exterior power source, and will only be able to run 12-volt DC appliances for so long before fully discharging batteries. Happily, there are some steps you can take that can effectively reduce or even eliminate excess moisture inside a motorhome, whether it's plugged in or not.

Moisture can enter from almost anywhere, and when interior temperatures drop, the water present in the air drops out of suspension or condenses, forming tiny droplets of water on any cooler surface including counters, cabinets and windows. Make sure roof seams and areas around roof vents are properly sealed and that there is no damage that can allow water to enter — this includes the foam seals around air conditioning unit(s). Inspect sealant for signs of dryness or cracking, and

[1] A dry interior starts with the exterior. Sealant around roof vents, skylights, antennas, etc., can break down over time, allowing moisture to seep in. The good news is, prevention requires little more than some elbow grease; the first step is to carefully scrape away old sealant (a putty knife is OK on aluminum and fiberglass roofs only. Otherwise, use a non-marring plastic scraper carefully to prevent tearing the roof membrane). [2] Generously apply lap sealant around the edges, making sure to cover any bolt heads.



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[3] EternaBond tape is another way to prevent water/moisture intrusion. It can be used around roof vents, transition seams (as in where the front/rear cap meets the roof) or any place there is damage on the roof. Use care when applying, however; as the name suggests, once it's in place, it's there for eternity. [4] Don't overlook the roof air-conditioner gaskets. Over time, these can deteriorate, allowing water to slowly seep into the roof. In the short term, a failing gasket will lead to unwanted moisture, mold and mildew; but, over time, a failing gasket can cause expensive damage. Scrape away the old gasket, replacing it with a quality black neoprene foam gasket. If you're not comfortable with this job, have it performed by a qualified RV repair center, particularly if the roof is sagging around the unit. This is a sign of damage that will require professional repair.

scrape away any old sealant with a plastic putty knife. Dicor (www.dicor.com) and other manufacturers offer suitable rubber roof sealants (use only the sealant that is designed for the particular roof type), and minor damage to the roof can easily be remedied with EternaBond tape (www.eter nabond.com).

Make sure that all windows close properly and that the rubber seals are in good condition, and are not cracking or pulling away. Examine the seam where the window frame meets the side wall. With standard metal-frame windows, consider sealing around the window with a good-quality window and door silicone sealant. So-called frameless windows actually have a frame and clamp ring just like other RV windows, but it's hidden behind the glass for a sleeker, more modern look. While you can't reach the seam on these windows, carefully inspect it to make sure there are no gaps or leaks. If so, the window will have to be removed to be resealed.

And, though it may not seem like a problem, make sure the exterior baggage doors are keeping the water out, and that the floor above

is protected by a moisture barrier. New rubber weather stripping is readily available from RV dealers and other sources, while rolls of moisture barrier are available at any home improvement store. Check the seam around the door for gaps, and consider sealing with acrylic RTV sealant or a product like those from Geocel (www.geocelusa.com) and Sika (<http://usa.sika.com/>).

If you have access to 120-volt AC power, a small dehumidifier like the Air Dryer 1000 from Davis Instruments (www.davisnet.com) can handle up to 1,000 square feet and costs no more than a light bulb to operate, according

to the company. Combine this with a small fan to keep the air moving, and humidity should be a thing of the past.

If you're concerned about leaving the motorhome plugged in, you shouldn't be. It's actually better for the batteries to be maintained on a "float" charge so they don't discharge and freeze. It is, however, recommended that you check on the batteries from time to time to make sure they don't over charge.

If you don't have access to power, a desiccant product like Dri-Z-Air (www.drizair.com) is your best bet. Nontoxic, calcium chloride crystals pull moisture out of the air, melting the crystals and depositing the liquid into a bowl. When all of the crystals have dissolved, the bowl is refilled with new crystals. It's a very simple, effective product, but will require a visit to your motorhome about once a week or so depending on the humidity in the area. Use one Dri-Z-Air unit for every 10

Kanberra gel (<http://kanberragel.com>) is a water-based, alcohol-free, natural air purifier that uses pure Australian tea tree oil, a natural antiseptic. An open container of Kanberra gel evaporates into the motorhome's interior, providing a fresh, clean scent. It then settles on interior surfaces, preventing the growth of mold and mildew.



If you don't have access to 120-volt AC power to run a dehumidifier, **Dri-Z-Air** is a simple, inexpensive way to prevent moisture damage and musty odors inside a motorhome while it is stored. Desiccant crystals draw moisture out of the air and deposit it in the container below. It is reusable and odorless, and comes with a 13-ounce bag of refill crystals.





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One way to promote air circulation inside the motorhome is with a roof vent cover like this one from **MaxxAir** (<http://www.airxcel.com/maxxair>). It allows you to keep roof vents open without the threat of water intrusion.

feet of motorhome — so in a 30-footer, you'd need three: one in the cab, one in the galley, and one in the bedroom, for example. We recommend placing each one in a freeze-proof pan for two reasons: One, if one of the units should spill, the pan will prevent a mess. And two, in very cold areas, the plastic bowls could split if the water freezes, creating a mess when the weather warms up and the liquid thaws again.

Keeping one or more roof vents cracked to allow air to circulate is a good idea, but only when vent covers are employed — otherwise you'll just be letting water back in.

In areas where there is a lot of snow, a quality RV cover provides insurance against water intrusion, but make sure the cover has vents or a Tyvek top (waterproof tarps don't breathe) and is properly secured, as a tarp or cover that flaps in strong winds can really damage exterior finishes.

Regardless of where your motorhome is stored, keeping the interior free of moisture isn't a "set it and forget it" situation. Whenever possible, check on the motorhome every week or so to make sure the plug-in dehumidifier is working properly or to empty desiccant trays.

With a little proactive attention before the wet/snowy weather sets in, you can keep the interior of any motorhome clean, dry and free of mold/mildew. More importantly, you'll prevent costly damage and will be ready for travel when warm weather returns. **M**

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By Bruce W. Smith

PLASTIC ROAD ARMOR

Covering vulnerable areas of a new motorhome's paint with Xpel Ultimate clear paint protective film keeps it looking like new for years

Buyers of high-end coaches that run into seven figures are very finicky about every aspect of their rolling investment, from the quality of the interior craftsmanship and furnishings to the paint and graphics on the exterior. Leaning a little to the obsessive side, they expect perfection when they take possession, and take great pride in keeping their estate-on-wheels looking as good as the day it rolled out of the factory.

Although it's easy to keep the interior looking as fresh as the day it was new, the exterior of coaches that spend a lot of time on the open road is another story. No matter how good the paint job, it'll start showing signs of being battered by the normal onslaught of debris thrown up from the

road's surface and the acidic nature of insect impacts. The result is sand-blasted headlights and wheel-well edges, and nicks, chips and blemishes in the paint across the coach's frontal area. Time and miles dictate the speed at which the paint damage is done. But it will happen.

That's why clear paint protective films (PPF) for automotive paint were invented. They are what Eugene, Oregon's Body Guard Paint Protection, an installer of Xpel Paint Protection Film products, calls "sacrificial shields" — the thin, clear urethane film that takes the hits, protecting the paint and graphics underneath.

When the PPF starts looking ugly from the normal encounters of everyday driving, the peel-and-stick product can be readily removed and replaced by professional installers without harm to the paint beneath.



1



2

Fit for Kings

Marathon Coach, a premier custom motorcoach builder, used to offer the installation of PPFs as a \$3,000 option on its builds. But the film was so popular that it is now a standard feature on every new coach that rolls out of its manufacturing facility — and Body Guard Paint Protection is the company it turns to when installing Xpel's high-end Ultimate PPF at the massive Coburg, Oregon, operation.

The Xpel library of patterns cover more than 60,000 applications, including the newest custom coaches like those Marathon builds. These patterns save professional installers time and ensure the body contours and configurations of each vehicle are perfectly matched from the hood, bumpers, wheel-well arches, headlights and even down to windshield-washer locations.



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6

Inside Xpel

The crystal-clear Ultimate PPF Expel manufactures is a triple layer composition that's just 8.5 mils (.0085 inches) thick. The hair-thin, clear topcoat's "elastomeric polymers" have self-healing properties, which help it flow back into a smooth, glossy surface after being impacted, or getting swirl marks or fine scratches from washing and waxing.

Xpel's Ultimate PPF is self-healing when it's sitting in the sun, or when you wipe over the film with hot,

[1] Xpel provides its installers with access to more than 60,000 patterns. The company can print/cut the film so every piece fits the vehicle perfectly, with cutouts and reliefs already in place for the wipers, lights, grille, bumpers or any other special contours/shapes. Body Guard Paint Protection uses a 64-inch Graphtec printer for all Marathon Coach PPF installations. [2] Xpel's Ultimate PPF is made up of three layers (top coat, film and adhesive) with a total thickness of 8.5 mils (.0085 inches). The top layer is "self-healing," so swirl marks, fine scratches and small indentations smooth out when exposed to direct sunlight or hot water. [3] The first key to a professional installation is making sure every inch of the surface to be covered is clean and dust/lint-free. Any imperfections in or on the paint will show through the clear protective film. A specialized cleaner

is used to set the stage for the installation. [4] Xpel's PPF comes with a protective backing from which it's removed prior to laying into place on the coach. This film is a wet-apply type, so a very generous application of a wetting agent (a couple drops of dish soap in a quart of water) is sprayed on the film before and during the install process. [5] The next step is spraying the area where the precut film will be laid down with a special solution that allows the film to be repositioned as needed prior to applying pressure with special squeegees. Xpel's wetting gel adheres well to vertical surfaces instead of running off like soap/water mixtures. [6] It takes a deft hand and a lot of experience to squeegee the clear film so there are no bubbles or creases. Kitzel's 15 years of installing PPF makes the application task look easy. Believe us, it's not.

soapy water. Give it a hot bath and the high-gloss usually comes right back, according to the company.

Underneath the topcoat is a clear 6-mil-thick polyurethane film (.006 inches) with a 1.6-mil, pressure-sensitive adhesive backing. The film is optically invisible when applied, requiring a very close-up inspection to see where the edge of the film ends and unprotected paint begins.

Xpel claims the makeup of its film allows it to withstand the effects of UV exposure, while allowing the paint underneath to fade at the same rate as the paint that isn't protected. Once the Ultimate PPF is installed, whether done at one of Xpel's retail dealers/installers around the country, or at the OEM level, it'll protect the paint from the harmful effects of bird droppings, bug acids, road salt, tree sap, air pollution and road grime. The company backs its PPF with a 10-year warranty against yellowing, discoloration, peeling, cracking and hazing. If it fails, Xpel replaces it, labor included.

Installation requires a professional, and great attention to cleanliness. The Xpel Ultimate film installed on the Marathon is optically clear, so it will show any nick, scratch



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See in depth article in *May 2016 Motorhome* page 111

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[7] The film's elasticity and the use of the special wetting agents allow it to be stretched (if needed) and positioned around corners without distortion. [8] The template for this 2018 Marathon Prevost's front bumper had the cutouts for the headlight washers and cuts for the special curves, making the installation a lot easier and quicker than it would have been if Kitzel had to make all the cuts with the film on the vehicle. [9] When the Xpel Ultimate PPF is applied, the high-gloss finish perfectly matches that of the motorhome. Hot, soapy water will keep it that way for years. It can also be cleaned/washed using Xpel's Protection Film Sealant.

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XPEL ULTIMATE PPF INSTALL



10



11



12

[10] The PPF is so thin that it takes a very close look to see where it has been applied. Here's a close-up of the film edge (arrow) around the embossed "Prevost" on the front of the motorcoach. The film is about the thickness of a sheet of paper. [11] Headlights, being plastic, are very susceptible to damage from being constantly bombarded by grit, bugs and road debris. The Xpel template includes pieces cut out to perfectly fit the 2018 Marathon's headlights. Kitzel uses a half-dozen different types and sizes of squeegees during a typical motorhome PPF installation. [12] Marathon technicians noticed that the plastic taillights were receiving as much damage as headlights from grit being sucked up by the vacuum created as the coach rolled down the highway. So their Xpel application includes protective film for the taillights. The install also covers the painted wheel arches to protect them from sand and stones thrown up by the tires.

or dirt spec the film is laid over. It can be applied to a new motorhome or an old car or truck, or just about any smooth surface, which is great for dingy vehicles, which tend to get blasted by road debris behind the coach.

According to Body Guard Paint Protection, any paint defects, chips, dirt specks, lint, hair or dust on the surface before the film is applied will remain after the film is installed, so it highly recommends that the PPF be installed on a clean vehicle that's brand new or just repainted, even before it is driven on the road.

That was the scenario when we caught up with the technician installing Xpel Ultimate PPF on Marathon No. 1267 Prevost H3-45 Double Slide right after it came out of paint. The \$2-million-plus 2018 show coach was getting the full Xpel package, from front end to wheel-well

arches to the taillights. Typically, MSRP for an application such as this would start at about \$2,500, depending on the make and model, and especially on the condition of the surfaces. Additional prep work may result in additional costs.

The images accompanying this article show the attention to detail and the amount of expertise that's involved in installing a quality PPF. It's clearly a way to keep the paint of any new motorhome — regardless of price — looking good for many years to come. **M**

Sources

Body Guard Paint Protection
541-912-8000, Facebook/
@bodyguardpaintprotection

Marathon Coach
800-234-9991, www.marathoncoach.com

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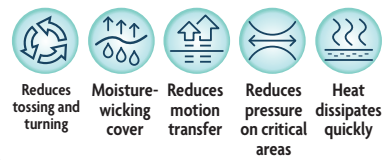
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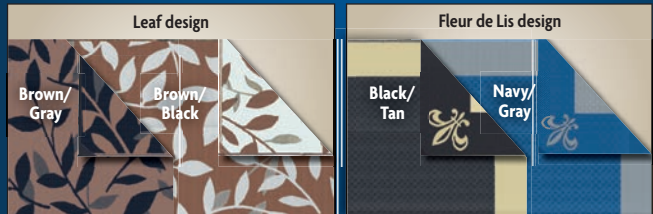
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GREAT SCOTTY!

TWO OF SERRO'S NIMBLE CLASS C MOTORHOMES FIND NEW LIFE WITH TWO VERY DIFFERENT SETS OF OWNERS

This article is one in our continuing series looking at motorhomes that have stood the test of time and can still make dreams come true. Each has earned the right to be called "the classic ride."

"Where we're going, we don't need roads." While motorhome owners like to think of themselves as modern day adventurers, the truth is that we have not quite moved up to Back to the Future's vision of flying cars and unlimited travel possibilities. The creators of that 1985 film (plus its sequels) pictured a future without wheels, but in 2018 we are still limited to roads and where they can take us.

Or are we? At least one motorhome exists that has enough power to climb mountains, is small enough to navigate narrow streets and has the traction to drive across the sand or through a foot of snow. This isn't newfangled technology, either

— this motorhome is more than two decades old.

Meet the Serro Scotty motorhome, the greatest little Class C that you have probably never heard of.

The Serro Scotty name is usually associated with the economical travel trailers its founder, retired Dodge salesman John Serro, began building in his garage in the 1950s. As these compact units gained popularity, his company grew, eventually expanding into the fifth-wheel and motorhome market by the 1990s. Serro manufactured a series of Class C's built on a Dodge chassis, including several models with diesel engines and even 4WD, but production ended when a catastrophic fire destroyed the Irwin,



Paul, Bobbi and Sura Wagner pose by their classic ride.

Pennsylvania, plant in 1997. Yet the forward-thinking design of the Serro Scotty motorhome still draws buyers like Beverly Cameron of Colorado, and Paul and Bobbi Wagner of Oregon today, more than 20 years after the last Scotty was produced. These two very different sets of owners both agree that the Serro Scotty is a true classic — and the motorhome of their dreams.

For Beverly Cameron, a former pilot and FAA examiner, life changed with the 2006 passing of her husband, John. The couple had traveled extensively in their Pace Arrow, but it was showing signs of age, and Bev had promised John that she would not drive it alone. At the same time,



Photos: Paul Wagner



Above: Decorator touches, like the backsplash and wall covering here, give a bright and contemporary vibe to the Wagners' Serro Scotty Hilander.

she was not ready to give up the camping that they had loved.

She put their Class A coach on the market and asked her children to be on the lookout for a smaller motorhome, preferably with a diesel engine. A few weeks later, her son found a 1996 Serro Scotty Hilander at a local RV consignment shop with a price tag of \$23,000. Though Bev had not expected to get a replacement so quickly, she agreed to take a look.

"I fell in love with it when I first saw it," she remembers.

At 25 feet in length, the Class C could navigate small-town streets and parking lots, meaning no dinghy vehicle would be necessary. It could also fit into national and state parks campsites, which aren't always accessible to larger Class A's. In addition, the size made driving and handling easier. Along with the size, Bev was impressed by the sturdy quality of the construction, inside and out.

"It's beefy and solid, and it just felt comfortable," she explains.

The unit was not equipped with the optional 4WD, but its Cummins turbodiesel did promise power, and Bev notes that the Scotty "can go over these Colorado mountains without even trying."

Another plus in this particular

Hilander was the rear bed; along with a large cabover bunk, the unit's floorplan provided room for Bev's sister, Diane. Also a widow, she quickly became Bev's new travel companion.

"It's a good way to get along," Bev says with a smile. "This way we each have our own room at opposite ends of the motorhome."

The Scotty was equipped with all of the basic creature comforts — four-burner stove, microwave, refrigerator, LP-gas furnace, air conditioner and an Onan generator. The interior was done in neutral grays and blues, which Bev saw no need to change. In fact, except for regular maintenance and the addition of tire-valve extenders, Cameron's Hilander looks much like it did when it rolled off the factory floor.

The two sisters have transited states from the West Coast to Cape

4WD means Sura can build sandcastles at her campsite.



The wood-look floor, customized futon couch and live-edge slab table added by the Wagners dramatically update the living space (shown here before the wall covering was applied). White woodwork and bold stripes make the Wagners' bedroom cheerful, even on cold winter days.



The Classic Ride

Cod on trips of up to four weeks at a time, and are positive proof that you can continue to camp throughout life's many stages. Bev credits choosing the right motorhome with making their continued adventures possible.

Choosing the right motorhome was also on the minds of Paul and Bobbi Wagner when they started their search for an RV. The young couple wanted a unit that would be comfortable for their young children and still allow them to camp at "off-grid" locations like beaches and ski slopes.

"My wife and I love the outdoors, and we love winter sports. We wanted reasonable fuel efficiency and 4WD, and we started looking around and realized that what we wanted was the Dodge Serro Scotty," Paul explains.

They found a 1996 Scotty for sale by a private owner in Portland. At 30 feet in length, the unit was large enough to accommodate a growing family, and it was in excellent mechanical shape. It included manual locking hubs that allowed for off-highway versatility, but the interior and exterior were dated. In addition, the electrical system would need revamping to boondock for a week or more at a time. Despite the low \$19,500 price tag, Bobbi was initially less than enthusiastic.

"This is one of those things where she said, 'This is your project,' but once we got going, she fell in love with it," says Paul.

They began by painting the cabinets white and updating the hardware to create a more modern, open feel. For easier care with small children and wet ski boots, they tore out the carpet and replaced it with luxury vinyl wood-look flooring. They wanted to replace the jackknife sofa and happened upon a futon on Amazon.com that is covered

in a durable, kid-proof fabric. Paul customized it to fit the space, and in front they added a rustic wooden live-edge table. With these changes and Bobbi's decorating touches, like a new backsplash, they were able to create a bright, contemporary living space inside the Scotty.

The Wagners made alterations to the exterior as well. After painstakingly removing all the old decals, Paul restriped the exterior himself while also adding some custom touches like the design over the cab. It depicts the historic "ski lift bus" that carried workers from the government camp up to Oregon's Timberline Lodge. The couple also added other side decals for Mount Hood and the many ski slopes they've visited.

To improve their dry-camping abilities, Paul added additional solar panels to increase capacity to 500 watts. They also added three AGM batteries for a total rating of 325-amp-hours. They have also added a portable LP-gas heater to warm up the interior in addition to their furnace. Paul hopes to eventually modify their system to the point where they never need to run a generator.

"We really like camping off-grid. Our goal is self-sufficiency," he says, explaining that they often park for seven days at a time in ski resorts where overnight stays are allowed but hookups are unavailable.

All of that winter camping has made the Scotty's 4 X 4 capability invaluable. The Wagners have equipped their motorhome with Goodyear Wrangler tires, traveling safely through snow-covered roads as far north as the Canadian Rockies.

They have been equally happy with its performance on sand, and are



Photos: Beverly Cameron

Above: Bev Cameron with her Hilander 25, still with the original exterior. The interior is vintage 1990s, with a soft blue/gray color scheme.

amused at the looks they get when they pull their full-size motorhome onto the beach. It is this versatility, combined with interior comfort, that makes the Serro Scotty so perfect for a young family. Any parent who has carried a playpen, chairs, coolers and toys to and from the beach knows that vacations can be stressful, but the Wagners note that they were able to enjoy their summer with 4-year-old daughter, Sura, and newborn son, Sagan, because of the convenience of owning their Scotty.

"The baby has actually spent more of his life in the RV than at home," Paul laughs.

It may be true that no one motorhome is perfect for everyone, but the Serro Scotty Hilander comes close. For these two families at least, this classic ride has proven to be the perfect vehicle to forge new memories today and for years to come. **M**

SEARCHING FOR A SERRO?

Class C Serro Scotty motorhomes are a sought-after commodity on the used market. The 4 X 4 models equipped with diesel engines, like the Wagners' motorhome, are in the highest demand and tend to sell quickly. If you can find one, expect to pay anywhere from \$25,000 to \$44,500, depending on the motorhome's length and condition.

► Paul Wagner removed the original decals from his coach and restriped the exterior himself.





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For a Rainy Day

The windshield and the driver- and passenger-side windows of my motorhome constantly had dirty streaks from rain running off the roof. To solve the problem I bought a roll of rain gutter, also called drip rail. It is a J-shape vinyl product available in black or white, and has a strong peel-and-stick adhesive backing.

Clean the area just above the window frames with alcohol, and cut each length to extend a few inches past the edge of the window. Curve the pieces slightly downward at the ends when pressing into place. It has rained several times since I applied the gutter, and the streak problem has been completely eliminated.

Tom Becker | Los Lunas, New Mexico



Shampoo Shelf

We own a 2007 Winnebago Access Class C motorhome. In the bathroom area, there is a panel that covers a hole to access the plumbing. The panel seemed like a tremendous waste of good storage space, so I took a lesson from our Craftsman-style house — where every nook has a built-in to hold something — and I built a box that can hold shampoo and similar bottles.

I made sure to construct the wooden box so that it matches the existing cabinetry and can easily slide out when I need to access the plumbing pipes. There is a lot of storage in our Access motorhome, but I think it never hurts to have more!

Liz Mowrey | Via email

Pooch Perch

When we travel in our Seneca Class C motorhome, our dogs prefer to ride on my wife's lap. While they had a great view, it was very uncomfortable for my wife. So, she designed a perch for them and we built it from a single shelf of a plastic shelf unit and two legs that were cut to fit the step in the floor between the cockpit seats. We then placed the dog beds and pillows upon it, and now everyone is happy.

Jim Stroh | Loveland, Colorado

Multiuse Mop Head

Drying off our Class A motorhome after a quick rinse — or cleaning off its bug-splattered windows — required dragging out a step stool, climbing up and down and still not reaching the very top. As a full-timer, I need to have every storage inch count and I am always looking for multiple ways to use an item. The Swiffer mop, with its long handle, is perfect for both drying and cleaning. I use microfiber cloths or terry cloth hand towels in the mop head's grippers to dry or clean the motorhome and windows quickly without the need for a step stool or ladder.

Nanci Dixon | Sioux Falls, South Dakota



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30", 5 DRAWER TOOL CART

• 8100 cu. in. of storage
• 704 lb. capacity
• Weighs 120 lbs.

Customer Rating ★★★★★

COMPARE TO SNAP-ON \$1150

SAVE \$990

~~\$1599~~

ITEM 61427/63308
69397/95272 shown

38020882

LIMIT 9 - Coupon valid through 4/12/18*

HaulMaster SUPER COUPON

17 FT. TYPE IA MULTI-TASK LADDER

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

Customer Rating ★★★★★

COMPARE TO LITTLE GIANT \$299.99

SAVE \$189

~~\$109.99~~

ITEM 63418/63419/63417/62656/67646/62514 shown

38020916

LIMIT 4 - Coupon valid through 4/12/18*

COVERPRO SUPER COUPON

10 FT. x 17 FT. PORTABLE GARAGE

Customer Rating ★★★★★

SAVE \$100

COMPARE TO SHELTER LOGIC \$270

~~\$169.99~~

ITEM 62859/63055
62860 shown

38025357

LIMIT 6 - Coupon valid through 4/12/18*

HaulMaster SUPER COUPON

1000 lb. capacity 18" x 12" MOVER'S DOLLY

Customer Rating ★★★★★

COMPARE TO MILWAUKEE \$19.97

SAVE 59%

~~\$7.99~~

ITEM 61899/60497/63095/63096
63098/63097/93888 shown

38029471

LIMIT 8 - Coupon valid through 4/12/18*

CHICAGO ELECTRIC SUPER COUPON

12" SLIDING COMPOUND DOUBLE-BEVEL MITER SAW

• Laser guide

Customer Rating ★★★★★

COMPARE TO KOBALT \$299

SAVE \$169

~~\$129.99~~

ITEM 61969/61970
69684 shown

38029770

LIMIT 7 - Coupon valid through 4/12/18*

CENTECH SUPER COUPON

AUTOMATIC BATTERY FLOAT CHARGER

Customer Rating ★★★★★

COMPARE TO SCHUMACHER \$9.84

SAVE 49%

~~\$4.99~~

ITEM 69955
69594/42292 shown

38036469

LIMIT 7 - Coupon valid through 4/12/18*

HaulMaster SUPER COUPON

TRIPLE BALL TRAILER HITCH

Customer Rating ★★★★★

SAVE 60%

COMPARE TO REESE \$49.99

~~\$21.99~~

ITEM 61914

38036939

LIMIT 7 - Coupon valid through 4/12/18*

WARRIOR SUPER COUPON

29 PIECE TITANIUM DRILL BIT SET

Customer Rating ★★★★★

COMPARE TO DEWALT \$60

SAVE 83%

~~\$17.99~~

ITEM 62281/61637 shown

38037142

LIMIT 8 - Coupon valid through 4/12/18*

HARDY SUPER COUPON

MECHANIC'S GLOVES

Customer Rating ★★★★★

COMPARE TO MECHANIX \$14.99

SAVE 73%

~~\$5.99~~

ITEM 62434, 62426, 62433,
62432, 62429, 62428 shown

38046872

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CENTRAL MACHINERY SUPER COUPON

10 TON HYDRAULIC LOG SPLITTER

• Accepts logs up to 18" long and 6-1/2" diameter

Customer Rating ★★★★★

COMPARE TO SUN JOE \$132.55

SAVE \$42

~~\$89.99~~

ITEM 62291
67090 shown

38060644

LIMIT 5 - Coupon valid through 4/12/18*

SUPER COUPON

7 FT. 4" x 9 FT. 6" ALL PURPOSE WEATHER RESISTANT TARP

Customer Rating ★★★★★

COMPARE TO LOWE'S \$8.58

SAVE 65%

~~\$4.99~~

ITEM 69249/69115/69137
69129/69121/877 shown

38060671

LIMIT 9 - Coupon valid through 4/12/18*

CENTRAL PNEUMATIC SUPER COUPON

3/8" x 50 FT. RETRACTABLE AIR HOSE REEL

Customer Rating ★★★★★

COMPARE TO KOBALT \$99

SAVE \$39

~~\$59.99~~

ITEM 69265/62344/93897 shown

38061203

LIMIT 4 - Coupon valid through 4/12/18*

FISCHER SUPER COUPON

750 LB. HEAVY DUTY ATV/MOWER HIGH LIFT JACK

Customer Rating ★★★★★

COMPARE TO MOJACK \$425.75

SAVE \$245

~~\$179.99~~

ITEM 63298

38078719

LIMIT 5 - Coupon valid through 4/12/18*

CHICAGO ELECTRIC WELDING SUPER COUPON

ADJUSTABLE STEEL WELDING TABLE

Customer Rating ★★★★★

COMPARE TO NORTHERN TOOL \$139.99

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~~\$59.99~~

ITEM 63069/61369 shown

38080573

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A/C Failure

Getting hot after an air-conditioner manufacturer refused reimbursement for a replacement due to failure, a reader asked Hot Line to step in. He wrote:



“ Upon retirement, my wife and I purchased our first motorhome, a new 2015 Winnebago Aspect. We travel a couple of times a year, usually in the spring and fall. During our fall trip last year, the air conditioner failed within the stated warranty period. We promptly contacted Airxcel (the A/C manufacturer), who told us that it would be covered under warranty.

When we returned home, we had the unit looked at, but by that time cold weather had arrived, and the dealer could not reproduce the failure. We thought perhaps the failure was a one-time occurrence.

On our first trip this spring, the air conditioner failed again. When we had the unit replaced at Winnebago in May, Airxcel would not cover the repair, telling us that the unit was out of warranty. Can Hot Line please help?

Skip Moreland | Wildwood, Missouri

In our experience, these types of problems are rarely “one-time” occurrences, and need to be thoroughly investigated and resolved while the item is under warranty. Apart from that, it appears the Morelands did everything correctly once their A/C initially failed, so we hoped Airxcel would reconsider its position. We never heard back from Moreland, but Airxcel sent us the following update:

A reimbursement check was issued to Mr. Moreland. This complaint was resolved directly with the customer.

Jennie Brown, Warranty Claims Auditor, Airxcel Inc., RV Products Division | Wichita, Kansas

Fan Frustration

After his motorhome received repairs from a shop that refused to call ahead to the service-contract provider for prior authorization, a reader turned to Hot Line for help. He wrote:

“ The serpentine fan belt on our

motorhome snapped while on the road in Connecticut. We called AAA for assistance and were referred to Hilario’s Service Center. Hilario’s towed us to the repair facility, but told me it does not call extended warranty providers. I called our warranty company, Star RV/Interstate, and spoke with Derrick. He could not issue me a claim number because I was not the repair facility. I explained the situation, but got no satisfaction. When the repairs were completed, Hilario’s faxed and we mailed the repair details twice to Star RV, but the claim was denied because we did not obtain prior authorization. Star RV called Hilario’s and requested our contract number, so they were aware the repairs were performed by Hilario’s. I spoke to a

supervisor at Star RV, and she also denied the claim. I requested a written denial letter, which she said would be sent. To this day, I have not received it.

Our tow bill has been reimbursed by AAA and we are only requesting reimbursement for the fan clutch in the amount of \$1,280.79, plus a portion of the total labor (\$500). We have since sold the RV and cancelled the service contract, but I feel Star RV should honor the contract.

David Thompson | The Villages, Florida

Anybody who reads this department consistently knows that receiving preauthorization for repairs from an extended-service provider is the key to a smooth process. In this case, it appears the repair facility has a policy in place in which it doesn’t call ahead for preauthorization. However, that policy is theirs to make, which put Thompson in a difficult spot, but he authorized the repairs in spite of that.

We decided to pass along Thompson’s request to Interstate National Dealer Services Inc., and didn’t hear anything for quite some time. After relaying that much to Thompson, he expressed his apologies and included a copy of the letter below from Interstate.

Dear Mr. Thompson:

Pursuant to Interstate National Dealer Services Inc.’s letter, enclosed please find a check in the amount of \$1,910.79.

Sakina Cornell, Paralegal, Interstate National Dealer Services Inc. Atlanta, Georgia

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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By Ken Freund

Descending Steep Grades

Q I recently bought a 2017 Thor Windsport 29M with the Ford V-10 engine. On a recent trip to the Great Smoky Mountains I began a descent from around 6,000-plus feet and gradually downshifted in order to slow the descending speed. I continually had to apply the brakes hard, which made the brakes squeak really loud. Is there an aftermarket product I can install to assist the braking system on this motorhome? Since I had such a hard time slowing it down at 6,000 feet, I am hesitant to drive up to the Rockies where there are elevations of 12,000 to 14,000 feet.

Kenneth Barnes | Houma, Louisiana

A The extreme heat buildup from extended downhill braking can cause the properties of the brake lining materials and other components to change. This can result in brake squealing, which may go away when they cool. The brakes can become glazed or the rotors warped. A greater risk is that the brake fluid boils in the calipers, which can result in a temporary complete loss of "pedal" until the fluid cools. If this worst-case scenario occurs, apply the parking brake, which is non-hydraulic, downshift as much as possible to control speed and use an emergency runaway truck ramp if one is available. This is why it's so important to be vigilant,



especially when driving a large, heavy vehicle, and to anticipate upcoming gradients. Plan ahead by approaching a long, steep downgrade at a slower speed and use a lower gear immediately — don't wait until the brakes are overheated. If you deem that the brakes are still overheating, pull safely off the road to allow them to cool before continuing. Thousands of heavy vehicles descend the grades of the West every day using stock brakes by following similar procedures.

Regarding aftermarket products, the main upgradeable items are heavy-duty brake pads, which contain ceramic and other high-temperature-resistant materials, and premium high-temperature brake fluids. Exhaust brakes can be added to diesel engines, but currently they are not available for gas models.

Bathroom Odors

Q We own a 2011 Winnebago Itasca Sunstar 35F. Periodically the half-bath gets a foul odor that smells like an old diaper pail. I have tried everything I can think of to find the cause, including replacing the floor flange seal below the toilet, keeping the roof vent lid closed (due to the vent stack being close to the roof vent) and keeping the half-bath window closed. The black-water tank for the half-bath is directly below it. I checked the basement compartment where the macerator pump is located and couldn't find any signs of wetness. If there was a hole or leak in the black-water tank it seems like the odor would be constant, but it's not. I also use tank deodorizing

chemicals regularly and drain the black-water tank often. Have you heard of other Itasca owners with the same problem or can you give me some advice?

C.F. Hommes | Shelby Township, Michigan

A Sometimes dealing with bathroom odors like these can be tricky, but there are a couple of things that could be causing the odors. Up behind the sink in the half-bath is what's called an anti-siphon trap vent device (ASTVD). This is a mechanical vent that opens to allow the sink to drain without emptying the P-trap. It consists of a rubber flap, sometimes held closed with a spring, that opens with the vacuum of the water draining from the sink. These frequently

fail, as the rubber dries out and no longer seals. It is easy to remove and replace, and is available from most RV parts suppliers and from Amazon.com (search "Oatey 39012"). Make sure to only hand tighten when replacing, and consider applying thread tape to help seal it.

Other possibilities are that the black-tank vent pipe has become dislodged from the grommet at the tank, or has come apart at one of the turns in the wall, or has dropped and terminates below the level of the roof. A visual inspection, if possible, may determine if there is a problem. A flood test is often performed to check the condition of the drain plumbing system; however, I would recommend that a flood test be performed by a



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certified RV technician in a controlled setting. That, in and of itself, will not test the integrity of the upper vent piping, but will ensure the tank connections are good. It may also be possible to pressure-test the system with air, but that is a more advanced process, using a test ball for 1½-inch pipe.

Shifting Gears

Q The "Comment — Shifting Advice" letter in the August 2017 issue was really a shocker. Would you please explain shifting/rpm, etc.? I have no idea which to use when climbing hills related to rpm. I guess gone are the days of "D" for drive? The letter discussed maximum torque, efficiency, gears to use, etc. I, and perhaps others, do not understand lock-up torque converters, nor when I should change gears up or down, nor at which tachometer readings I should do so. My new Phoenix Cruiser on an

E-450 chassis with a V-10 engine has more gears than my older motorhome. I'd like a simplified article about the significance of tachometer readings, which gears to select at which speeds, and so forth. Auto mechanics was not my major in medical school. I just want to go camping, enjoy my motorhome and not ruin the engine in the meantime.

MD in Michigan | Via email

A The letter you refer to was at the upper technical limit of what I prefer to cover and explain in this column, which is intended for the layperson with a modicum of DIY knowledge, rather than engineers, professional technicians, etc. It was really about extracting the last bit of performance and efficiency. So don't feel bad if you didn't understand it. Virtually all motorhomes come with automatic transmissions, and they are designed to operate in most conditions without **(continued on page 72)**



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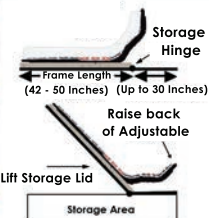
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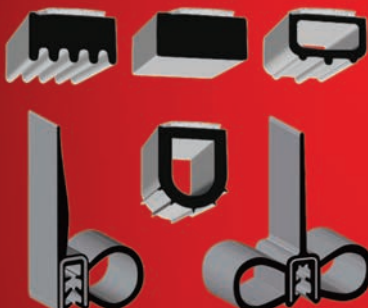
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COACH & POWERTRAIN

(continued from page 68)

manual control over forward gear selection. The main exception (in my opinion) would be when descending long or steep grades, for the purpose of reducing the heat load on brakes (See “Descending Steep Grades” letter on page 67).

The region you live in is relatively flat and shouldn't require much driver intervention in automatic shifting. If your transmission doesn't “hunt” up and down between gears when climbing a long grade, don't worry about it. If it does hunt, select the next lower gear until you crest the grade. If you're descending a grade and need help controlling downhill speed, slow down and downshift a gear or two as needed.

The Ford chassis is equipped with a tow/haul mode, which is switched on at the end of the gear shift stalk. This changes the transmission programming to optimize the shifting points for carrying or hauling a heavier load, and will also allow the vehicle downshift on hills to help slow the vehicle. With ordinary driving on level ground it's probably not necessary to use tow/haul; however, when towing or when driving in mountainous terrain, I would recommend using it.

Many motorhomes don't have a tachometer, and they are not essential for routine operation (although many folks like to have one). The latest E-450 chassis equipped with the 6.8-liter V-10 have a six-speed automatic, and torque peak is at 3,250 rpm and peak horsepower is reached at 4,250 rpm. The engine's best efficiency under full load is at torque peak, and best acceleration and power at the horsepower peak (but efficiency drops off). So, for long upgrades you may want to stay near torque peak, and for short bursts — like merging onto highways — run it up to the horsepower peak, but not any higher.

Battery Goes Dead — Comment

In “Battery Goes Dead When Disconnected — Comment” in the October 2017 issue, reader John Gaines suggests installing a blade switch to disconnect the batteries. May I strongly

suggest, from a safety viewpoint, to install a marine-type battery switch. These are fully enclosed and thus eliminate the probability of generating a spark.

Lutz Moeckel | Garden Grove, California

Thanks for writing, Lutz. You have a good point, as hydrogen gas can accumulate around batteries, especially if they have just been charging, or battery-box ventilation is poor. A quality switch designed for marine use, such as those sold by Perko, are considered to be sparkless and safer for this application.

Fuel Starvation?

Q I retired last April and purchased a used 1994 Winnebago Brave on the Chevy P30 chassis. I started driving to Canada and only made it about 200 miles before having problems. The engine ran fine until I went uphill; then it started to “pop” as if it was backfiring through the carburetor. I called for roadside assistance and the mechanic said the tank was dirty and that he could send it off to have it cleaned. The catch was it would take a week. I decided to suffer through it and made it to Canada. The motorhome runs fine as long as there is no incline; it also runs better if the fuel level is around half-full or less. I also can't find a correct belt routing schematic so I can run the dash air. Any help would be appreciated.

Dan Knowlton | Via email

A This model is equipped with fuel injection, and doesn't have a carburetor. However, the symptom you describe — the engine losing power under a heavier load, such as during an uphill climb — leads me to suspect fuel starvation, not contamination. The most common cause is a partially clogged fuel filter, and that should be checked first. When I replace filters, I write the date and mileage on top of the housing with a felt-tip marker for future reference. Also, blow backward through the old and new ones and compare the resistance, and look

for crud coming out of the old one. If the fuel filter isn't partially blocked, I suspect a weak electric fuel pump. The best way to test one is with a fuel-pressure gauge while the engine is under full load. Remove the doghouse in the cab for access during the test drive. You can also test the fuel-pressure regulator during this test.

One final item to check is gas-tank venting. When the engine seems to be acting up, quickly remove the gas cap and note if there seems to be an inrush of air. If so, leave the cap very loose and test drive once again.

As for the belt diagram, if you don't have a decal, go online and Google "1994 Chevrolet 454 motorhome belt routing diagram" and you'll find the diagrams under "images."

Rocking the RV!

Q I have a 34-foot Class A motorhome equipped with an HWH Kick Down leveling system. Even

with the jacks down, my wife complains about the movement of the RV when I walk. When I camp with friends I also notice a lot of movement when they move in the RV. When I camp on a cement pad, there isn't any movement, so I will assume the jacks are OK. I have tried blocks under the jacks to improve the footprint, but I seem to still have the problem. My thinking is the optimum adjustment would keep all four wheels on the ground with maximum pressure to each jack. I am considering using additional scissor jacks like the ones used on travel trailers. Do you have a better suggestion besides me and my friends losing weight?

Robert Schulz | Avenel, New Jersey

A The HWH flip-down jacks are designed to stabilize the motorhome to a point, Robert, but aren't as rock-stable as some other types of levelers, like straight-acting hydraulic units. This is due to the flip-down mechanism. It is possible

that the motorhome is more stable on concrete than soft ground, not just because the jacks are on firmer ground, but because the tires are as well. HWH, in its owner's manual, states that the wheels must be securely chocked.

Blocking or chocking the wheels accomplishes two things. First, it protects the motorhome from shifting on the jacks, destroying the jacks and possibly causing the motorhome to roll downhill. Second, chocking the wheels on both sides helps to stabilize movement. **M**

Have a Tech Question?

Contact our experts:

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

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Show 'n Tell

We're all good at making memories, but sharing them, well, not so much

By Alan Rider

Let me be right up front: I like making stuff. I've dabbled in plein air painting, turned globs of raw clay into finished pottery and more. And the one thing partaking of all of this has taught me is that we as human beings are inherently creative. I don't care if you can't draw a straight line, the fact of the matter is that the urge to create is within you.

Much the same can be said of the folks who have created the publication you now hold in your hands. And all the writers, editors, graphic artists and even printers who've been churning out issue after issue of *MotorHome* for the past half-century.

Now, granted, the expression of your creativity may look a lot different from ours. But as motorhome travelers, the one thing we all create is memories.

Unfortunately for those of us without magazine pages to fill, these remembrances can be fleeting, with the only proof locked up inside our smartphones. But what if there was a way to capture those memories in a form that actually encourages us to pull them out and share them with friends and relations? A format that actually draws people into our stories, as opposed to putting them off staring at a palm-sized screen?

As someone who's had a fair number of adventures over the years, this is a problem I bump up against fairly regularly. I mean to look at me, you'd think I was just your average

schlub whose most interesting aspect is what I just had for lunch.

But what if I told you I once spent the night in my motorhome camped at the base of the cliffs that held one of Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid's most notorious hideouts? Or flew a fighter plane (OK, a prop-driven aircraft used to train real fighter pilots) in an actual dogfight? Or been kissed by a great white whale? All of which is just a fraction of the fascinating stuff you've seen on *MotorHome's* pages as we celebrate our 50th anniversary.

On an interpersonal basis though, the problem is that chances are someone's going to wanna see what we're talking about. And we end up throwing up our hands, knowing

we have those photos around here somewhere. In that sense, I suspect we're all in the same boat.

So here's my suggestion. Now, in the quiet season for motorhome aficionados, collect those memories and do something with them! If you're computer-savvy, build a slideshow/video extravaganza complete with Ken Burns-style transitions and a stirring musical score.

Being the borderline Luddite I am, though, I knew I wanted something that I could hold in my hand. So, I sought out the help of one of the many services out there that will turn your photos into a bound book.

I used Shutterfly (www.shutterfly.com) and its Make My Book service, a neat setup where I just gathered the digital photos from my various adventures over the years, sent them off and had their designers lay the whole thing out for me. Then I just fine-tuned their creation online, rearranging photos to satisfy my creative urges — and my slightly obsessive attention to detail. I did put some effort in to make it my own, but there's no arguing this approach is a big time saver.

Now I have something that's easy to flip through with new folks I meet while I'm out making the next half-century of memories along The Road Ahead. **M**

“... what if there was a way to capture those memories in a form that actually encourages us to pull them out and share them with friends and relations? A format that actually draws people into our stories, as opposed to putting them off staring at a palm-sized screen?”

Picture This

Right: Photo books make a great way to preserve memories of your adventures, from playing rock star at Rock 'n' Roll Fantasy Camp to crushing a car with the folks from Drive A Tank.





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