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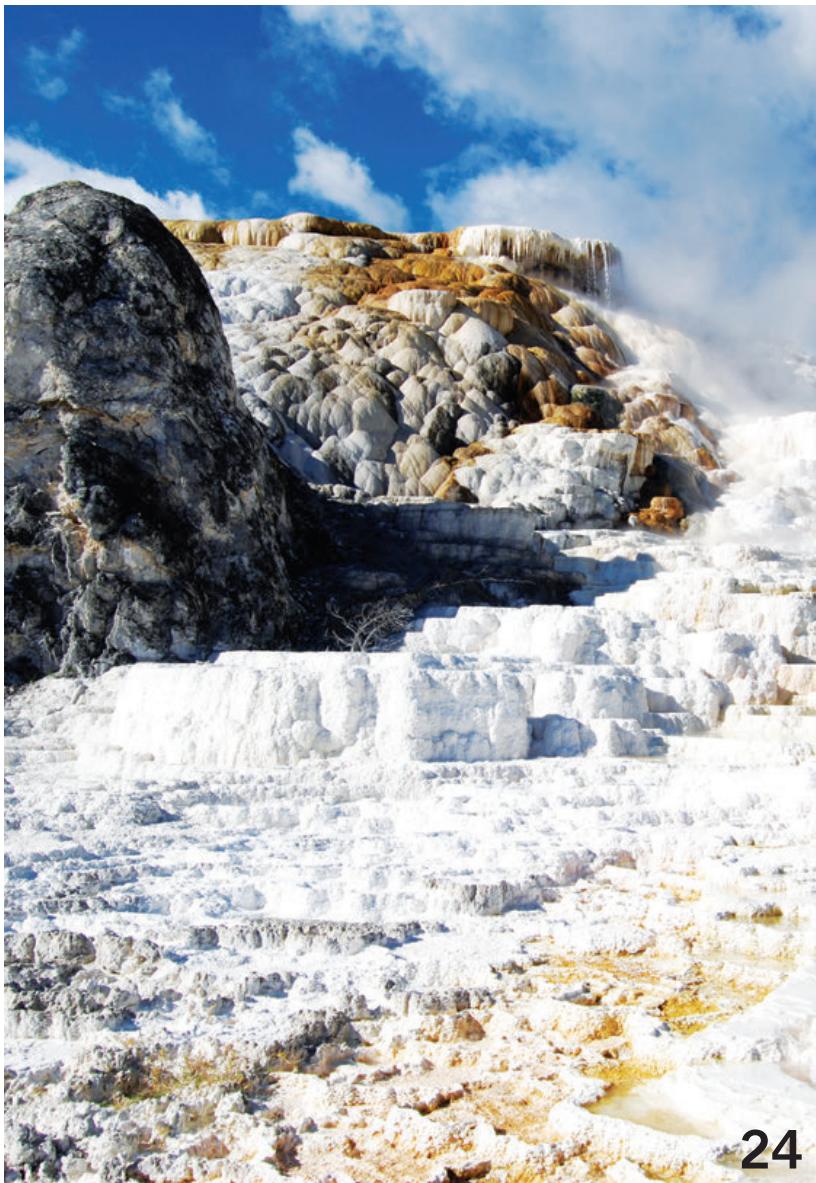
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On The Cover: Touring the backroads of Southern California's Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area in Winnebago's new Travato 59G (see test on page 46). Photo by Scott Hirko.

CUTTING THE UMBILICAL CORD

I clearly remember the days when Publisher Emeritus Bill Estes and I would load our families in RVs and head out to some of our most favorite primitive locations. Season was not a factor; we often found ourselves buried in snow for the duration of a trip, only to dig out when we needed to depart for home. But for the most part, journeys to newly discovered hidden gems during the summer months were among our favorite trips — especially those near fishing waters. To make most of our adventures work, we needed to rely heavily on batteries.

There are a number of factors to consider when dealing with a 12-volt DC system so it can provide the uninterrupted power needed to enjoy the onboard systems. The main element is having an adequate battery bank, which is a product of carefully calculated daily usage. Motorhomes today are more dependent on electrical power than ever, so when it comes to being self-reliant, batteries play an important role, especially when inverting to 120-volt AC power for use of accessories like the satellite systems featured on page 52.

For years, I was a real fan of 6-volt golf cart batteries wired in series. Without the use of solar systems or the desire to crank up the then-noisier generators in pristine environments, we relied on heavy (minimum 8-gauge) wiring and the engine alternator to recharge the batteries. Although antiquated by today's standards, we frequently used a heavy rock to hold the throttle down to keep the engine at a high enough rpm to provide adequate charging amperage to the batteries. Today, my solar system takes the place of that rock and I've transitioned to AGM batteries, which no doubt are expensive, but provide the kind of service that meets my current needs. We often find ourselves in and around places like Yellowstone National Park (see page 24) and British Columbia (see page 32) and depend on complete self-containment.

Having a stout — and durable —



multi-stage charging system is important for good battery health. Since we try to refrain from discharging batteries below a 50 percent threshold, efficient charging systems are necessary for performance and longevity. Too many people spend a few nights unhooked and assume that connecting to 120-volt AC power in a campground the next day will bring their batteries back to a full state of charge. Many standard power converters simply won't do the job. Installing an inverter/charger or high quality multi-stage converter/charger may not be a realistic option for some owners. If that's the case, using a charger like the Xantrex TRUECharge2 as a portable may be a viable alternative. A portable multi-stage charger like this one can be connected to the batteries and powered by campground hookups or the generator.

These days, most motorhome enthusiasts spend their time in developed campgrounds, myself included. But it's nice to be prepared for venturing out to more rustic locations and take advantage of the self-containment features we paid for.

By the way, if you really want to practice conservation, check out what E. Don Smith writes in his article on bicycles on page 39. Pedaling in camp and to nearby attractions is a practical way to get around without burning fuel, except for the calories stored in our bodies. Riding a bicycle is a fun and healthy alternative to using our dinghy vehicles. But finding the right bike takes some study. Today's technology offers many options and matching the bike type for the terrain, activities and skill level is revealed by Smith, who like myself, is a bicycle enthusiast. ♦

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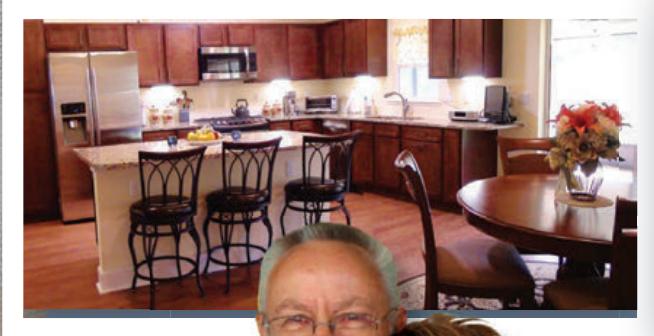
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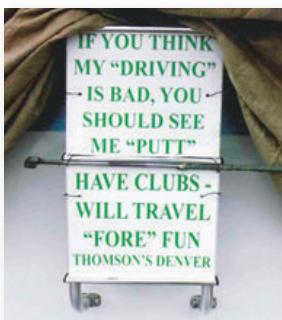
DOES YOUR RIG HAVE A HUMOROUS LICENSE PLATE OR LICENSE PLATE HOLDER? IF SO, WHAT DOES IT SAY?

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

TRAVELING "FORE" FUN

We have enjoyed MotorHome since 2004, when we purchased our Itasca Sunova. Colorado has many splendid mountain golf courses that we love to play, especially in the western and southwestern parts of our state. I have attached these two signs to the ladder of our motorhome and we get a honk or someone hollering "fore" as they pass us. Some even want their picture taken beneath the sign. Seldom do campers ask my handicap ... thank goodness!

DON AND JOYCE THOMSON | DENVER, COLO.



YOUNG AT HEART

This is a picture of the back of our motorhome. As you can see, we have been in the water for many years and that would account for our "WRINKLE" plate. You'd have a wrinkle or two also! Enjoy, we do.

**PETE AND ARLENE CHIAROLANZIO
FLORHAM PARK, N.J.**



NOTHIN' LEFT

We get plenty of laughs with the personalized plate on our coach.

**MARCI AND GARY WHITEMAN
HARTLAND, MICH.**



BIKE ELF

My license plate isn't funny, but it has meaning. For about 20 years before retiring, my wife ran the Angel Tree Christ-

mas program for the Salvation Army in Port Angeles, Wash. I refurbished about 100 bikes a year for the program. Often, when parents picked up their gifts for their children, they would have tears in their eyes seeing a bike for their kids.

One day, a reporter came to interview me about the bikes and I told him the Major at the Salvation Army was like Santa Claus and I was his elf. The next day the headline in the local paper read "BIKE ELF." The article included a story I told the reporter about a boy who called me and told me that I had done a bike for him a year ago. He said that his mother had found a job and they were doing well now and that she had bought him a new bike. He wanted to give the bike I did back to me so I could give it out again to another child. The bike was in just as good shape as it was when he got it.

GEORGE C. WILLIAMS | VIA EMAIL

JUST ASK GRANDMA

We have these license plate holders on all of our vehicles and our RV. We also have one that says, "If Mom says no, call 1-800-Grandpa."

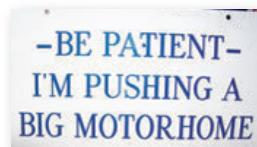
**ELVIN AND LINDA KOZACHENKO
SAN PEDRO, CALIF.**



PUSHING A BIG COACH

This is in response to your request for a humorous picture. I hang this in the back window of our motorhome whenever we pull our dinghy vehicle. It helps that we only drive the coach 55 mph. It seems that other drivers sometimes have a smile on their face as they pass by.

WALTER TERRY | UNION CITY, CALIF.



TOTALLY COOL

Our motorhome's California license plate is "KOOLRV," and



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our dinghy vehicle—which is a Honda Fit—has “KOOLFIT.”

**VICKI AND MURIL CLIFT
CAMBRIA, CALIF.**

BREAKING THE BANK

I had “BNKRUPT” plates on my Newmar Kountry Star from 1999-2010 when I sold the motorhome. Had I known I would get another RV two years later, I would have retained them.

They brought a lot of smiles through

the years, as people passed us on an expressway or saw us in RV parks and campgrounds, but especially when I would fill it up with fuel. People told me if they had to fill it up, they would be bankrupt too! The matching plates are now hanging on the walls of the River City Cafe in Merrells Inlet, S.C.



RON SZUSTAKOWSKI | VIA EMAIL

CHOOSE CAREFULLY

Publisher Bob Livingston’s editorial “Getting Spoiled” (March issue) really resonated with me. For more than 40 years I traveled and camped in rented, or borrowed, Class A motorhomes. I greatly preferred the comfort and easy setup of a motorhome over the vulnerability and hassle of tents and campers. When my employment flexibility finally enabled me to travel enough to justify owning a coach, my wife, Nancy, and I sorted through the things that were important to us.

Our choices of RV amenities had certainly expanded during four decades, but our selections were mostly predicated on how we intended to travel. We only considered full-size Class A motorhomes because of their spaciousness and elevated panorama from the driver’s seat. Anything longer than 35 feet would significantly reduce our choice of campsites and maneuverability. Since we seldom planned to stay in one location for more than a few days, and wanted to be able to enjoy national parks and national seashores where

hookups are often nonexistent, we did not want to be dependent upon shorepower, expensive solar panels or our generator to run energy-hungry appliances.

In May 2012 we finally bought a 1-year-old, barely used but well-equipped 35-foot-long gasoline-powered coach with three slides and a comfortable king-size bed. It doesn’t have a washer/dryer, second bathroom, dishwasher or fake fireplace. The motorhome did come equipped with three TVs, but we have never watched the one outside and rarely watch the one in the bedroom. Our microwave/convection oven is convenient when we have shorepower, but the oven in our gas range is invaluable when we don’t, and it makes better biscuits and rolls.

Carefully made choices, asking lots of questions, heavily involving my wife in the decision-making process, and not being in a hurry to make a purchase has enabled us to be thrilled with our decision and our camping experiences. We can attend the largest rallies and RV shows and go away from them without motorhome envy and



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not wishing we had bought something else.
LEWIS A. EDGE JR. | PRINCETON, N.J.

TOO MANY LUXURIES

Heat to warm the coach, hot water to shower and wash dishes, A/C to cool the coach, LP-gas to cook with, a refrigerator to keep the beer cold and a potty. That's all we need! I agree that a lot of modern coaches have far too many luxuries and I'd like to see them eliminated, especially those obnoxious outdoor entertainment centers. Why, oh why, must we take our TV with us to share with the world? If you must watch that drivel, please do it inside and close all of your doors and windows so that the rest of us can enjoy the quiet.
GLEN FOTRE | PRESCOTT VALLEY, ARIZ.

TEST RESIDENTIAL REFRIGERATORS

In March, Bob Livingston wrote about residential refrigerators and the issues when dry camping ("Getting Spoiled"). What I find interesting is that I have talked to several salesmen about dry camping with a residential refrigerator, and I get the

same answer, "No problem, they will last for days without running the generator."

I would like to see an article testing residential refrigerators to see how long they will operate, under normal use, without charging the batteries. This type of information would be helpful to your readers when making decisions on what type of unit would meet their needs.

LORRIN WALSH | BREMERTON, WASH.

ENERGY-EFFICIENT REFRIGERATORS

I enjoyed the editorial "Getting Spoiled," and agree that we are getting too spoiled trying to take it all with us when traveling. But I disagree with the statement about household refrigerators: "But forget about staying in primitive locations, unless you have a massive solar system or don't mind running the generator most of the day."

Almost five years ago, I installed a 22-cubic-foot household refrigerator in my now 8-year-old American Coach. I enjoy dry camping, and run the generator two hours in the morning and two hours in the evening, which keeps all batteries very

happy. Timed correctly, each of those two-hour periods can also be used for cooking or other things when 120-volt AC is needed. I take no extraordinary measures the rest of the day to save power, but am normally cautious about power usage. Of course the refrigerator is on 24/7. I have no solar panels. The replacement batteries are the same as original: four group 27 AGM for the house, and two group 31 maintenance-free for the engine start.

I think the biggest reason most people think this can't be done is that compared to an absorption type, or older household refrigerator, the new energy-efficient refrigerators are incredibly efficient.

DAVID PARSONS | MADISONVILLE, LA.

KNIFE TIP

Regarding the knife holder Quick Tip in the March issue, I think this is a good idea with the exception of the way the knives are placed in the holder. The knives should be placed with the blades up. With the shaking of the knives in travel they surely would become dull more quickly. With the

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sharp edges up, they won't become dull from the cutting of the wood. This is also the way to store them at home, where the knives are kept in a slotted wooden block so the blades will not be cutting wood each time you remove or replace the blades.

PAUL MAY | VIA EMAIL

LEFT IN THE DARK

In the March issue, the "Lighting the Way" Quick Tip mentions Costco item #580978, but I couldn't find it at the store. Don't you check your information for accuracy? Maybe if Mr. Winter had given the manufacturer's name, we could have found the light. The idea is excellent, information supplied poor!

GAYLE IDSALL | ATHENS, ALA.

Thanks for writing, Gayle. We checked with Winter and found that the light he mentioned has been replaced with a re-styled one made by Duracell. It's a Duracell Durabeam Ultra 2-pack Wireless LED Under-cabinet Lights (item #999411). We apologize for the error. — Editors

CONCEALED CARRY LAWS

When is a motorhome a home and when is it a motor vehicle? I keep a handgun in my motorhome loaded and ready, and have for 10 years. I've never had to use it, but my local sheriff's department and the state attorney general's office couldn't say if it's legal or not to carry a gun in a motorhome. Both told me it's a gray area. I keep my gun 30 feet from my driving position when on the road. No, I won't travel unloaded. One time, I heard a loud noise in the middle of the night and got the gun, went for the bullets, and 10 bullets fell on the floor and I couldn't get one into the chamber.

I'd like to hear from other RVers about how they handle this, because every state has different laws on concealed carry.

GARY LEWIS | BROOKLYN, WISC.

QUESTION:

Do you travel with a firearm? If so, are you well-versed in the weapons laws for your state and the states you visit?

Send your comments to *MotorHome*, 2750 Park View Court, Suite 240, Oxnard, CA 93036; or email letters@motorhomemagazine.com. ♦

escapes

edited by EILEEN HUBBARD

ROAD FOODIE | WHEELS & GEAR | NOTEWORTHY | CROSSROADS

CITY OF ROCKS, IDAHO

THESE AMAZING FORMATIONS ATTRACT CLIMBERS, HIKERS AND HISTORY BUFFS

Southern Idaho's **City of Rocks National Reserve** is a climbing mecca, attracting technical climbers from all over the world. Nearby Castle Rock State Park offers even more climbing. The area has some 700 climbing routes. Granite pinnacles and monoliths towering 350 feet or more are awe-inspiring. An extensive network of trails in the 14,407-acre reserve makes the area equally attractive for mountain biking, hiking and horseback riding. Climbing information and trail maps are available at the visitor center in nearby Almo. History buffs also will enjoy City of Rocks. More than a quarter-million people traveled the California Trail during the Gold Rush. City of Rocks was a favorite encampment en route for these pioneers from 1843 to 1882. Many wrote their names in axle grease on Camp Rock, and some of those signatures are still visible today.

Smoky Mountain Campground, located just outside City of Rocks, has 38 RV sites with 30-amp electric and water hookups. Six sites are designated for equestrian campers. For more information, call 208-824-5901, or go online to www.nps.gov/ciro. — *Mary Zalmanek*



MONTREAL — TAKE A BITE



Schwartz's deli is tiny, but does a booming business selling Montreal smoked meats.

As the weather warms up, many of us are planning trips north, and Quebec is a great choice for RVers. The largely Francophile Canadian province is so French it's like traveling to Europe — without the airfare or the jet lag! And Montreal, the province's capital, is a terrific place to get a taste of what Quebec has to offer road foodies.

Montreal's food scene is influenced not just by its French and British heritages, but also its diverse ethnic immigrants. More than 120 ethnic groups, including Italian, Greek, Jewish and Lebanese, live in and around Montreal, each contributing unique flavors and traditions to the city's culinary landscape. The Jewish community has contributed two of the city's most recognized and prized foods: Montreal smoked meat and Montreal-style bagels. Both of these foods are great to-go items that you can take with you in your rig and enjoy as you explore the rest of Quebec.

The smoked meat is kosher-style, salted and cured beef brisket with spic-

es, including cracked peppercorns and aromatic spices, such as coriander. It's typically hand-sliced and served on rye bread with mustard. And it's delicious!

One place to get this smoked deli meat is at **Schwartz's** (aka the Montreal Hebrew Delicatessen) on Saint-Laurent Boulevard. Established in 1928, this culinary landmark is a hole-in-the-wall in the Plateau neighborhood where residents and visitors line up (sometimes for an hour) to buy sandwiches, sliced meat and whole briskets.

Last time we visited Schwartz's, it was early in the morning and the meat



A traditional Montreal smoked meat sandwich is served on rye with yellow mustard.

wasn't hot (meat is hot only after 10 a.m.). However, my sandwich was piled high with smoky, thin-sliced meat on rye with yellow mustard.

As long as you're loading up goodies for your Quebec road trip, head over to one of five **Juliette & Chocolat** stores. These café-chocolate shops sell everything chocolate, including elegant chocolate candies and some of the best European-style hot chocolate I've ever tasted. The hot chocolate is so thick you have to eat it with a spoon!



At **Juliette & Chocolat**, the European-style hot chocolate is so rich and thick, it's served in bowls and is best eaten with a spoon. The shops also sell a wide variety of chocolate treats.

FRESH, HOT BAGELS

Montreal bagels are the other must-try for food lovers. You may be more familiar with New York-style bagels. In Montreal, bagels are smaller, denser and a bit sweeter. The Jewish-dominated "Mile End" district (officially part of the Plateau borough) is home to the city's two famous bagel makers, Fairmount and St-Viateur bakeries, located on the streets of the same names.

St-Viateur Bagel, open 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, has been making bagels the same way since 1957. The bakers hand-cut and shape the bagels and then boil them for five minutes in honey water to ensure proper chewiness and sweetness. Sesame or poppy seeds, onion, and other toppings are added and the baker shovels them into a wood-fired oven on a long, thin stick. A few minutes later, they come out hot and crispy. These bagels are so good they don't even need *schmear* (spreads like cream cheese). I buy a couple dozen Montreal bagels and pop a few into my motorhome's freezer to enjoy later.

With all these Montreal goodies, you'll be feeling like a Québécois (French Quebecer) before you know it!



From left: Bakers hand-cut and shape each bagel. Bagels are then boiled in honey water to ensure the sweet chewiness. A long, narrow board is used to load the bagels into a wood-fired oven. There's a veritable river of fresh bagels for sale at St-Viateur Bagel.

PHOTOS: BOBBIE HASSELBRING

SUPER C

A truck chassis with diesel power is a nice platform for a motorhome, but until recently, this combination has been hard to find. Thor Motor Coach (TMC) has filled this void in the RV market with its Chateau and Four Winds "Super C" diesel motorhomes. Offered in two floorplans (33SW and 35SK), these coaches are built on the rugged Ford F-550 Super Duty chassis, powered by the 300-hp, 6.7-liter Ford Power Stroke diesel V-8. Both models come standard with king-size Denver Mattress Sleep Systems and booth dinettes, not to mention LCD TVs in the living area and bedroom. An outdoor 32-inch LCD TV and a 6,000-watt diesel generator are offered as options. Another noteworthy feature is the available Rapid Camp system, an exclusive wireless remote control that operates the patio light, leveling jacks, generator, awning and slideout from up to 50 feet away.

Thor Motor Coach, 800-860-5658, www.fourwinds-super-c.com, www.chateau-super-c.com



A BRIGHT IDEA

Cabin Bright has introduced a line of LED lighting products designed to replace existing 12-volt DC fluorescent tubes without harming the fixture wiring. In addition to brighter light, LEDs have a lower current draw, and the company says the installation takes roughly five to 10 minutes using just a screwdriver and a pair of wire cutters. Cabin Bright offers products to fit 12- or 18-inch fixtures with double or single tubes, switched or not. Twelve-inch fixtures come in four- and six-module versions, the

latter of which can produce up to 50 percent more light than the existing fluorescent, according to the company. The 18-inch products for single and double tube fixtures come in five-, eight- and 10-module versions and can provide up to 20 percent more light than existing tubes. Prices range from \$32 to \$65.

Cabin Bright
513-899-9152
www.cabinbright.com



WISE SQUAD

Whether you're a hobbyist or just like making your own repairs, the Wilton ATV (All Terrain Vise) could be a handy addition to your rig. The Wilton ATV is a combination vise and sleeve that slides into a standard 2-inch receiver and is secured by the hitch pin. In addition, two patented setscrews on the top and side are used to tighten the ATV's fit inside the receiver to eliminate play and reduce vibration when driving. The 33-pound portable, multiuse vise is constructed of powder-coated, high-strength ductile cast iron rated to 60,000 psi. The ATV's overall dimensions are 19.25 inches long by 6 inches wide by 7.25 inches high. The Wilton ATV (#10010, \$199.99) includes the vise, hitch pin, cotter pin and a bench mount bracket, plus instructions and a parts manual.

Wilton Tools, 800-274-6848
www.wiltontools.com



THE ULTIMATE AIR SHOW

For seven days each summer, the small town of Oshkosh, Wis., operates the world's busiest airport, and its population swells from 66,000 to half a million. That's the week EAA AirVenture, North America's largest air show of its kind, touches down at Wittman Regional Airport on the western shores of Lake Winnebago. EAA stands for Experimental Aircraft Association, and AirVenture wings in a rare fleet of one-of-a-kind flying machines, along with everything from classic biplanes and restored "warbirds" to cutting-edge aircraft. Held July 28 through August 3 this year, AirVenture dazzles with high-flying aerobatics and dawn-till-dark activities on the ground. For RVers, Camp Scholler is the place to stay, with breathtaking views of the airborne parade, plus food concessions, free Wi-Fi and two general stores. To plant stakes at Camp Scholler, one member of each party must purchase a \$40 annual EAA membership. This year the Good Sam Club is offering its members a six-month EAA membership for \$10 that allows them to book an RV site and purchase admission at discounted rates. Good Sam members can take advantage of the offer by clicking on the AirVenture link at www.goodsamclub.com/chapters.

For more information, go to www.airventure.org — Valerie Law

News Briefs

For the ninth consecutive year, **Camping World RV Sales** was ranked as the nation's No. 1 seller of RVs, per data compiled by Statistical Surveys Inc. According to a press release, Camping World dealerships amassed 47 individual dealer awards for being the top in class in their respective states in 2013. Camping World RV Sales surpassed 46,000 total new and used RV sales last year. "We take pride in our excellent 2013 results and the completion of another great year for our team," said Marcus Lemonis, chairman and CEO of Camping World and Good Sam. "In 2014, we will continue to target growing our market share through same-store growth, additional acquisitions, and focus on improving our sales and service customer experience. We are excited about these opportunities and confident in our ability to continue growing our RV business in 2014."

Ocean Canyon Properties Inc., a privately owned membership camping resort company, has acquired **Compton Ridge Campground**, a public campground located in Branson, Mo. The park has 260 RV sites, Wi-Fi, two outdoor pools and one indoor pool, and a store. Compton Ridge is Ocean Canyon Properties' first public campground.

Progressive Dynamics is celebrating its 50th anniversary this year. Progressive was the first to develop a modern converter for the RV industry and created what it claims is the industry's smallest all-in-one 45- and 60-amp distribution panel/converter system. The company manufactures power centers, power conversion, interior lighting products and battery-management solutions for RV, specialty and marine industries.

NATIONAL PARKS DRAW 273.6 MILLION VISITORS

Last year, more than 273.6 million visits were recorded during the year at the 401 parks, historic sites and recreation areas that make up the National Park System. The 2013 visitation figure is down 9.1 million visits from 2012 due in large part to the lapse in federal appropriations, which shuttered national parks for the first 16 days of October.

These are the Top 10 most-visited places in the National Park System for 2013:

Golden Gate National Recreation Area	14,289,121
Blue Ridge Parkway	12,877,368
Great Smoky Mountains National Park	9,354,695
George Washington Memorial Parkway	7,360,392
Lincoln Memorial	6,546,518
Lake Mead National Recreation Area	6,344,714
Gateway National Recreation Area	6,191,246
Natchez Trace Parkway	6,012,740
Chesapeake & Ohio Canal National Historical Park	4,941,367
Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area	4,843,350

These are the Top 10 most-visited sites with the "national park" designation for 2013:

Great Smoky Mountains National Park	9,354,695
Grand Canyon National Park	4,564,840
Yosemite National Park	3,691,191
Yellowstone National Park	3,188,030
Olympic National Park	3,085,340
Rocky Mountain National Park	2,991,141
Zion National Park	2,807,387
Grand Teton National Park	2,688,794
Acadia National Park	2,254,922
Glacier National Park	2,190,374

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*Camping World survey 2012.

escapes | CROSSROADS

ELK COUNTRY VISITOR CENTER

Missoula, Mont., is home to the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation's (RMEF) Elk Country Visitor Center. Conveniently located two blocks north of Exit 101 on Interstate 90, it's a great place to learn about elk, their habitat and the role RMEF plays in conservation. From humble beginnings in 1984, the RMEF has grown to more than 196,000 members whose support has protected or enhanced more than 6.2 million acres of North American wildlife habitat.



The Elk Country Diorama showcases 30 animals through taxidermy and murals. In other parts of the museum, you can hear authentic elk sounds and heft an antler to guess its weight. Interesting exhibits keep people engaged throughout their visit. Visitors can learn about sounds (and lack thereof) warning elk about nearby predators, and the brief period each year when the bull's antlers are bright white and streaked with crimson blood. After learning all about elk trivia inside, visitors can go outside for a walk on the wooded nature trail that winds through the 22-acre property.

Admission is free (although tax-deductible donations to this non-profit are welcome). RV parking is available. For more information, call 800-225-5355 or go to www.rmef.org — Mary Zalmanek

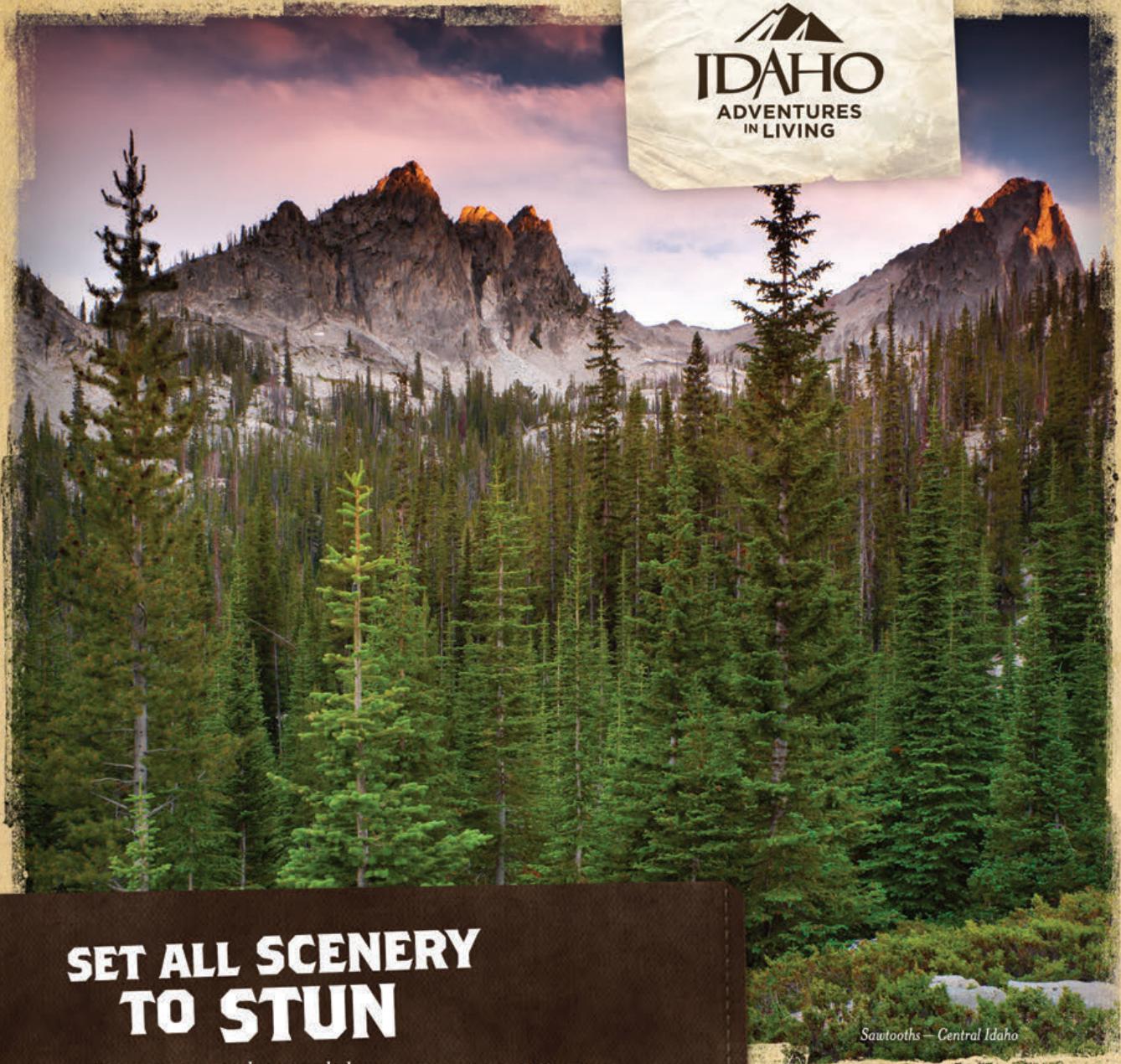
TENNESSEE'S DOE RIVER COVERED BRIDGE



Covered bridges are popular attractions. Of the four remaining in Tennessee, the Doe River Covered Bridge is the longest at 154 feet. Built in the 1880s, it was the only major bridge to survive a massive flood in 1901. The Doe River flows through the east Tennessee city of Elizabethton, where most of the downtown buildings are listed in the National Register of Historic Places. The Doe River Covered Bridge, one of the state's major landmarks, is located at S. Riverside Drive and Hattie Avenue in Elizabethton. Two other attractions nearby are the Carter Mansion and the Sycamore Shoals State Historic Park. For more information, contact the Carter County Tourism Association, www.tourcartercounty.com — James Richardson ♦



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by PAM WINDSOR

getaway



LOUISVILLE, KENTUCKY

MORE THAN JUST FAST HORSES AND BASEBALL BATS, THIS CITY OFFERS UNIQUE MUSEUMS AND THE WORLD'S ONLY FULLY UNDERGROUND ZIP-LINE COURSE

When you think of Louisville, the Kentucky Derby or the Louisville Slugger often comes to mind. But it may surprise you to find this city on the banks of the Ohio River has a number of other attractions to offer.

Louisville hosts the world-famous Kentucky Derby, but if you can't make it on the first Saturday in May, you can see plenty of racing action at Churchill Downs during other times of the year. Many of those same Derby-riding jockeys saddle up for races in late April through late June, most of the month of September, and late October through November. (Check www.churchilldowns.com for an exact racing schedule.) For a few dollars admission, you can watch a full day of thoroughbred horse racing on this well-known track.

The Kentucky Derby Museum, right next to Churchill Downs, is open year-round and features exhibits, film clips, a gift shop and even a tour of the track. You can hear the call of Derby races from years past, and for a short time feel as though you're right in the middle

of the greatest two minutes in sports. Make sure you catch "The Greatest Race," a 360-degree panoramic film experience that shows the Derby on every level, from the birth of a horse on a Kentucky farm, to the training that goes into developing a champion horse, to all aspects of Derby Day itself. You'll see the pomp, circumstance, color and excitement as tens of thousands pour onto the grounds sporting fancy hats, dresses and suits as they head for box



Kentucky Hot Brown — a traditional Derby dish — is an open-face sandwich with turkey, bacon, cheese and Mornay sauce. The dish got its start at the historic Brown Hotel.

From top: Churchill Downs is home to the world-famous Kentucky Derby. The Louisville Slugger Museum & Factory is a must-see for baseball fans. The Belle of Louisville still plies the waters of the Ohio River and will be celebrating its 100th birthday in October.

PHOTOS: PAM WINDSOR



Above: Louisville Mega Cavern began as a limestone quarry that was mined for almost 40 years. Now, the 100-acre site features six underground zip lines, a ropes challenge course, a one-hour tram tour and a drive-through Christmas light show during the holiday season. Below: The visitor experience at the Muhammad Ali Center incorporates the six core principles of Ali's life — confidence, conviction, dedication, giving, respect and spirituality — through multimedia presentations, interactive exhibits and historical video.

seats or perhaps tables on Millionaire's Row. You'll also see regular folk who pay a smaller admission for access to the infield to spend the day in tents, chairs and whatever they brought with them. The day offers a chance simply to hang out, drink, and have a good time — though parts of the infield have been known to get quite rowdy at times. The Kentucky Derby definitely has it all.

Minerva Garcia of Miami, Fla., expressed surprise after touring the museum.

"I didn't expect to see all of this," she said. "I didn't realize there were so many aspects to the Derby. I love how they used technology so the visitor can go back to, I think the 1870s, and see what was actually happening here. It's a great experience."

She's more determined than ever to someday make it to the Kentucky Derby.

"Oh my gosh! It's on my bucket list now," she added, laughing.

NATIVE SON, MUHAMMAD ALI

The Muhammad Ali Center honors one of Louisville's most famous native sons. Here, you'll view historic videos of some of the champion boxer's greatest fights, try interactive exhibits, see boxing memorabilia and get insight into his work on behalf



of international peace in his later years.

Michael Kraft, who lives in Louisville, grew up admiring Muhammad Ali.

"Growing up, Muhammad Ali was something you waited for, to watch on TV when it would come on with Howard Cosell. Back then, the prize fights were followed by everyone in the world."

The Center offers an opportunity to reflect on Ali's boxing career, as well as other parts of his story. Learn about how the boxing legend changed his name from

Cassius Clay, faced discrimination in his hometown — even after winning an Olympic Gold Medal — and his refusal to serve in the Vietnam War, a decision that cost him his championship belt and resulted in a three-year ban from boxing. The museum does a thorough job of telling it all, including Ali's diagnosis of Parkinson's disease.

"The museum has been a success for Louisville," Kraft said. "And the memorabilia, where they got it all, I have no idea, because there's so much. It's really neat."

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LOUISVILLE, KENTUCKY

LOUISVILLE MEGA CAVERN

If you're the adventurous type, you might enjoy the Louisville Mega Cavern. This 100-acre underground cavern, which began as a limestone quarry, has seen many different uses. During the Cuban Missile Crisis, preparations were made to house 50,000 people in the event of a nuclear attack. Open to the public today, the cavern offers zip-line tours, challenge bridges and tram tours throughout its 17 miles of underground space.

Tram tour guide Juanita Larkin said people are often surprised to hear how it once served as a fallout shelter. Many who lived here during the Cold War never knew of its existence.

"It was the largest fallout shelter in the state of Kentucky," she said. "It had enough food, water and equipment to take care of 50,000 for up to three years."

Now, parts of the cavern are used for storing large equipment and traffic salt, the type used to clear snow and ice off the roads during wintry conditions. The cavern also houses recycling worms, as part of a Mother Earth recycling program.

"We recycle, still to this day, dirt, rock, brick, gravel and concrete. We use recycling worms."

Larkin added that the worms are edible, and as part of each tour, shows the worms in their recycling bins and even stops to eat one.

"That gets a big reaction out of people," she admitted.

And what do the worms taste like?

"Dirt," she said, laughing. "My doctor thinks I'm nuts, but they can't hurt me."

During the past couple of years, the cavern has set up courses and has become the only fully underground zip-line operation in the world.

Mindy Grewell from North Canton, Ohio, recently zip-lined at Mega Cavern.

"I've never zip-lined in a cavern. It was exhilarating, a good adrenaline rush!"

Michelle Cameron of Magnolia, Ky., backed her up.

"It's awesome, so fun! I've never done anything like this and it's thrilling. I'm scared of heights but it's really fun!"

Her son John agreed.

"While there's the thrill of the rush, there are also points, on the longest one, where it starts to slow down and you can



The Kentucky Derby Museum offers two floors of exhibits that give visitors an in-depth look at thoroughbred racing.

kind of hang there," he explains. "It's peaceful and exciting at the same time."

THE BELLE OF LOUISVILLE

Built along the Ohio River, Louisville remains very proud of its heritage. The city holds events and festivals along its waterfront throughout the year. A steamboat, the Belle of Louisville, offers cruises along the Ohio River, giving those on board a unique view of Louisville on one side of the river and Indiana on the other. In fact, with the two states so close, those who live here often refer to this part of the country as Kentuckiana.

KENTUCKY HOT BROWN

During your visit to Louisville, you'll definitely eat well. Louisville is proud to be known as a city of restaurants offering many types of unique dishes. For a quick dessert, sample some Derby Pie, and when it comes to an entrée, you don't want to miss a Kentucky Hot Brown. Many restaurants offer it, including the English Grill at the historic Brown Hotel, where it got its start. Chef de Cuisine Ryan O'Driscoll said the open-face sandwich consisting of brioche bread, turkey, bacon, Mornay sauce and cheese was created by the hotel chef in 1926.

"They would have hundreds here for an evening of dancing and then it came to a point where people got bored with the normal fare and wanted something different. He came up with a late-night meal that was sort of comforting and filling."

O'Driscoll noted that the hotel still prepares the hearty dish the way it has from the beginning, with the key being the care taken in preparing each ingredient.

LOUISVILLE SLUGGER

If you're passing through downtown, you'll likely see the 120-foot-tall bat in front of the Louisville Slugger Museum & Factory. Through a side window you can watch as factory workers make Louisville Slugger bats. Baseball fans will enjoy a trip inside to get an up-close look at the operation that still turns out every wooden bat used by players in the major leagues today.

The museum offers a rich look at the



Babe Ruth's 1927 bat is considered to be the crown jewel of the Louisville Slugger Museum's collection.

game's history. Curator Nathan Stalvey takes great pride in what he calls its crown jewel.

"This is a game-used Babe Ruth bat from 1927. It was the year he hit 60 home runs, the first 21 with this bat. How do we know that? Look at the center brand logo. Those are notches he put in there for each home run he hit."

In Louisville, you'll find quite a few options that appeal to a variety of different interests. Whatever you choose, you can be sure these are one-of-a-kind attractions you won't find anywhere else. ♦

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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



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YELLOWSTONE

A FIRST-TIMER'S



Grand Prismatic Spring, the largest hot spring in Yellowstone, is a must-see that dazzles visitors with its size and colors.

Jagged rock formations frame the Lower Falls of the Yellowstone River in the park's own Grand Canyon.

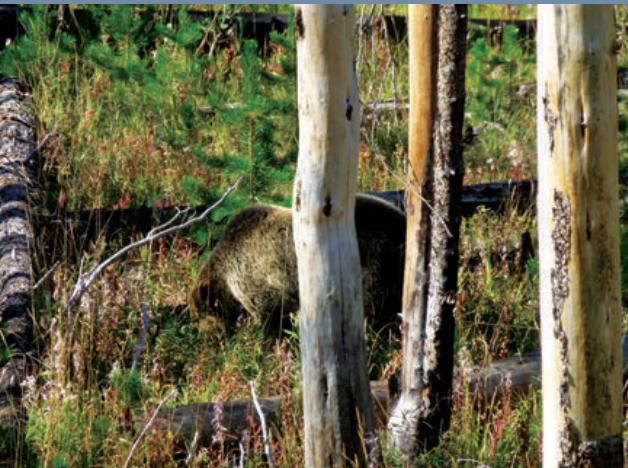


YOUR WAY TOOL KIT



Hot, acidic water dissolves limestone beneath the ground to form travertine terraces at Mammoth Hot Springs.

Yellowstone is grizzly bear country, so keep your distance and only get close with your camera lens.



PLANNING A TRIP TO SEE OLD FAITHFUL? HERE'S WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW BEFORE HEADING OFF TO THE **WORLD'S LARGEST COLLECTION OF GEYSERS**

by CHRISTINE GOODIER

Tell a few people you're going to Yellowstone National Park and you'll suffer from information overload. Your helpful boss or mother-in-law's idea of a good time may not match yours, and you could end up with more questions than answers.

When to arrive? Where to stay? And what are the "musts" to see? My husband, Bob, and I learned by trial and error last summer when we drove west in our Class B Sprinter motorhome.

CHECK YOUR DATES AND BRING WARM CLOTHES

My taste buds were primed for a steak-and-baked-beans cookout until I discovered that Roosevelt Lodge Corral activities had concluded on Labor Day before our Sept. 6 arrival. Most people come to Yellowstone in June, July and August, optimal weather months when the park is in full swing (and most crowded).

Campgrounds inside the park open in May or June, and begin closing as early as Sept. 1, along with some visitor services. (Mammoth entrance and campground do stay open all year, but most park roads are closed to auto travel between early November and late April.)

Snow and freezing conditions can happen any time of year, the campground staff told us. We turned on our furnace and added another layer of clothes when September's mild days dropped into the 30s at night.

TIPS FOR YOUR TRIP

The NPS Yellowstone site (www.nps.gov/yell) has a wealth of information, including opening and closing dates, and details on campgrounds inside and outside the park. (All campgrounds in the park, except Fishing Bridge, are discounted by 50 percent for Senior or Access Pass holders.)

CAMPGROUNDS EVERYWHERE

There's no one "best" location, we learned. The park covers 3,472 square miles — more than Delaware and Rhode Island combined — with 310 miles of paved roads. Some people divide their Yellowstone nights between two or three campgrounds to cut down on drive time; others park the motorhome once and explore from a base camp.

We wanted to stay inside the park, preferably with electricity and water, so Fishing Bridge RV Park was our only option. (It has 325 paved, level back-in sites with a maximum RV length of 40 feet.) We were happy with the location along the figure-eight-shaped Grand Loop road that links many of Yellowstone's sights.

It was the priciest option (\$50 per night in 2014) but delivered on services: full hookups (50 amp) at each site, showers and a coin laundry at the office, and groceries, fuel and LP-gas just outside the entrance. Campers park dinghy vehicles alongside their motorhomes in the double-wide sites, but slideout space is tight.

We reserved ahead online through Xanterra Parks and Resorts. The same concession operates four additional campgrounds on the

PHOTOS: ROBERT GOODIER

YELLOWSTONE YOUR WAY: A FIRST-TIMER'S TOOL KIT

Grand Loop Road: Canyon, Bridge Bay, Grant and Madison. All have some services, but no hookups, for RVs up to 40 feet and are priced between \$22.50 and \$27. Some sites are not level, so RVers should bring blocks. Generators are allowed.

Many RVers expand their choices and stay outside the park, adding extra driving time to reach the Grand Loop. Yellowstone Grizzly, for example, is a private campground in West Yellowstone, Mont., just

four blocks from the West Entrance, that can handle large Class A's. Henry's Lake State Park in Idaho has water and electric sites you can reserve, as do some National Forest Service campgrounds.

NO RESERVATIONS? COME ANYWAY

On our next trip, we might try showing up before 11 a.m. for one of seven first-come, first-served National Park Service (NPS) campgrounds, also located inside



Yellowstone Lake can get choppy, but morning waters are usually calm. Boat rentals are available at Bridge Bay Marina.

GEYSER GAZING

Look for signs posted in visitor centers for eruption predictions, call the Old Faithful Visitor Education Center at 307-344-2751 for recorded messages, or receive geyser eruption predictions via @Twitter.com/GeyserNPS.



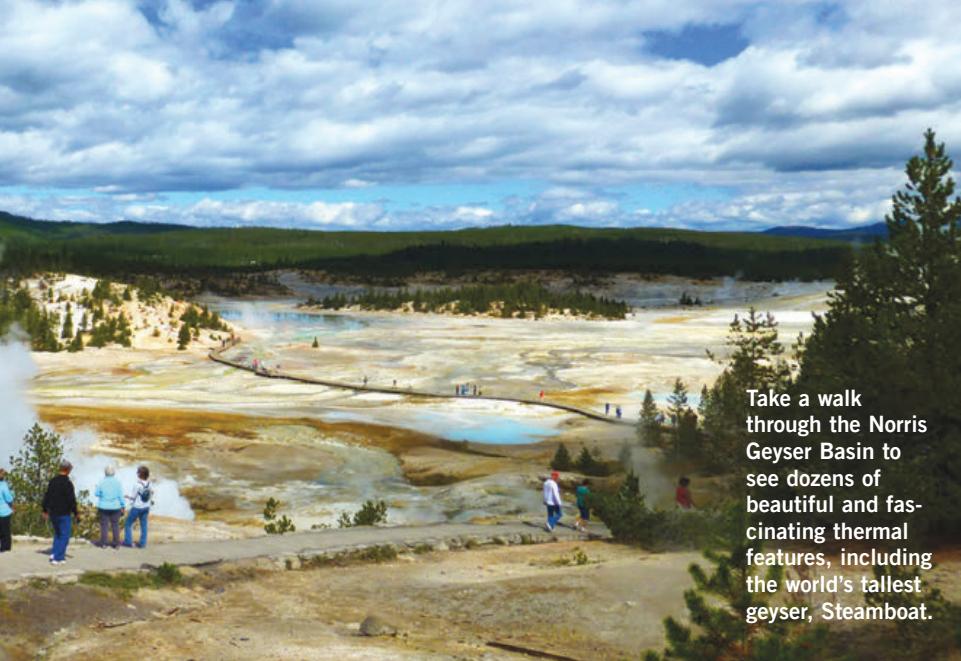
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Take a walk through the Norris Geyser Basin to see dozens of beautiful and fascinating thermal features, including the world's tallest geyser, Steamboat.



Ranger Jen Shoemaker leads a tour at Mammoth Hot Springs. The park offers a wide variety of ranger programs.



Back-in sites at Fishing Bridge Campground have full hookups, but space is tight if you have slideouts and a dinghy.

NPS RANGER PHOTO BY BRIAN SUDEMAN

the park (\$15 to \$20). None have hookups or dump stations, and only Mammoth and Norris allow generator use. Many sites are suitable only for motorhomes up to 35 feet, but there are some long pull-through sites at Mammoth.

Although there's no dispersed RV camping inside Yellowstone, a lot of public land surrounds the park. For example, Gallatin National Forest has more than a dozen campgrounds (some with electric hookups) and plenty of dispersed sites.

STRATEGIZE YOUR SIGHTSEEING

Eventually I winnowed down the overwhelming possibilities into a must-see "three G" list: grizzlies, geysers and the Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone. After being on the road for a few weeks, we were ready to unwind. But we knew we'd be driving for long stretches on the Grand Loop where the speed limit is 45 MPH or less, roads are under construction, parking lots overflow and wildlife sightings create "animal jams."

To ease into it, I booked two bus tours

that departed directly from our campground. A full-day "Circle of Fire" tour around the lower Grand Loop introduced us to thermal features and the canyon without traffic or parking hassles. A five-hour Lamar Valley Wildlife Excursion took us directly to prime animal viewing areas at sunset, and spared Bob the chore of driving through construction over Dunraven Pass and back again at dusk.

Refreshed and armed with a new grasp of the park layout, we set out early each of the following days. Starting a 50-mile drive at 7 a.m. gave us a solitary view of Hayden Valley's trumpeter swans in the fog-bound Yellowstone River. With minimal traffic, we reached Mammoth Hot Springs ahead of the day's crowds.

For a close-up look at the often-choppy Yellowstone Lake, we drove to Bridge Bay Marina and boarded the first boat tour of the day, when morning-calm waters mirrored the elegant 1891 Lake Hotel. Park Ranger Lydia Smith narrated with facts about the largest high-altitude lake in North America.



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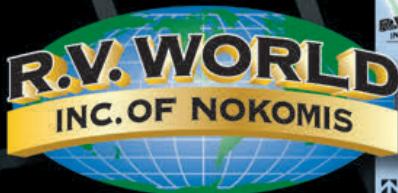
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STAY SAFE OUT THERE

A sizable bison lumbered into our campground loop one afternoon like a friendly dog. But appearances are deceiving. "Bison can sprint three times faster than humans can run," the Park Service warns. "Every year visitors are gored, and some have been killed."

Rangers hope campers won't join the list of those who have been harmed. Do not approach or feed wildlife, they remind us. Keep children close. Store food properly, don't hike alone, and stay on trails and boardwalks.

Avoid falling into the thermal pools and their runoff streams by accident or on purpose, which can be fatal. Yellowstone was shaped by one of the largest volcanoes on earth and it's still active. Excelsior Geyser, for example, pumps more than 4,000 gallons of boiling water per minute over its crater rim. Should you frolic in its steaming runoff? No. But we noticed that some folks leave common sense at home.

PREPARE TO BE DAZZLED

Any one feature would be remarkable, but we found the sum of Yellowstone's colorful parts to be spectacular. Animals roam freely; visitors spot bears, birds, elk, deer, pronghorns, wolves, bison and more. We captured my hoped-for grizzly bear our first day from a distance, through the zoom lens of a point-and-shoot camera.

I'm glad I got to see America's best-known geyser, Old Faithful, which erupted about every 90 minutes while we were

WHAT ABOUT FIDO?

Pets are prohibited on trails, boardwalks and the back country, but can accompany you in areas within 100 feet of roads, parking areas and campgrounds. (They must be on a leash not exceeding 6 feet or in a crate.) Xanterra allows pets to be left in a motorhome as long as the animal is quiet. There are no kennel facilities within the park.

there. But many of the other 10,000 hot springs, fumaroles, bubbling mud pots and geysers were equally captivating. I loved the sparkling Fountain Geyser at Fountain Paint Pot Loop Walk and the travertine Mammoth Hot Springs Terraces, which look like smoldering wedding cakes.

On park boardwalks, each visual treat led to another. Dramatic colors are determined by microorganisms or minerals (even arsenic) in the water, our tour guide explained, along with the water's temperature, acidity and alkalinity. It was a challenge to take it all in from ground level. Grand Prismatic at Midway Geyser Basin, the park's largest hot springs, measures about 250 to 350 feet across, with stunning orange bands fanning from a turquoise center.

Colors delighted us at the Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone, too, the third "G" on my must-see list. From Artist Point, where visitors flock to see Lower Falls plunge 308 feet to the river, we gazed at volcanic walls tinted yellow, orange, pink and creamy white, a result of hot water and steam reacting with iron and other minerals.

CHANGE IS THE ONLY CONSTANT

Your trip might be affected by smoke or road closings and you'll see burned trees. Fire is a natural part of the Yellowstone ecosystem that constantly changes. Mother Nature is in charge.

The NPS effects change, too, through annual updates. The 1909 Albright Visitor Center at Mammoth Hot Springs is undergoing a makeover and will reopen in 2015. Cellular service inside the park, currently limited to the Mammoth, Old Faithful, Canyon, Tower-Roosevelt and Grant areas,

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YELLOWSTONE YOUR WAY
A FIRST-TIMER'S TOOL KIT

Chromatic Spring is near Old Faithful.

will increase soon. The NPS gave approval in 2013 permitting Verizon Wireless to build a cell tower to serve the Fishing Bridge and Lake Village developed areas.

On the evening of July 31, 2013, several dozen drenched tourists scored a unique story for the folks back home. After eight quiet years, Steamboat Geyser suddenly roared to life, shaking the ground and shooting steamy water hundreds of feet into the air for nine minutes.

Five weeks later, when we visited, the world's tallest geyser was back to gurgling quietly on its pile of orange rocks and it might remain that way for decades. That's part of Yellowstone's charm. You never know what might happen.

ASSUME YOU WILL RETURN

Once my short list was checked off, I headed off to see more geysers. Because I love history, I made time for the Museum of the Park Ranger and the Old Faithful Inn, a National Historic Landmark built in 1904. You may decide to hike the back country, fish for cutthroat trout, or go canoeing, biking or bird watching. Families can investigate the free Junior Ranger program for kids ages 5 to 12. The main objective: see Yellowstone your way.

It's easy to overdo it in "wonderland," but all 300 geysers, 290 waterfalls and 1,000 miles of back country trails probably will be around a while longer. Ask a ranger his or her favorite experiences and jot them down for your return trip.

Until then, pace yourself. Relax to the sounds of a string quartet at the Lake Yellowstone Hotel's lounge overlooking the water. Sit on the porch roof of the Old Faithful Inn and watch the geyser erupt one more time. Step outside the motorhome and stare at the night sky. Assume you will return. ♦



Christine Goodier is a freelance writer and editor who lives on the North Carolina coast and travels with her husband, photographer Bob Goodier, in a Class B Sprinter motorhome.



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My girlfriends and I need an RV getaway. Our “must-haves” include beautiful scenery and great food and wine — and not a lot of driving. Josie, my friend who lives in Vancouver, suggests the Okanagan Valley, British Columbia’s renowned wine country. Less than 250 miles from Vancouver, it’s an easy and beautiful drive, and a perfect place to sip good wine and savor farm-to-table foods.

“The Okanagan,” as locals call it, is a fertile valley surrounded by pine-studded hills along 83-mile-long Okanagan Lake. With vast orchards of cherries, apples, peaches and nectarines, the valley is Canada’s fruit basket. The area’s 2,000 hours of annual sun and cool-lake influence have also encouraged farmers to plant wine grapes, birthing 160-plus wineries. It would take weeks, if not months, to explore the entire 100-mile valley and sample all its wine and food offerings, so we focus on middle and southern regions from Kelowna, the largest city, to Oliver, one of the smallest. We also agree to rotate designated drivers so we’re safe.

CHEESE, HONEY AND FARM-FRESH EGGS

We arrive in the afternoon in Kelowna and Josie, who knows the Okanagan, insists we head for Carmelis, an artisan goat-cheese creamery on the edge of town. After all, she reasons, cheese goes with wine.

Carmelis is operated by a couple from Israel who use Old-World techniques to make fresh chevre and brie and aged gouda, cheddar and a blue they call “goatgonzola.” Goat cheese can be strong-flavored, but these are mild and delicious and we load up our motorhome’s refrigerator.

We wend through the hills to Arlo’s Honey Farm, specializing in honey and organic vegetables. Co-owner Helen Kennedy dons protective gear (we’re safe on a screened porch) and shows us how bees fill honeycomb with golden nectar. She gives us fascinating information — each bee visits and pollinates 200 to 300 flowers per day and these intelligent creatures recognize people’s faces! In the gift shop, we sample and buy honey and silky lotion made with honey.



Bees at Arlo’s Honey Farm.

Since we’re on hiatus from cooking, we head to RauDZ Regional Table in Kelowna, a popular neighborhood place that uses valley-sourced products. We sit at a communal table next to the open kitchen and watch chefs prepare dishes like sable fish with baby potatoes, chewy house-made gnocchi and big New York steaks topped with chunks of local blue cheese.

We’re stuffed silly by the time we roll back to the motorhome. We head a few miles from city center through hills of orchards, vineyards and horse farms. While there are a number of RV parks, we’ve opted for Canyon Farms, eight sites nestled on a peaceful farm where guests enjoy the owner’s

SIP AND SAVOR THE OK



PHOTO: DESTINATION BRITISH COLUMBIA

ANAGAN

CONSIDERED BRITISH COLUMBIA'S
FRUIT BASKET, THIS FERTILE VALLEY
ALSO PRODUCES 90 PERCENT OF
CANADA'S WINE

article and photos by BOBBIE HASSELBRING



free-range chicken, eggs and garden-fresh vegetables.

Owner Lesley strolls across the yard, scooting a dozen fat hens out of the way to show us our flat, gravel-topped pull-through site. It features full hookups, a grassy strip, picnic table and our own row of table grapes. We settle in, munching on fresh goat cheese and listening to soothing chicken sounds.

We're up early and, after enjoying farm-fresh eggs, we go exploring. With so many wineries, how to choose? We created an itinerary of different kinds of wineries. Our first stop is The Vibrant Vine where we're greeted with paper 3-D glasses to view artist Phil Lewis' wildly colorful paintings of wolves, moose and birds. The winemaker is brother Tony, a former musician and engineer. As we sample his spicy gewürztraminer, he regales us with tales about learning winemaking on the Internet. Judging from what we sample, he's learned well.

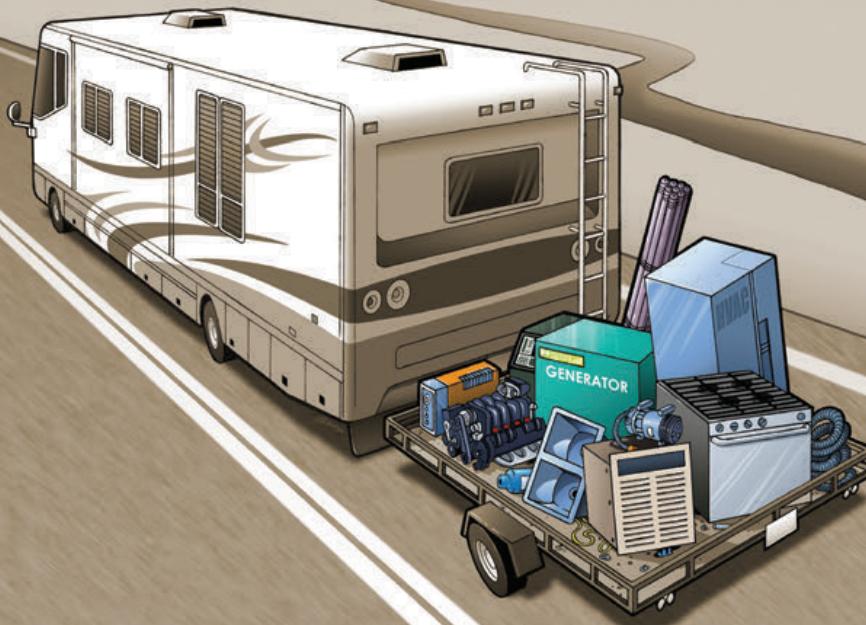
We drive onto Lakeshore Road and across the lake

Clockwise from left: Vaseux Lake, in the southern section of the Okanagan Valley, can be seen from Blue Mountain Vineyard and Cellars. In a nod to the area's viticulture, each of the eight sites at Canyon Farms RV Park in Kelowna has its own row of grapes. Carmelis, a family-owned boutique dairy, makes aged and fresh cheese from goat's milk.



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SIP AND SAVOR THE OKANAGAN

via Bennett Bridge to West Kelowna and Quails' Gate Winery, one of the largest family-owned wineries. It's also home to Old Vines Restaurant, a wood-and-glass space with drop-dead views of Lake Okanagan. I order sable fish with lentils and, with their signature pinot noir, it's heavenly.

After lunch, we head to downtown Kelowna for a different drink — hand-made distilled spirits. Okanagan Spirits is a 10-year-old craft distillery that uses a copper still from Germany that looks like it belongs to Willy Wonka, to produce smooth fruit brandies and gin, vodka and whisky. After sampling, we buy a few bottles for friends.

We split up — some of us head to boutiques in Kelowna's walkable downtown. I slip on running shoes to enjoy the city's lakeside parks and pathways. Kelowna has 10 parks, many threaded along the lake. Three — Waterfront, Stuart and City Park — are linked by a 1.5-mile concrete boardwalk that's shared by walkers, cyclists and rollerbladers. I work up a sweat passing picturesque marinas and public art, including giant sculptures

of dolphins, sailboats and a big blue polar bear. There's even a green, undulating Ogo-pogo — the famed lake monster said to roam the lake's 700-foot depths.

Later, we meet for dinner at Waterfront Wines. The pakora-battered calamari and ultra-buttery foie gras topped with sweet gewürztraminer jelly make me swoon — and these are just the appetizers. My scallops come perfectly cooked and the lemon ice cream has me vowing to put off my diet until next month.

HEADING SOUTH

Before we leave town the following day, we stop at the Wednesday Kelowna Farmers and Crafters Market to buy smoked salmon for snacks and then head south to Summerland. We cross the lake again, past strip malls in West Kelowna, and quickly we're in the hills. Highway 97 is a smooth four-laner skirting the lake where pleasure boats look like toys, giving us a sense of the lake's massive size. Clouds hang on the hillsides, but the sun is shining. Since arriving, we've experienced a mixture of clouds and sun, and I'm grateful it's unseasonably cool.



From top right: Along the boardwalk in Kelowna is a sculpture of Ogo-pogo, the legendary lake serpent, which is a favorite with children. Tasters line up at the Dirty Laundry Vineyard in Summerland for wines with names like Secret Affair and Naughty Lady. Visitors can take a one-hour organic farm tour at Covert Farms on bench seats in the back of this 1952 Mercury pickup truck.



Summerland, 45 minutes from Kelowna, is a quaint town with walkable streets filled with Swiss-style buildings. Since we skipped breakfast, we head into True Grain Bread, a whole-foods bakery that mills heritage grains like kamut, emmer, and red fife and bakes chewy, wholesome breads. We pick up bread along with a few cheesy pretzel buns for breakfast, and oat and chocolate chip cookies for later.

We churn into Summerland's hills past cherry orchards heavy with fruit to Dirty Laundry Vineyard where we park the rig in the ample parking lot. It's named for an early Chinese entrepreneur who operated The Dirty Laundry, a laundry downstairs and a saloon and bordello upstairs. The winery does a fun, campy take on the bordello theme with "working girls" in spangles and feathers pouring wines with names like Naughty Chardonnay, Secret

Affair and a Girl in Every Port. Guests can buy cheeses and other picnic foods and wine by the glass or bottle and enjoy sweeping views of the valley, the Kettle Valley Railroad trestle and the lake below.

How could we possibly be hungry — again? We are, especially when we hear Summerland's Local Lounge and Grille has a talented new chef. We sit lakeside in this contemporary restaurant and feast on innovative dishes — a salad of citrus-grilled squid, pecorino, pea shoots and preserved lemon; crispy pork belly with quinoa salad; and juicy roast lamb sirloin with minted English peas. Yum!

We drive south on Highway 97 toward Penticton, a town of about 30,000, situated between Okanagan and Skaha lakes. The mountains are higher and steeper here; the cliffs white and erosion-scarred. The city's warm, sunny climate, mountainous terrain and lakeside location make it a center for outdoor sports like climbing, hiking, boating, cycling and mountain biking. It's home to the Penticton Challenge Triathlon and Iron Man athletes often train here.

We motor through town and into the hills to the Naramata Bench, land boasting a unique combination of soil, sun, weather — *terroir* as winemakers call it — that makes its wine uniquely flavored. Given the spitting rain and skies rumbling with thunder, you wouldn't know Penticton gets only 13 inches of rain each year and is Canada's second-warmest city. At Upper Bench Winery & Creamery, one of the newest, the owner gives us a tour and we sample wine and creamy cheese, and buy a few.

Then we churn southward, the terrain becoming drier. In fact, if we kept driving south, we'd bump into the northernmost tip of the Sonoran Desert. But, today, our destination is the town of Oliver and Covert Farms, a 600-acre organic farm and winery specializing in wine tasting, u-pick vegetables and local artisan food products.

We pile into the back of a 1952 Mercury pickup for a one-hour tour and learn Covert uses biodynamic methods — working with nature — to increase yields and grow crops in this dry climate. Afterward, we enjoy wine and a charcuterie plate of locally produced meats and cheeses.

We drive back toward Summerland to

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Okanagan Lake Provincial Park just off the highway. The park has two campgrounds — south has utilities, but north is less crowded with better lake views. We opt for a roomy spot in north campground and enjoy the view.

The next morning is our last day and we meet Ed Kruger of Monashee Adventure Tours to work off a few calories. We scramble into Kruger's van and drive up and up into the mountains to about 3,000 feet. We stop along a gravel track, site of the former Kettle Valley Railroad that once brought silver and fruit out of these hills. The rail bed has been transformed into the Kettle Valley Rail Trail (KVR) and the section we're riding is practically all downhill.

We helmet up and peddle after Kruger, who sets an easy pace. The track is mostly flat, so riding is a breeze. We pause at spectacular viewpoints and Kruger fills us in on history and flora and fauna. About halfway through our 17-mile journey, we pass through lush vineyards and over a

trebble. Some of Kruger's tours include wine tasting, but even this relatively flat path leaves me panting. I can't imagine sipping and peddling.

We've cycled for a couple of hours and we're nearly at our destination when Kruger yells, "Gear down! We're heading uphill."

I shift to 1 and 1, the lowest on my sprocket. The hill gets steeper and my legs burn. I hear my friends gasping behind

me. "You're doing great," Kruger calls out.

We peddle into the parking lot of Popular Grove Winery and The Vanilla Pod Restaurant where we've parked the rig. Sweaty and exhilarated, I'm triumphant. It's time to celebrate — with wine and lunch. ♦



Bobbie Hasselbring is a frequent contributor to *MotorHome* and editor of www.realfoodtraveler.com, which covers authentic food and travel. Bobbie owns a Class C Jayco Greyhawk SS.

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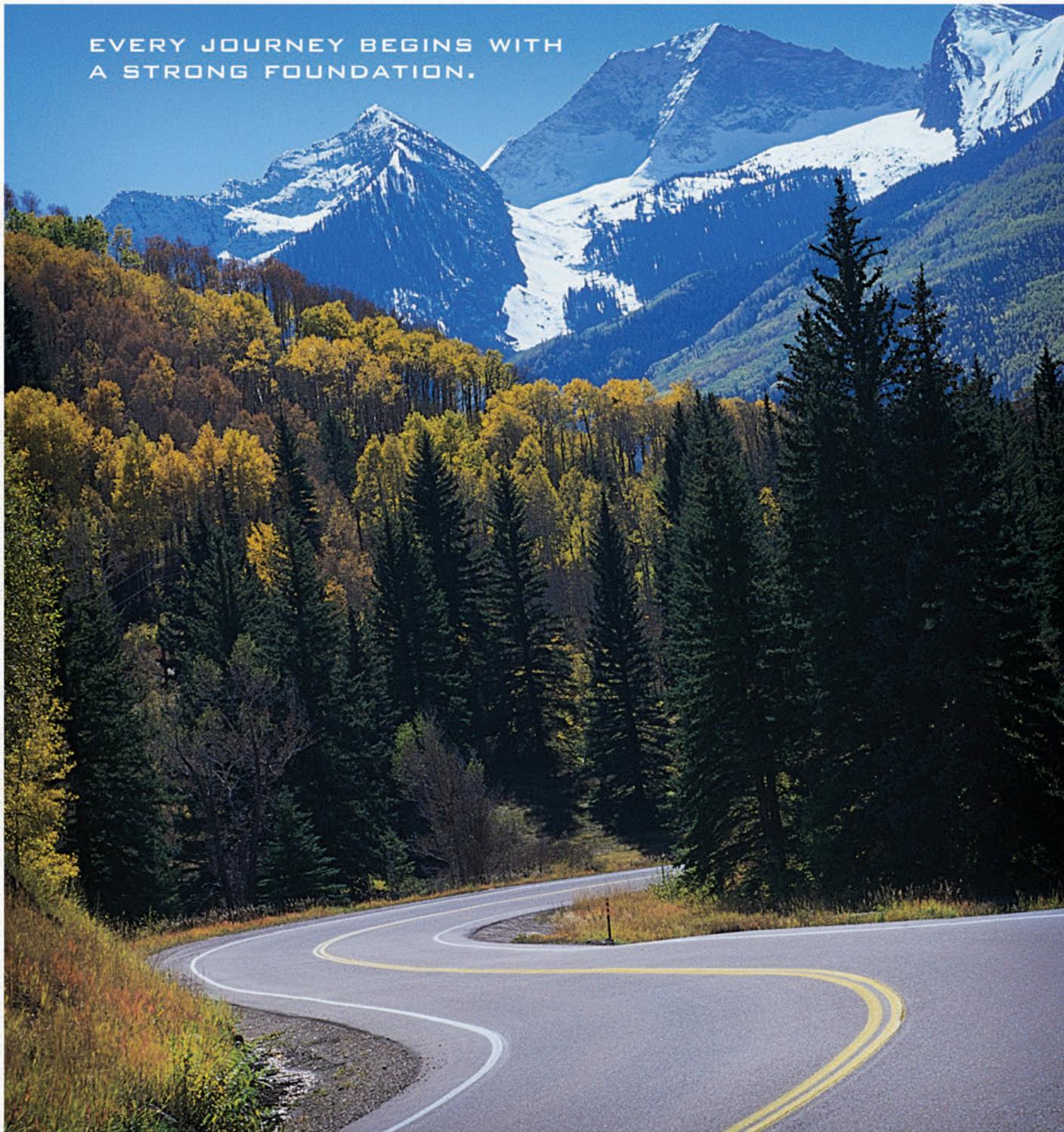


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TWO WHEELS MEAN TWICE THE FUN

by E. DON SMITH

NOT ONLY IS CYCLING GOOD EXERCISE, IT'S A GREAT WAY TO EXPLORE THE AREA BEYOND YOUR CAMPSITE

PHOTO: COURTESY OF DIAMONDBACK

Since the 1800s, when the modern bicycle was invented in Europe, mankind has been fascinated with using our own power to propel ourselves around on two wheels. Throughout the history of the bike, it has served a variety of roles. In many parts of the world, bikes are used by couriers, police and delivery personnel; they are also used for basic transportation, training and racing. There are an estimated 1 billion bikes in the world today, and some countries rely on bicycles for a major portion of their transportation needs. Denmark uses bikes for 30 percent of all transportation, and Groningen, Netherlands, lays claim to the most bike-friendly city with three times as many bikes as cars.

Even in the United States, where automobiles account for 84 percent of our transportation, we love bicycles, but use them in a more recreational way. Even though most Americans don't use a bicycle for primary transportation, we can learn some lessons from those who do. In some ways, motorhome travel is an exercise in minimalism. Yes, we see the irony in that statement because the motorhome itself is a six- or seven-figure expenditure, but the fact remains that it's a lifestyle that forces us to make decisions on what we can take with us on the road due to space limitations in the coach.

Since the bicycle serves so many needs, it's easy to see why it's a natural fit with RVing: Bikes offer a great way to get some exercise and they can and do serve travelers as a mode of transportation once they arrive at a campground.

All it takes is a few minutes in any resort area to notice that there are bicycles everywhere. Many places such as bike-friendly Hilton Head, S.C., have dedicated lanes for bike use.

These bike lanes make cycling a completely different activity as opposed to dodging cars on normal roads. So if you are looking for a bike-centered vacation, make sure your destination has plenty of bike paths/lanes.

If you decide to incorporate bikes into your vacation plans, you will notice several important differences in your trip compared to non-cycling trips. First, bikes are a great way for families to spend quality time together doing something healthy and it allows you to experience the smells and sensations of an area that is very different than just passing through in a car with the windows rolled up and the A/C on. Another advantage of cycling is of course environmental — pedal power doesn't generate any emissions and it's always easy to find a parking spot once you arrive at your destination.

If you aren't an avid cyclist, but you do some riding and are thinking of upgrading your bike, the first thing you will



TWO WHEELS MEAN TWICE THE FUN

Road bikes are the fastest, lightest and most efficient, but their riding position may not suit everyone. This class of bike is best suited for fitness enthusiasts.



Fitness, or hybrid bikes, offer many of the advantages of a road bike without the crouched-over riding position. These bikes are good for training, exercising, or for recreational riding. This class is best suited for casual riders.



City bikes are very popular among casual riders because they feature an upright riding position as well as front suspension (on some models) and a comfortable seat.



PHOTOS: E. DON SMITH

notice is how many different types are available. Ranging from less than \$100 to more than \$10,000, bikes come in lots of shapes, styles and sizes. Choosing the right bike for your intended use will dramatically increase your comfort and enjoyment.

When I rediscovered bicycling a few years ago (for health reasons), I chose this method of exercise to replace jogging because it is a much lower-impact activity and safer on the knees, ankles and hips. Cycling is not for everyone and, depending on your age and physical condition, it may be wise to consult with your physician to make sure you are fit enough to ride. If you are just planning to meander around the RV park, you need to make sure your fitness and physical dexterity are sufficient to engage in cycling. Many states and localities have helmet laws for bicyclists below a certain age, but even if you are

in an area that doesn't require the use of a helmet, it's a good idea to always wear proper attire and protective gear.

If you would like to add cycling to your activity list or step up to a different model of bike, we are going to give you a quick overview to help you pick the right type of bike for your skill level and type of riding. There are lots of different kinds of bikes so we will cover the main types to help you get started. Each manufacturer defines its own categories so don't get too hung up on the title if brand X uses a different name than we do.

The best resource is usually a local bike store where they have trained specialists to answer questions and steer you toward the right bike. While some of these bikes may seem expensive, the most expensive one is the one you buy and then don't use. It usually takes several trips to



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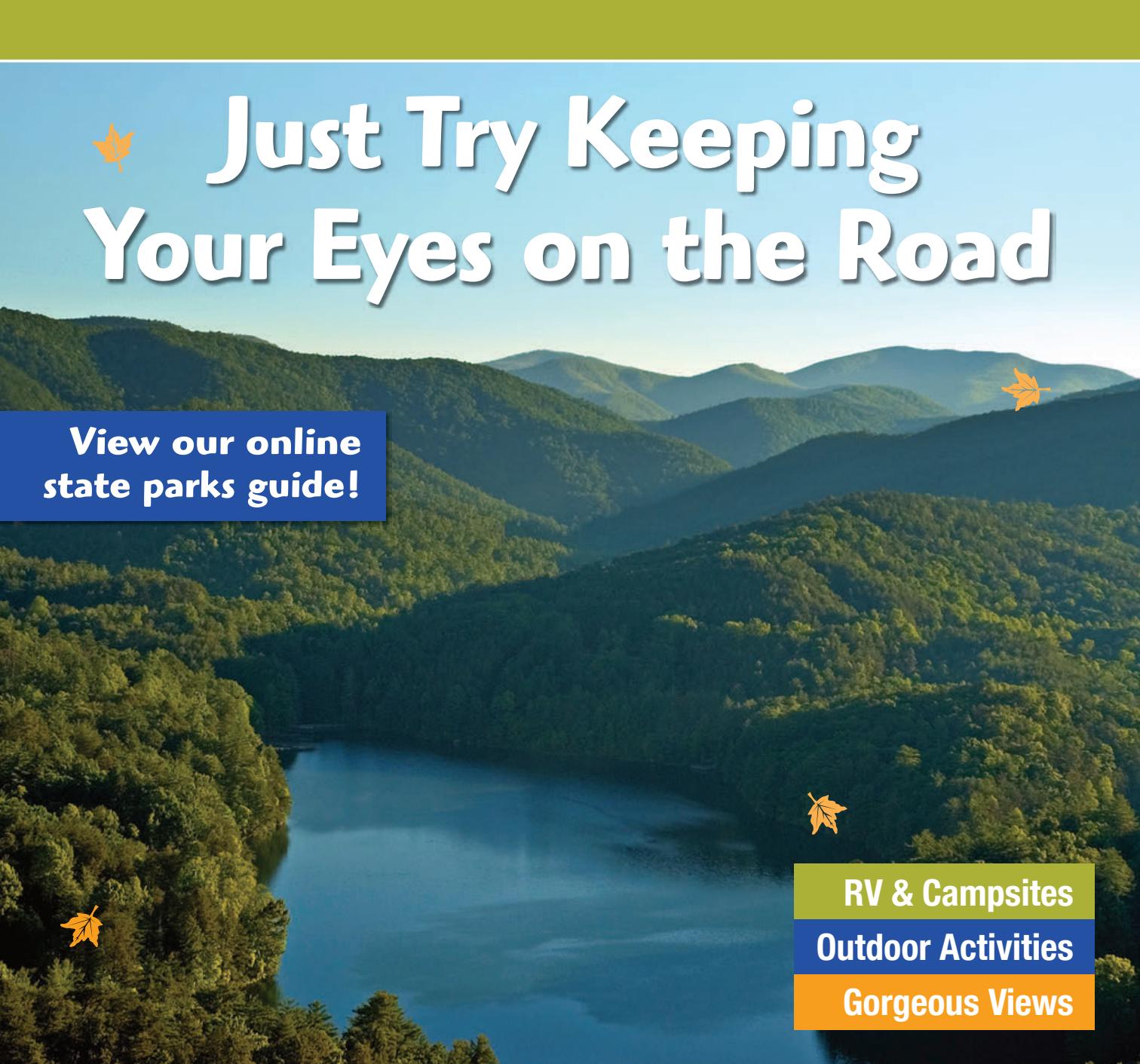


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TWO WHEELS MEAN TWICE THE FUN

Cruisers are always popular for simply pedaling down the beach or on a bike path, and if you travel to a beach area you are bound to see lots of these. The big wrap-around handlebars and comfy seat make a sunset bike ride simple and enjoyable. The bike's retro style means you'll have the coolest ride on the beach.



At the opposite end of the spectrum from road bikes is the mountain bike. Features such as oversize knobby tires, front suspension and a sturdier frame make this model ideal for off-road duty.



different stores to gather the information necessary to make a good buying decision. Many stores have professionals to fit you to the bike. Another benefit of doing business at a bike store is they usually have a club and group rides that are chock-full of people willing to help you get started.

TRADITIONAL ROAD BIKES

Starting at the top of the bicycle world is the traditional road bike. These bikes are made for maximum speed and efficiency, and for use on paved roads. The riding position may look cramped at first, but even some older riders have no problem with this type of bike. They are also the lightest of all the bikes because they are generally made from carbon fiber, titanium or aluminum. The more expensive versions weigh a slight 15 pounds, which makes long rides much easier. Typically riders on this type of bike travel 15 to 100 miles in a single trip. A road bike has between 14 and 30 gear ratios, which make it easier to climb hills or travel downhill at more than 40 MPH. They also require the most physical fitness and can cause neck pain

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If your motorhome is really tight on space but you still want to travel with one or more bikes, Camping World sells an assortment of fold-up bikes, such as this Adventurer Single-Speed Folding Bike model.

due to the seated position. This is the best choice for serious fitness enthusiasts.

FITNESS/HYBRID BIKES

The next category is called fitness (or sometimes hybrid) and this is one of the most popular categories because it appeals to a broader group of people. The short definition is that a fitness bike is a road bike that has flat bars instead of drop-down handlebars. Hybrids have many technical innovations such as multiple gear ratios, and they can be light but usu-

ally not as light as a true road bike. Commuters, as well as those who just want to ride to get in shape, often use them due to the riding comfort. As long as you don't plan on group rides with a lot of fast people on road bikes, this is a great option. Like all bike types, they come in sizes for men and women to fit your body type.

CITY BIKES

Another popular category is the city bike. These are made for a wider array of use, such as rougher roads and sidewalks that

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are likely to be filled with bumps. They feature wider tires and a heavier frame to help soak up the bumps and usually have a wide range of adjustable gears. The city bike has a larger seat and an upright seating position and some models have a front suspension. If you aren't planning on taking long rides or serious training rides, this one merits consideration.

COMFORT/CRUISER BIKES

The next road-based category is known as a comfort bike, also called a casual or cruiser bike. It has an upright seating position with a tall handlebar mount that allows you to sit back on the large seat and enjoy the ride. Some models have gears, but many do not, so keep that in mind if you ride in hilly areas. Cruisers have big, wide tires and beefy frames to soak up bumps and pot holes, but don't plan on riding them 20 to 30 miles per session because they aren't really set up for that. These are for enjoying the scenery and riding 30 to 60 minutes when traveling a major distance is not the goal. This is the most common type of rental bike.

MOUNTAIN BIKES

If you are really adventurous and like to ride off-road, there's a bike just for you — it's the mountain bike. These are made specifically for off-road use and include front- or front-and-rear suspension as well as large-diameter knobby tires to better roll over obstacles and get traction in dirt and sand. They also have a wide range of gear ratios aimed at the slower speeds that are necessary when riding off-road. The riding position is aimed specifically at giving you the most control of the bike while seated and standing. This kind of bike is not for everyone, but as a class, it's one of the fastest growing categories.

No matter which type of bike you choose, the important thing is to get out there and ride. Bikes can take you places

you can't get to in a car, and allow you to experience things such as the smell of an ocean breeze, the smile and wave from another cyclist, or even the sight of a deer in the woods as you silently roll by.

Many of us choose motorhome travel because we love the outdoors and traveling to new and different places while experiencing everything that place has to offer. There are few ways to enjoy more of what an area has to offer than by seeing

it on a bicycle. Before you spend another beautiful spring day riding around in your dinghy, consider adding a bike to your RV travels. Not only will you be more physically fit, but also you will see and experience things you didn't before biking. ♦



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



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WINNEBAGO TOURING COACH TRAVATO 59G



THE SUCCESSFUL MARRIAGE BETWEEN FIAT AND CHRYSLER RESULTS IN A STYLISH CLASS B THAT'S FUN, PRACTICAL AND EASY TO PARK

by DONYA CARLSON

When considering the purchase of a motorhome, it's always a good idea to think about how you plan to use it, where you plan to store it and if the end justifies the means. However, many potential buyers take all this into consideration and end up talking themselves out of a new coach, simply because they don't think it makes sense in the long run. But what if you could have a motorhome that could be used every day, could be parked in your driveway and didn't cost more than a typical luxury car?

Winnebago's Travato is the first Class B motorhome in the United States to be offered on Fiat's Ducato chassis, which has been in production in Europe since 1981, and is the most common platform there. The Italian-sourced chassis is badged as the Ram ProMaster in the U.S. market, and is powered by Chrysler's 3.6-liter Pentastar V-6 that boasts 280 horsepower and 260 lb-ft torque. Now that plans for this chassis have winged their way across the pond to the North American market, we couldn't wait to get our hands on this Class B.

To test Winnebago's newest motorhome from the company's Touring Coach lineup, we filled the cabinets' nooks and crannies with food and Chianti (the obvious choice), sleeping gear and

all the necessary kitchen caboodle, and motored up the California coast to Morro Dunes RV Park in Morro Bay. Wherever we stopped with the Travato, the name alone was a people-magnet. The most common observation was — using their hands for emphasis — “Itsa Italian, no?!” Then, once peering inside, they were impressed with all the amenities.

The Travato has a surprising amount of indoor storage space, plus the cabinets have nifty push-in/pull-out knobs that tell you in a glance if the cabinets are locked and ready for travel. Our test Travato was outfitted with European-style Marbella Cherry Wood Finish cabinets (\$203), which looked beautiful, but fingerprints stood out on the high-gloss finish. Alas, potential storage space over the cab was occupied by window-cover panels and an extra cushion to convert the dinette into a bed. Happily, there is plenty of floor space for bicycles, camp chairs and sporting equipment at the rear of the motorhome when the Flex Bed System (which folds down from the streetside wall) is stowed, and it's all handily accessible through the double doors.

There's no outside storage (except to stow the sewer hose), although inside the back door a cubby houses a water hose, quick-disconnect and sprayer-head wash station, plus there's storage for electrical cords and such in a cabinet under the Flex

Bed. Because space is at a premium, a pump that delivers air and tire sealant simultaneously is provided in lieu of a spare tire. Underneath the motorhome is the 2.8 kW generator, which is just 6¼ inches off the ground — so take care when traveling off-road.

We liked the Travato's easy-grip door handles and smooth-sliding side door for uncomplicated entry. Once inside the cockpit, we settled into cushy cloth-covered captain's seats with manually adjustable lumbar support and height adjustment. These dial-type lumbar controls could use a bit more area to grip for easier adjustment. A well-laid-out instrument panel is right in view and an Electronic Vehicle Information Center keeps you in the loop about everything from a door being ajar to windshield washer fluid being low. Chrysler's U-Connect 5.0 Infotainment Center above the temperature controls offers a wealth of information on a 5-inch color touch screen, including a Rear-view Monitor System, GPS navigation and Bluetooth hands-free phone functionality, in addition to the stereo with SiriusXM services. Three deep cup holders kept large-sized fountain drinks securely parked.

Traveling down a smooth highway, handling was excellent, noise inside the cab was minimal and it was easy to have normal-decibel conversations. Several times when hitting patches of nasty pavement, especially with the suspension designed for heavy use, components and gear rattled around in the back and the noise level increased to the point where we took a break in conversation. With 280 HP, the Travato had no problem taking on steep hills; but at higher engine rpm, engine roar was prominent. Also, during travel, the window on the sliding door worked its way open time and again. Visibility overall was good, and the side mirrors with a power-folding feature provided a wide rear view.

A forward-facing convertible dinette seats two and has three-point seat belts — there's even a child-seat anchor. The Ultraleather seats were comfortable enough — although, while underway, the smooth upholstery, in conjunction with the bench structure's slick finish, created a slippery surface where the bottom cushion would scoot out during travel. When we investigated why the bench seat's backrest was askew, we found that one of the screws designed to secure it had become dislodged, and the screw head was not accessible. Hook-and-loop fastener would probably be a better method here.

Likewise, the convertible dinette left a lot to be desired. In fairness, it's a challenge to create a multiuse space in a motorhome of this size, but we found that the table was unstable and awkward to use. The hinges, which are used to fold the dinette table down to make a bed, work smoothly, but the table extension isn't easy to deploy either while sitting or standing. Pushing the table forward as far as it could go allowed 15½ inches from the seat back to the table, so it was a tight squeeze. Plus, when getting in, we needed to take care not to crash into the table leg.

Once seated, we found other problems. Our thighs almost touched the bottom of the teetering table, and the cabinet above to the streetside window, which houses light switches and the TV, got in the way of tall people who constantly banged their heads on it. We recommend reserving the window seat for

From top: Cockpit controls are logically laid out and easy to reach. Galley is compact but functional, and upgraded cabinetry has an elegant European look. Dinette area is a bit cramped, but converts into additional sleeping space.



2014 WINNEBAGO TRAVATO 59G

WHAT'S HOT

Good fuel economy, quick and easy Flex Bed System, big bathroom, can be parked in a driveway and used as daily transport

WHAT'S NOT

Cockpit seats are difficult to adjust, the dinette table is awkward to set up, window covers are difficult to install

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smaller people. For the best seat in the house, release two levers, and the driver's seat swivels around to face the dinette. The passenger's seat swivels as well to angle in toward the table, but has to be moved forward first in order to clear the fire extinguisher mounted just behind it.

Stepping into the Travato from the sliding door via an electric step, you'll find a nicely disguised freshwater tank covered in Ultraleather to match the dinette's cushions. It's an unusual arrangement to have the tank in the doorway, but there's more to it than meets the eye: The seat box can slide forward to meet the dining table or become part of the dinette's transformation into a bed. An included cushion completes the bed or doubles as a backrest for the seat when the sliding door is closed but, here again, there were problems with the execution. The sliding door was designed with an inside handle that's not flush-mounted, so the seat-back cushion always looks crooked when resting against it. Fortunately, the cushion is thick enough that it lessens the impact of the door handle in your back.

When it came time to rest our weary — yet thoroughly content — heads, we set about blocking out light with the blackout roller shades and privacy panels. In the cab, magnetic panels "stick" on in seconds, while snap-on panels are provided for the side and rear windows. Once we got the panels matched up with the correct windows, they went on quickly. The doors need to be open to snap on the panels because cabinetry gets in the way.

Within seconds, we had the 46-by-77-inch Flex Bed System with a 3½-inch-thick mattress set up. For optimum comfort for two, and so one doesn't disturb the other during the night to use the loo, the Flex Bed is set up for your heads to be at the back doors — there are even reading



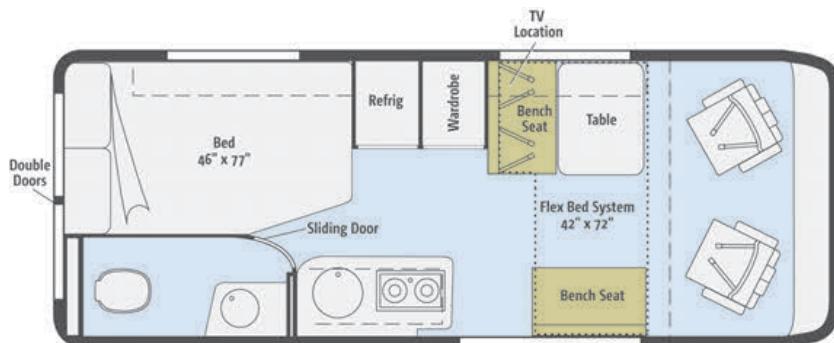
When the Flex Bed is folded up, there's 34 inches in floor space width for taking along bicycles and other toys.

lamps attached to the right door at the top. When the bed is folded up against the wall, there's space behind it for storing a couple of pillows and blankets so bedding is out of the way.

In contrast to the flip-down bed's easy setup, converting the dinette into a bed takes effort, mainly due to having to wrestle the table away from its wall slider in a compact area. Once the table is lowered, the bench top in place and the comfortable cushions tossed on, you'd never suspect the wobbly table that lurks beneath. Someone a few inches shorter than 6 feet can stretch out.

A what-a-fantastic-idea sliding screen in the side door allows you to bring in the outdoors and fresh air without inviting in the bugs. We enjoyed this setup while relaxing inside, plus it kept unnecessary protein out of our food when cooking. When we moved outdoors, the hassle-free electric awning with LED lights was set up in fewer than two minutes.

The efficient two-burner stove with dime-sized controls and sink with a fold-



SPECIFICATIONS

PERFORMANCE

FUEL ECONOMY: 17.7 MPG

0-60 MPH: 14.1 SEC

40-60 MPH: 7.3 SEC

CHASSIS

MODEL: RAM PROMASTER

ENGINE: 3.6-L V-6

SAE HP: 280 HP @ 6,400 RPM

TORQUE: 260 LB-FT @ 4,175 RPM

TRANSMISSION: 6-SPEED AUTOMATIC

AXLE RATIO: 3.86:1

FRONT TIRES: 225/75R16C

REAR TIRES: 225/75R16C

WHEELBASE: 159"

BRAKES: 4-WHEEL DISC WITH ABS

SUSPENSION, F/R: MCPHERSON WITH STABILIZER BAR/SOLID AXLE WITH LEAF SPRINGS

FUEL CAP: 24 GAL

WARRANTY: 3 YEARS/36,000 MILES

COACH

EXT LENGTH: 20' 11"

EXT WIDTH: 6' 11"

EXT HEIGHT: 9'

INT WIDTH: 6' 2"

INT HEIGHT: 6' 3"

CONSTRUCTION: STEEL VAN SHELL,

FIBERGLASS BATT INSULATION

FRESHWATER CAP: 22 GAL

BLACK-WATER CAP: 11 GAL

GRAY-WATER CAP: 14 GAL

WATER HEATER CAP: 4 GAL

LP-GAS CAP: 6 GAL

AIR CONDITIONER: 13,500 BTU

FURNACE: 16,000 BTU

REFRIGERATOR: 4.94 CU-FT

CONVERTER/CHARGER: 30 AMP

BATTERY: (1) 12-VOLT CHASSIS,

(1) 12-VOLT COACH

AC GENERATOR: 2.8 KW GAS

MSRP: \$84,039

MSRP AS TESTED: \$85,873

WARRANTY: 12 MONTHS/15,000 MILES

WET WEIGHT

(WATER & HEATER, FUEL, LP-GAS TANKS FULL;

NO SUPPLIES OR PASSENGERS)

FRONT AXLE: 3,640 LBS

REAR AXLE: 3,800 LBS

TOTAL: 7,440 LBS

CHASSIS RATINGS

GAWR, F/R: 4,630/5,291 LBS

GVWR/GCWR: 9,350/11,500 LBS

OCCE: 1,910 LBS

GAWR: GROSS AXLE WEIGHT RATING

GVWR: GROSS VEHICLE WEIGHT RATING

GCWR: GROSS COMBINATION WEIGHT RATING

OCCE: OCCUPANT AND CARGO CARRYING

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down faucet are stored under glass covers. There's not much room here for prepping, so when we needed space for chopping, we moved to the dinette table. Standing at the stove, the cabinets, drawers and a good-sized 4.94-cubic-foot refrigerator were within easy reach. A wardrobe next to the refrigerator has a rod for hanging clothes.

The Travato's wet bath is large for a Class B, measuring 25½ inches in width and 50½ inches in length at the longest

point — as it curves for the door, and has everything needed, including storage cubbies. A curtain separated the toilet from the sink and shower area. We removed the snap-on curtain, which gave us room to stand lengthwise for more elbowroom when showering and access to the wall-mounted shampoo/soap dispenser over the toilet without having to fight our way around a shower curtain. The Travato has on-demand hot water — so it was not nec-



The advertisement features a photograph of an RV kitchen counter with a DuPont Corian solid surface. On the counter, there is a stainless steel faucet, a sink, a folded towel, a glass of water, and a decorative fruit bowl. Below the counter are wooden cabinets with several control buttons. A yellow circular logo with the text 'DuPont CORIAN SOLID SURFACES' is overlaid on the image. In the top right corner, the DuPont logo and the word 'Corian.' are displayed. A red banner at the top of the ad contains the headline: 'YOUR HOUSE ON WHEELS MAY OUTDO YOUR HOUSE WITH THE ZIP CODE.' Below the headline, text describes the benefits of DuPont Corian solid surface, including its durability and quality. A website URL, www.rvsurfaces.dupont.com, is provided for more information.

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WINNEBAGO TRAVATO

essary to turn on a hot-water heater and wait 30 minutes before showering.

With a ceiling height of 6 feet 3 inches, most people can walk through the motorhome without ducking (except at the air conditioner). We had no complaints about temperature in the Travato as the low-profile 13,500-Btu air conditioner (which pairs nicely with the generator), ceiling vent fan and furnace all worked efficiently in the compact space.

At almost 21 feet long, the Travato is about the length of a full-size pickup, and we had no problems with around-town driving and parking. Several times, we didn't realize that the parking brake lever hadn't been released all the way — and were notified quite loudly as we drove off. Also, because of the lever's location to the left of the driver, as one tester was climbing out of the cab, his loose-fitting shorts snagged on the engaged brake lever. Luckily, he grabbed the hand grip over the driver's seat.

A 22-inch HDTV and stereo that includes a CD/DVD player is housed above the dinette. The TV pivots out to the right only, making the swiveling chairs and seat box the places to settle for viewing. In the cabinet behind the TV are hookups for HDMI and antenna, and room for storing the remotes.

There aren't many available options — the side sliding screen (\$280) and cab carpet (\$168) are what Winnebago calls mandatory options. Extras include a detachable rear fly screen (\$168) and the European-style cabinetry.

The Travato is an ideal motorhome for two who want to travel in comfort and love the outdoors. With space to take along your toys, we picture packing up a couple of bicycles and a small kayak and taking a leisurely cross-country trip where we can spend days outside and then head indoors to prepare meals and sleep in style. At an as-tested price of \$85,873, it has more sleeping capacity than most other Class B's in its price range, and it got an average of 17.7 MPG, with a low of 16.59 MPG.

This Touring Coach is also good for RVers who want to downsize without giving up amenities. After camping with the Travato, we'd say it is a darn good choice. And, it gets a thumbs' up because itsa Italian. ♦

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KING CONTROLS

The **Tailgater VQ2500** (\$349) features fully integrated antenna and receiver software, which leads to automatic satellite acquisition with no separate remote control or power source required. Just connect the Tailgater to a DISH receiver via the supplied 50-foot coaxial cable and you'll be enjoying DISH HD programming in no time. The custom designed user interface with on-screen graphics makes for easy setup. Just place it anywhere in your campsite with a clear view to the southern sky; it even displays that the satellite signal is partially or completely blocked via on-screen diagnostics. For reception of DISH Network SD and HD programming only; requires customer-supplied DISH-Network-compatible receiver.

The **Relay** (msrp \$699.95) offers the same features as the Tailgater but in a

traditional roof-mounted dome designed for permanent installation. The Relay is ideal for RVers who want a quick DISH Network satellite TV setup while parked in areas generally clear of trees and other obstacles.

The Relay can be wired through an A/B switch to allow use of a Tailgater portable antenna when parked in the trees, and also enables users to upgrade their existing roof-mounted satellite dish, King-Dome or others, to full HDTV capabilities with no need to install additional cables or find an external power source. Dual low-noise block (LNB) allows viewers to watch different channels on the same satellite with a second receiver.

The **Rover** (msrp \$899) offers one-touch, automatic satellite acquisition in a full-size dome, which helps get the best

possible picture quality during inclement weather. The Rover works with a variety of satellite receivers for DirecTV, DISH and Bell, though its HD reception is limited to some DISH receivers only. The Rover features dual LNB, which enables viewers to watch different channels from the same satellite, provided they have connected a second receiver. The Rover is connected via coax cable only, meaning there is no need for a separate power cable.

The portable **VuQube** satellite antenna is designed to get reception anywhere, though users will need to provide a receiver and TV. The VuQube FLEX (msrp \$649) features a wireless remote for easy operation, and is completely self-contained in a weather-resistant enclosure. Simply push a button to automatically lock-on the satellite(s) for the service provider of your



Tailgater VQ2500



Relay



Rover



VuQube FLEX

Watching TV just ain't what it used to be, whether at your residence or from the comfort of your favorite campsite. And that's a good thing. New technology continues to lead to vastly improved audio and video quality, as well as a seemingly endless ocean of programming that can even be tailor-made for the specific viewer. But in order to reap the benefits of all those new bells and whistles, RVers need to ensure their rigs are properly set up, and that means so much more than a pair of pliers and a bent clothes hanger.

It all starts with acquiring a signal. And, as you know from your residential home, that is accomplished via a satellite TV provider, DISH Network and DirecTV being the two most prominent options stateside (Bell in Canada). The decision as to which provider to select can be as simple as continuing to use your current provider (in which case you may be able to use the same receiver that's in your living room). DISH and DirecTV offer pay-as-you-go

options that don't require you to lock in to a two-year contract.

Once you've selected a provider, you can then determine the number of receivers you'll need, and also if you'd like high-definition programming, a DVR, etc. Then it's time to grab a bucket of popcorn and beam in the signal from the sky. But how does that happen, really?

It's that signal acquisition that we are focusing on: satellite and broadcast antennas and accessories. What we generally call a satellite (the dish on the motorhome's roof) is actually an antenna, as are bat wing units, which are found on many RVs. They are designed to pull in the provider's signal, and as with any products, all are not created equal. That's why we've included some of the top antenna products from the "Big Three" to help you turn your mobile living room into a campsite home theater. Just be sure to keep the volume at a reasonable level so as not to disturb the neighbors.

choice. The FLEX works with a variety of receivers for DirecTV, DISH and BELL TV (DISH-HD-capable only). Simple coaxial cable connection with no external power cable required. Owners have the option to add a second receiver to watch different channels off the same satellite on two different TVs.

King-Dome's **JACK** broadcast antenna (msrp \$159.99) includes a built-in amplifier for improved reception. The JACK also includes a built-in digital TV signal meter that displays the best direction to point the antenna before scanning for available channels. This feature, called SureLock, is also available a la carte (\$39.95) to add to an existing antenna. A JACK replacement head for Winegard's popular Sensor antennas (msrp \$49.95) is available as well.



King-Dome JACK

KVH



KVH's crown jewel, the in-motion **TracVision A7** (msrp \$3,995), is only 5 inches tall and supports more than one TV. The dome is available in a high-gloss black or silver automotive-grade finish, and is compatible with virtually all standard factory-installed and aftermarket video systems, including those with S-video inputs. The A7 includes an exclusive compact 12-volt DC DirecTV receiver that retains the program guide for a quicker start-up process. The system is easily controlled thanks to onscreen messaging and a backlit RF/IR remote control that allows users to change channels even if the receiver is out of your sightline (i.e., in a cabinet). As of press-time, the TracVision A7 is currently only available with DirecTV standard-definition programming.

KVH also offers the SlimLine Series multi-directional roof-mount antennas. The **TracVision R1DX** (msrp \$2,195) is billed as the smallest, lightest in-motion satellite TV system on the market. The compact, 12.5-inch-diameter system allows users to enjoy DISH Network standard/HD programming throughout the continental U.S. Plus, the R1DX supports automatic satellite switching from your remote control (a KVH exclusive), and gives viewers the ability to hook up multiple receivers in different locations within the coach. The antenna features single-cable installation, plus the WhisperDrive motor technology leads to super-quiet operation. The **R1ST** (msrp \$2,195) has the same benefits as the R1DX, but is compatible with DirecTV standard-definition programming only.

A Trio of Tripods

Once you've purchased a portable antenna, there's still one more option to consider: a tripod. Although many conventional antennas require roof mounting, sometimes that's just not practical, as drilling holes into your roof or side wall just to watch Matlock reruns doesn't seem too appealing. And, although the portable systems are often designed to stand on the ground, it's generally a good idea to use a tripod to help minimize the moisture, mud and grime that these units can collect. Traditional "homemade" remedies often include plywood, pavers, bricks and/or milk jugs, but for true durability, we recommend a sturdy tripod designed specifically for the job.

Generally, a simple Internet search for satellite tripods will reveal a variety of options. One especially helpful site is www.satelliteoasis.com. The site features tripods and accessories for all the major providers, and a category search can generally produce the product you need. Another resource is www.campingworld.com, which carries Winegard tripods (listed below).

TR-1518 Carryout Tripod Mount



TR-3535 Satellite Tripod Mount

TR-2077 Tripod Mount



WINEGARD TRIPODS

The **TR-1518 Carryout Tripod Mount** (msrp \$89.99) is an aluminum tripod designed to elevate the Carryout portable satellite antenna off the ground for protection from mud and water. The mount is easy to assemble and features adjustable height and leveling settings ranging from 14.5 inches to 22 inches. The TR-1518 can be secured against wind using an anchor loop, and quickly disassembles when it's time to break camp. Plus, Winegard claims the mount is compatible with King Controls' VuQube antennas, offering versatility across the board.

The **TR-3535 Satellite Tripod Mount with Carry Bag** (msrp \$89.95) is constructed using sturdy powdercoated steel with 1.66-inch OD mount pipe. The TR-3535 is compatible with all DISH Network, Shaw Direct and Bell home antennas, plus all DirecTV home antennas except the

Slimline models. The tripod features fully adjustable legs that allow up to a 45-degree angle setting for increased stability. The legs also expand and retract between 28 and 37 inches for a sturdy base. The kit includes a nylon tote bag that attaches to a leg when not in use to store the included three ground anchors, satellite-alignment compass and bubble level. When not in use, the 10½-pound tripod folds to a compact 36 inches.

The **TR-2077 Satellite Tripod Mount** (msrp \$49.99) is constructed on a heavy-duty ABS flat base with convenient azimuth degree markings molded in. The 18-inch pole and detachable legs attach to the base but can be easily removed for storage and portability. The TR-2077 works with most standard 18-inch satellite antennas and mounts. The kit also contains a ground anchor/bungee, a compass and a level.

WINEGARD



Pathway X2



Sensor IV VHF UHF HDTV

New from Winegard is the **Pathway X2**, which is a fully electric portable DISH-Network-only system designed to support two receivers. The X2 (msrp \$449) features a grip handle for easy carrying, while an eyelet on its base provides the ability to lock up the unit for added security. Included is a 25-foot coaxial cable, along with two coaxial outputs. It is also available bundled with a compatible DISH Network receiver for \$499.

Winegard's popular **Sensar** bat-wing broadcast antennas feature a built-in amplifier designed to offer users VHF/UHF reception wherever they park their motorhome. The antenna can be raised, lowered and rotated from inside the coach. The **Sensar IV VHF UHF HDTV** (msrp \$106.25) antenna integrates the UHF-enhanced Wingman antenna to capture even more programming. The Wingman UHF Performance Enhancer (msrp \$29.99) is also available a la carte.

The **RS 3000** (msrp \$89.99) is an omni-directional broadcast antenna designed to support two receivers and to continuously find and acquire any available VHF, UHF and FM broadcast signals within a 35-mile radius of a parked vehicle. Plus, it is capable of receiving free over-the-air programming from many major networks (note that subscribing to a provider will



Carryout G2



RS 3000



RoadTrip



Trav'ler
SK SWM3
Slimline



GM-5000

always result in more channels).

Trav'ler dish antennas are designed to allow viewers to watch all satellites simultaneously, eliminating the delay of satellite switching. They are available for DISH Network, DirecTV, Bell and Shaw Direct; the Trav'ler SK SWM3 Slimline (msrp \$1,799) is touted by Winegard as the only satellite antenna to offer full DirecTV HD programming. The SWM3 is a good choice for RVers who wish to utilize the HD DVR functions on their equipment.

RoadTrip roof-mounted antennas feature a compact 20-inch footprint and support two receivers. The **RT 4000S** (msrp \$1,199) is a stationary antenna that is 15.6 inches tall, while the **RT 4000T** (msrp \$1,299) is an in-motion unit that's 12.9 inches tall. Both are compatible with the major satellite providers (DISH/Bell HD, SD; DirecTV SD).

The new **Carryout G2 Portable Satellite Antenna** (msrp \$649) is a portable antenna that works with most receivers. It supports two TVs (on the same satellite) and is compatible with DISH Network, DirecTV and Bell. The Carryout G2 weighs only 10 pounds and plugs in to a 12-volt DC outlet. Other popular versions of the Carryout Antenna include the rugged RealTree camouflage edition (msrp \$899) and the GM-5000 Carryout Anser

Hybrid Automatic Portable Satellite Antenna (msrp \$449), which can support two receivers watching separate shows. ♦



Kristopher Bunker, the former editor of *Trailer Life* magazine, has been RVing for more than a decade and is currently a freelance writer and stay-at-home dad.

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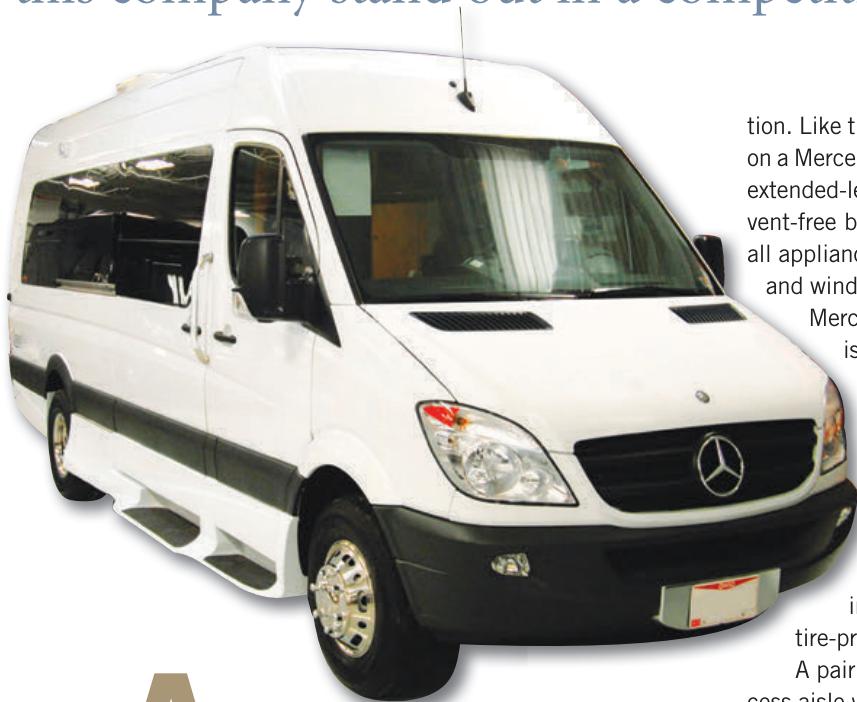
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ADVANCED RV CLASS B

Fully customized interiors and user-selected features help this company stand out in a competitive niche RV market



Advanced RV is a fairly new motorhome manufacturer that stands out in the Class-B field which, by most descriptions, is a niche market in the RV industry. First, it's a direct factory-sales-only company and has no dealers. Second, it offers no standard off-the-shelf products and every motorhome it builds is customized to suit the customer's needs and desires. As such, Advanced RV seems to be a niche builder in a niche market, and the company likes it that way just fine.

We saw several motorhomes in process during our recent factory tour, but one mostly finished model caught our atten-

tion. Like the other Advanced RV models, this one was built on a Mercedes-Benz Sprinter chassis — in this example, the extended-length 3500. The exterior is kept extra clean and vent-free because this motorhome has no LP-gas onboard; all appliances are electric or diesel-fueled. Less wind noise and wind resistance are benefits of the smooth exterior. A Mercedes-Benz-approved VB air-ride rear suspension is available as a factory option.

This version of the company's Ocean One EcOasis model was configured to accommodate a customer's need to haul show dogs on the contest circuit. A V-6 diesel with a five-speed automatic transmission is standard and a four-cylinder diesel backed by a seven-speed automatic is optionally available for those interested in maximizing fuel economy. This unit also has a tire-pressure monitoring system.

A pair of twin-size beds out back flanks the center access aisle with deep storage drawers at the forward ends of the beds. The aft section includes caged dog kennels with opening and foldaway screened doors plus small water beds for the dogs' comfort. Separate HVAC units are built into each kennel. There's a large storage shelf that abuts the curved overhead cabinets encircling the back end of the motorhome.

In a layout common to Class B's, the galley with a single-bowl sink in a granite countertop is curbside adjacent to and aft of the entry door, and opposite, streetside, there's a cabinet unit housing the stainless-steel-faced refrigerator and microwave, pantry, storage cabinets and convenience





SPECIFICATIONS

CHASSIS: MERCEDES-BENZ SPRINTER 3500	EXT. WIDTH: 8'
ENGINE: BLUETEC TURBODIESEL	EXT. HEIGHT: 9' 11"
FUEL: DIESEL	FRESHWATER CAP: 40 GAL
GVWR: 11,030 LBS	GRAY-WATER CAP: 26 GAL
EXT. LENGTH: 24' 1"	BLACK-WATER CAP: 18 GAL
	WEIGHT (DRY): 8,970 LBS
	BASE MSRP: \$169,343

ADVANCED RV

440-283-0405, WWW.ADVANCED-RV.COM

shelf. A single-burner induction portable cooktop and Keurig coffeemaker are standard. The sky is the limit when it comes to designing a custom interior and its details.

This rig's interior layout may be familiar, but it's in the details that Advanced RV makes the difference. Every component and accessory is top-notch and selected for durability, energy efficiency, beauty and function. Cabinets are constructed with furniture-grade plywood, using quality furniture building techniques, and faced with high-pressure laminate veneer — maple in the example of this coach — and fitted with German-spec hardware, some hidden and some visible where necessary. LED lights, including LEC strip accent lights, are used throughout.

Custom-cut and hand-fitted leather upholstery is used in each Advanced RV coach unless the customer specifies otherwise.

Depending on the floorplan, a side-retract screen door and attachable screen panel make it possible to leave the

van sliding door open for air circulation when desired. A similar attachable screen is available for the aft-end doors.

Many of the vehicle's systems are routed through and monitored or controlled by the SilverLeaf control system. SilverLeaf uses industry multiplexing standards to integrate most of the coach electrical systems including engine remote start, solar charging, battery charging and maintenance when on shorepower.

A 2,800-watt inverter provides power for accessories such as the .7-cubic-foot Frigidaire microwave oven. The refrigerator is a 12-volt DC-powered 6.8-cubic-foot Novacool conventional compressor-type refrigerator as opposed to the usual absorption-type model. A 200-watt solar panel system and three lithium-ion batteries are options in this rig, along with an Apple TV, Wi-Fi Ranger, a Level 2 sound system and Compustar Drone Security with remote control, among other features. XM Satellite Radio is part of the Pioneer stereo system that also includes a backup monitor.

The furnace is an Espar diesel-fueled hydronic system that provides interior heat, hot water via a heat exchanger and engine preheat in cold climates. An electric element heats the unit and saves diesel fuel when connected to shorepower.

The wet bath includes a porcelain toilet, medicine cabinet, hand-held residential-type shower head and sink. A standard macerator pump helps simplify wastewater dumping.

Paying attention to customer needs and delivering the best possible product are characteristics that help to make Advanced RV stand out in a niche market. ♦



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ROOF A/C GASKET REPLACEMENT

WATER LEAKAGE AROUND THE A/C UNIT MEANS IT'S TIME TO **REPLACE THE GASKET BEFORE DAMAGE OCCURS**

by BILL AND JENN GEHR

Every year, after the first big rain of the season, it's not uncommon for motorhome owners to discover that there's a leak originating from the air conditioner's inside ceiling assembly. After a period of time, the weight from the air conditioner compresses the gasket, which starts to work its way loose during travel. Rainwater then finds a path into the coach, creating a stained ceiling and wet surroundings.

Replacing the gasket between the air conditioner and the rooftop is fairly simple. Foremost, if the gasket is in decent condition, the problem can usually be traced to a loose air conditioner and can be remedied simply by tightening the bolts. For that reason, air conditioners should be inspected and/or tightened every six months for the first couple of years to compensate for the compressing gasket.

If tightening the bolts doesn't do the trick, the gasket needs to be replaced. Gaskets come in two sizes: 14-by-14 inches or 14-by-16 inches. If you know the model of your air conditioner, a call to the manufacturer usually will confirm the size. If not, just remove the interior ceiling assembly and measure the gasket

from the inside. While there are a few styles of gaskets on the market, it's best to purchase one that's made of black neoprene foam; the cost is around \$25, and they are available at most RV dealers and RV supply stores. Do not purchase the white universal air-conditioner gaskets; they will not hold up.

Installation is quite simple, but it does require a second person. To get started, make sure the motorhome is unplugged from electrical power and remove the ceiling assembly. Once the underside of the air conditioner is exposed, disconnect the electrical connections from the upper unit to the ceiling assembly. In most cases, the Romex 120-volt AC supply wire does not have to be removed. Once the bolts that secure the upper unit to the tie-down plate are removed, the air conditioner is ready to be lifted off the opening in the roof. It may be easier to unscrew and lift off the plastic shroud that covers the top of the air conditioner, as this will give you some handholds to properly manipulate the air conditioner back into position during reassembly. We've done this job many times, so we were able to leave the shroud in place. With the help of another person, lift the air conditioner and place



1 Water stains are indicators of a leaking air-conditioner gasket. They can be removed with InstaGone.



2 Remove the four screws that hold the ceiling assembly in place to access the tie-down bolts.



3 Remove the electrical control box and tuck it up into the air-conditioner assembly.

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ROOF A/C GASKET REPLACEMENT



The tie-down bolts holding the air conditioner in place can be quite long, so we opted to use a cordless drill for removal.



Apply steady upward pressure to break the air-conditioner gasket loose from the roof material.



This particular roof sagged a little bit and water had pooled under the air-conditioning unit. Be sure to remove any excess water before continuing with the repair.



As you can see from the lifted rubber, the faulty old gasket was causing a water leak.



Use mineral spirits to clean the gasket area when household cleaners won't do the job.



Rubber roof material can easily become damaged while extracting the A/C unit. EternaBond tape can be used to make the repairs. This will make a permanent seal.

it on its side, being careful not to lay the unit on its top, which could damage the compressor. Clean and inspect the roof material where the gasket was seated. Mineral spirits, Simple Green or a similar cleaner will do the job well.

If there are any cuts, tears or holes in the roof material, it will be necessary to make repairs before installing the new gasket. This is most problematic when working with rubber roofs, where the material can be pulled off with the gasket (if this happens, 4-inch-wide EternaBond

tape does a fabulous job of repairing damage to the roof area).

Using a sharp putty knife or a scraper, strip the old gasket from the bottom of the air conditioner. Though the gasket was originally installed with double-sided tape, over time the gasket can bond to the air-conditioner surface and become difficult to remove. This process will take the most time and requires patience.

With the gasket removed, the surface is cleaned with the product used on the roof. Install the new gasket in the same



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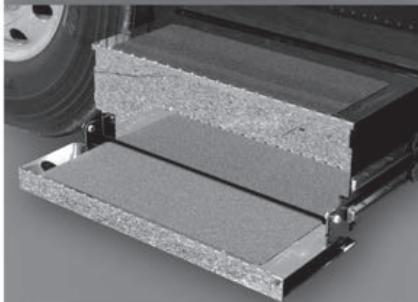
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ROOF A/C GASKET REPLACEMENT



10 A heavy-duty putty knife with a sharp edge is used to remove the old gasket.



11 When installing the new air-conditioner gasket, carefully peel off the tape backing. Once the gasket touches the surface, it's pretty well set into place.



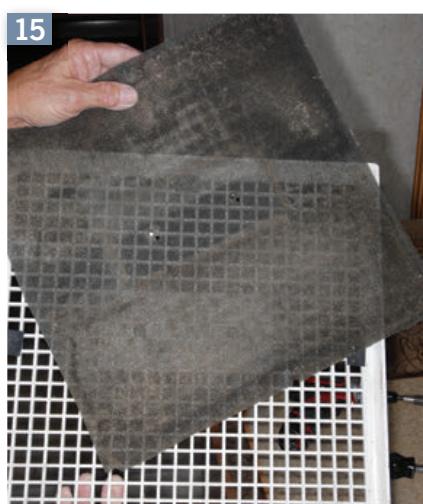
12 Make sure to install the rear spacer that is supplied in the air-conditioner-gasket set.



13 With the new gasket installed, set the air conditioner in place and line up the bolt holes from the inside.



14 The interior holddown plate is recessed in each corner. If the air conditioner is not lined up properly, the recess will not fit into the 14-by-14-inch opening.



15 Prior to installing the ceiling assembly, take the time to clean the foam filter with mild soap and warm water.

position. Be careful here; once it sticks, it cannot easily be repositioned. Before the air conditioner is reinstalled, use some type of a straight edge and check the roof for level. Over the years the weight of the air conditioner can cause the roof to sag and make it difficult to stop the leak, even with a new seal in place.

If the roof is sagging, carefully lift

the roof material (rubber or fiberglass) and install a thin piece of plywood (shim) underneath the substrate. Be sure that the shim is at least an inch wider than the outside dimensions of the gasket. Secure the shim using the correct glue for the particular construction of the RV. There will be no need to use screws for

CONTINUED ON PAGE 70

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SIESTA FIESTA

A SPRINTER-BASED MOTORHOME FROM THOR MOTOR COACH THAT MAKES IT EASY TO DOWNSIZE



In the world of motorhomes, Class A's and Class C's have had the lion's share of luxury. With the advent of the acclaimed Sprinter chassis, most Class B producers have really stepped up their game to provide far more luxurious features and options than ever before, and compete in an area where downsizing doesn't mean sacrifice. Thor Motor Coach, for example, assembles three smart-looking, fully outfitted Class B-plus models under the Siesta-Sprinter banner. Technically, they are Class C's based on chassis definition, but the company prefers to label these coaches as Class B-plus, a category that blends the best of Class C living with a Class B stature. We took a look at the Siesta Sprinter 24SA.

Right off the bat, the Siesta-Sprinter's name announces that the chassis is built by Mercedes-Benz — an excel-

lent starting point for those looking for upscale motorhomes. Powered by the Mercedes 3.0-liter V-6 BlueTEC turbodiesel, putting out 188 HP and 325 LB-FT of torque, the motorhome turns in spirited performance and good fuel economy.

The coach foundation is comprised of a fully welded tubular aluminum floor, side wall cage and roof wrapped with a vacuum-laminated exterior and topped off with one-piece fiberglass front and rear caps. Incorporated into the nicely finished and trimmed optional Sandscape full-body paint package are side-hinged luggage doors supplying easy access to lower compartment cargo. This is complemented by a small selection of maintenance-free storage accommodations. Sitting at the upper levels are a 14-foot, 6-inch patio awning and a matching slideout awning.

Moving aboard the Siesta 24SA reveals a multitude of fine touches, beginning in the cockpit with the posh leatherette captain's chairs. Cockpit seating allows for long-term comfort while giving users easy access to all the dashboard instrumentation and controls, including the touch screen Pioneer AM/FM/CD/MP3 head unit, which is iPod- and Sirius-compatible. Support items up front include a back-up moni-

tor, power windows, door locks, keyless cab entry and deluxe, heated remote mirrors.

The interior's natural décor displays an array of distinctive European-inspired maple cabinetry spread throughout the motorhome. Perfectly nestled in the entertainment center above the driver's cabin is an optional 26-inch LCD TV coupled to a DVD system. Backing up these components are the usual signal improvement aids such as a TV antenna with booster, cable connection and satellite pre-wiring.

Beyond this point lies the remainder of the well-lit living area, partially thanks to the large electric Euro-sky-light, surrounded by a plethora of European-style curved cabinetry with hidden hinges, which enhance the beauty of the cabinetry. There is liberal storage space throughout the motorhome. The earth-toned cabinetry is perfectly accented by an extra-plush leatherette U-shaped dinette, which doubles as an optional sofa bed with air mattress. The dinette is the lounging point in this floorplan and is expanded appreciably by the single, streetside slideout. There's a surprising amount of room to kick your feet up and the view to the outside provides optimum landscape visibility. From this vantage point, the





SPECIFICATIONS

CHASSIS: MERCEDES-BENZ SPRINTER 3500	EXT. HEIGHT WITH A/C: 10' 10"
ENGINE: BLUETEC TURBODIESEL	WHEELBASE: 170.3"
FUEL: DIESEL	FRESHWATER CAP: 40 GAL
GVWR: 11,030 LBS	GRAY-WATER CAP: 38 GAL
EXT. LENGTH: 24' 6"	BLACK-WATER CAP: 38 GAL
EXT. WIDTH: 7' 6"	LP-GAS CAP: 16 GAL
	BASE MSRP: \$108,375
	FULLY OPTIONED: \$122,005

THOR MOTOR COACH

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eyes are focused on a gracefully dressed kitchen, featuring a solid-surface countertop trimmed with a tasteful selection of stainless-steel fixtures. The natural, brushed stainless-steel theme is supported by a single bowl sink with a tall gooseneck faucet, the convection/microwave oven, a range hood with a smooth flowing matched backsplash and the double-door refrigerator inserts.

Residential-looking linoleum flooring continues into the bedroom and bathroom. A quick tour of the bathroom reveals a simple and tidy area with all the basics. This area is well-equipped with a porcelain bowl commode, rectangular shower with a glass door and a welcome skylight. Helping to keep the close quarters fresh is the usual powered bath vent.

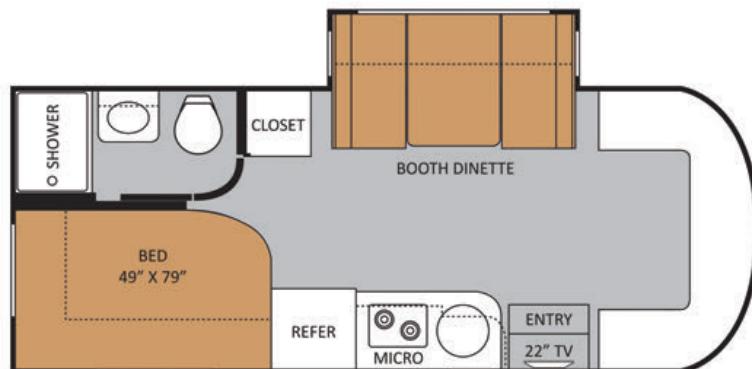
Opposite the bathroom wall is the master bedroom of sorts. A queen-size, premium Denver Mattress is supplied as standard equipment. Adding to the décor carried throughout the Siesta is the nice-looking bedspread plus pillow shams, all with European influence. Reading a favorite book or magazine in bed is made easy by well-placed directional lights.

All these carefully selected amenities are made more enjoyable by the ability to control the interior comfort level

through the 13,500-Btu front-mounted low-profile air conditioner, conveniently forced through a ceiling ducting system. Helping to power all the creature comforts is an optional Onan RV QD 3200 diesel generator, while an Onan RV QC 3600 LP is standard issue. Optional holding-tank heating pads can be added,

which help extend the travel season.

Thor Motor Coach's Siesta 24SA looks and feels good, and should appeal to those looking to downsize without giving up on the features commonly found in Class A and Class C coaches. It's fun to drive and the expected fuel economy speaks for itself. ♦



▼ KEEPING THE TOW BAR DRY



My tow bar cover was gathering moisture and water due to rain. My solution was to stand the tow bar on end. That way the safety cables and electrical connections are tucked inside and remain dry. My talented wife, Sara, hand-made a cover for the tow bar with cloth-backed vinyl from Hancock Fabrics.

DON DAVIS
BRISTOL, TENN.

CONVENIENT CANNED-FOOD STORAGE ▼



We used to store canned goods on shelves behind cabinet doors. My wife often thought that the item she needed was behind some other cans. The simple fix was location, location, location. We decided to put all cans in a large bottom drawer equipped with ball bearings, which makes it easy to open. That setup meant that she was now looking at the tops of the cans, not the labels. To solve that dilemma, we used a large felt-tip marker to label the lid of each can.

Now she pulls out the item she wants the first time. This storage method also helps when doing a quick inventory for putting together a grocery list.

FRANK WOYTHAL | **ANDOVER, N.Y.**

IN THE BAG

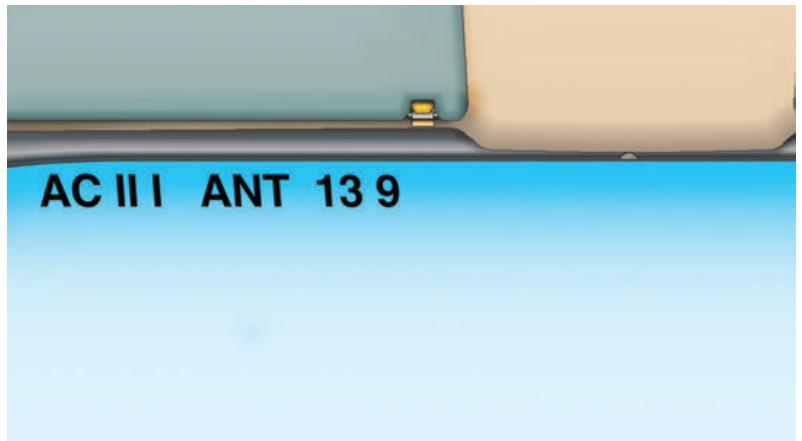
To end some of the clutter in our motorhome's basement compartment, which houses our electrical and water connections, I purchased some plain cotton tote bags. These are quite inexpensive and come in varying sizes. I use two of the largest bags to contain the 30-amp and 50-amp power cords, and a medium-size bag to hold the water hose. I labeled each of the bags with a permanent marker so we can tell at a glance which bag contains what item. With the items stored this way, I don't have to separate and recoil items that I don't need when setting up camp.

NEIL JOHNSON | **PENSACOLA, FLA.**

KNOW YOUR HEIGHT ▼

YouTube is full of videos of RVers who have lost their air conditioning units, and anything else on the roof, while driving under low overpasses. To prevent this from happening to me, I had a friend help me measure all of the high points on my RV, and then purchased a sheet of plastic letters and numbers at an office-supply store. I placed the letters and numbers at the top of my windshield so that when I come to an overpass, I just look at the top of my windshield to know if I will fit. The numbers show that the top of my air conditioner is 11 feet, 1 inch, and the top of my CB antenna is 13 feet, 9 inches (when it's up).

LLOYD KURTZ | **ELLINWOOD, KAN.** ♦



WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!

Quick Tips, *MotorHome's* monthly column of handy, simple tips by fellow RVers, is looking for submissions. Please send your favorite DIY ideas to: *MotorHome* Quick Tips, 2750 Park View Ct., Ste. 240, Oxnard, CA 93036, or email letters@motorhomemagazine.com. Be sure to include any photos, illustrations or drawings. If your tip is selected for publication, you will receive \$35.

techsavvy

HANDS-ON | HOT LINE | COACH & POWERTRAIN

HANDS-ON | by BOB LIVINGSTON

COMFORT ZONES

TempMinder wireless digital thermometer, calendar and clock keeps tabs on inside temperatures and up to three remote locations

Admittedly, I'm a weather junkie. Maybe it's

because I wanted to be a meteorologist before pursuing a journalism career, but that's another story. Keeping tabs on temperature is not only fun, it's utilitarian, especially in a motorhome exposed to four-season travel. There are dozens of weather stations on the market — some elaborate and some inexpensive — and Minder Research, the company known for its tire-pressure-monitoring system, offers a product that fits the latter category. Called the TempMinder (MRI-200HI), this simple wireless temperature monitor can be hooked up to three remote transmitters.

The people at Minder Research have a great sense of humor and reading the instructions will bring a chuckle or two. Actually, the amusing language is comforting since you'll never get the device programmed without reading the instructions. Sorry guys!

Batteries are used to power the receiver and remote transmitters. Inserting batteries is not exactly rocket science, but following the prescribed procedure is critical to proper operation. Once the two AA batteries are inserted in the receiver (polarity is important), you'll have five minutes to complete the process of syncing the remote transmitters.

Left: Remote transmitters are marked to coincide with channel numbers on screen. **Receiver (center)** uses two AA batteries and **transmitters (right)** are powered by two AAA batteries. Five minutes are allowed for syncing of up to three remote transmitters. Using lithium batteries is only required for cold conditions, but in general will provide superior service.



TempMinder receiver is compact, but readouts are large and clear. A "kickstand" built into the housing opens so the receiver can be placed on a countertop.



Three transmitters were lined up on a table to complete the process and each one was marked to coincide with the channel number that will show up on the receiver screen. Once the two AAA batteries are installed in the first transmitter (same direction) "CH1" and the temperature will appear on the receiver screen; to confirm the process a red light will appear on the remote transmitter. When the red light disappears, the batteries can be installed in the second and third remote transmitters using the same sequence. The receiver automatically recognizes the transmitters in the

CONTINUED ON PAGE 79



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ROOF A/C GASKET REPLACEMENT FROM PAGE 62

installation, as they can cause permanent damage to the roof material. Some service technicians suggest using caulking between the gasket and the roof material, but this mistake will make it nearly impossible to remove the air conditioner in the future. If you are the least bit unsure about this shimming process, it's best to leave it to a professional.

With the help of an assistant stationed on the roof, set the air conditioner back down over the opening and work together to center the unit. Once the position is set, bolt the air conditioner to the roof. There is no specified torque rating for the holddown bolts, so snug them first and finish by giving them three or four turns. Install the upper shroud if it's been removed, then assemble the ceiling components. Now is a good time to clean the foam filter with mild soap and warm water and allow the filter to air dry.

After your first road trip, remove the inside ceiling assembly and retighten the holddown bolts. Then check again in six months.

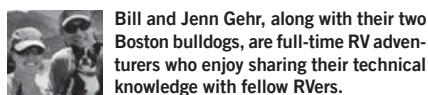
Some RV manufacturers use fabric on the ceiling. As the air conditioner leaks, the water will stain the ceiling fabric, as it did on the RV we repaired. Water stains can be stubborn to remove, but a product called InstaGone does an amazing job. Simply spray the cleaner on the surface, and the stains usually disappear. InstaGone also works on wood-panel ceilings. The product is available online.

With a little time and some elbow grease, our leak was sealed and future water damage was diminished. ♦

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



Crossed Wires

AT AN IMPASSE WITH THE ADMINISTRATOR OF THEIR VEHICLE SERVICE CONTRACT, TWO READERS ASKED HOT LINE FOR HELP. THEY WROTE:

We purchased a 2006 Fleetwood Bounder motorhome in December 2012 from Shabbona Creek RV in Atkinson, Ill. At the same time, we bought a vehicle service contract through USA TravelCare. We only used the motorhome four times. Then, last October, we were driving to a facility to have the coach winterized when we noticed that it would not shift out of first gear. We called USA TravelCare and they said that the motorhome had to be towed to an authorized dealer. They called Good Sam Roadside Assistance and we were towed to Truck Centers Inc. in Morton, Ill.

Brian, a service technician at Truck Centers contacted USA TravelCare to notify them that there was some kind of break in the transmission's electronics, but that he didn't know where the break was or what had caused the problem. USA TravelCare stated they would not pay for diagnostic charges. We had to pay the entire amount of the repair (\$839), which should have been covered under our warranty. We are asking Hot Line for help in having these charges reimbursed to us by USA TravelCare.

**JAMES AND MARY JANE FRIDAY
COLCHESTER, ILL.**

Hot Line contacted USA TravelCare on the Fridays' behalf. We received the following letter from American Guardian Warranty Services Inc. (the claims administrator for USA TravelCare), which ended the case on a positive note. It read:

I am in receipt of your inquiry into a complaint communicated by James Friday to Hot Line. American Guard-

ian Warranty Services (AGWS) is the claims administrator and obligor for the USA TravelCare vehicle service contract that Mr. Friday purchased. This service contract provides coverage for specific named components, which include the coach-wiring harness.

Our records show that Brian at Truck Centers Inc. contacted AGWS on Oct. 8. He advised that the vehicle was brought in with the transmission not shifting and a trouble-indicator lit. A review of our phone agent's notes found that the repairer asked for a \$600 diagnostic charge in order to determine the problem, which required the consumer to approve this fee. The service contract will pay diagnosis charges as they relate to a covered repair. Our agent was waiting to hear from the repairer as to the actual cause of failure to trigger coverage and authorize the repair. He never received the information he needed.

My evaluation of the facts, as identified on the repair order from Truck Centers Inc., indicates that a break of some type caused the circuit failure between the electronic transmission shift control and a transmission sensor. The repairer replaced the damaged wiring circuit, which corrected the transmission shift problem. We can't determine the actual cause of failure from the notes on the repair order.

In retrospect, I believe our phone agent and the repairer should have been able to reconcile any differences over the cause of this wiring harness/circuit failure. I apologize for the inconvenience that resulted from our part in this incident. In order to bring this matter to a conclusion, I have taken the liberty of issuing a payment to Mr. Friday for this repair. I have also waived his deductible as a gesture of our goodwill.

In closing, I'd like to thank MotorHome and Hot Line for allowing AGWS the opportunity to provide our explanation for the consumer's concern with the USA TravelCare service contract.

**JOHN WENDT, CLAIMS DIRECTOR
AMERICAN GUARDIAN
WARRANTY SERVICES INC.
GLEN ELLYN, ILL.**

TOWING TROUBLE

Finding themselves between a rock and a hard place in trying to work out reimbursement from their emergency roadside service company, two readers called on Hot Line for help. They wrote:

On July 22, 2013, we got stuck on an access road to Sandy Neck Beach in Cape Cod, Mass. Due to the remoteness of the location, we didn't have cellphone reception. The ranger on site gave us two hours to get our coach off the access road, but our efforts were futile. The ranger was able to radio a dispatcher and have a tow company come and tow us out. It cost us \$600.

Upon returning home, I contacted Allstate Motor Club (AMC), and a representative assured me we were covered. I was told to write to the claims department and include a copy of our tow receipt for reimbursement. AMC first denied our request because we didn't have the proper authorization number, which we couldn't get because we didn't have cell service. The representative said this happens all the time and not to worry about it. After writing another letter to AMC, we were denied again. AMC stated our claim was not submitted within 30 days, yet its first denial claim letter was dated Aug. 14 and our tow bill was July 22, so it did receive our claim within the 30-day time period. Please help us.

**DAN AND LIZ GODWIN
TAUNTON, MASS.**

AMC was contacted to see if there was anything it could do for the Godwins. Soon after, we received the following update from the Godwins. It read:

Thank you for helping us resolve our issue with AMC. We received a check for the tow three weeks after receiving your letter informing us that you had contacted AMC. You provide a great service for your readers. We couldn't be any happier with the outcome.

DG ♦

TO CONTRIBUTE TO HOT LINE, please refer to Contact MotorHome, on page 10.

Oil Consumption Mystery

We recently ran into a problem with our motorhome that we can't figure out. We own a 2007 Newmar Dutchstar powered by a 400-HP Cummins ISL turbo-diesel engine. It has about 36,000 miles on it. During our last trip, we suddenly began to go through a considerable amount of oil. Eventually, we discovered that we were losing about 1 gallon of oil about every 300 miles. I did not notice any loss of power.

I kept an eye on the oil pressure gauge and the temperature gauge and neither indicated there was a problem. I contacted Cummins and was told that as long as the oil pressure stayed within guidelines it would be safe to drive home. The pressure gauge was showing me running between 50 and 55 pounds of oil pressure and 20 to 25 at idle, which is well within guidelines. However, just to be safe, we stopped in Omaha, Neb., and again in Cheyenne, Wyo., to have two certified Cummins shops look at it. After three days, neither of these repair shops were able to locate anything wrong with the engine.

However, oil continued to disappear. Eventually, we replaced about 14 gallons of oil in about 3,000 miles. There is no indication of a leak anywhere. There are no drops of oil under the engine after stopping overnight, no spray of oil on our dinghy car, no spray or oil in or around the engine compartment and no oil dripping from the exhaust. Also, there is no evidence of burning oil such as blue smoke from the exhaust. The exhaust pipe shows black soot, but it is not excessively oily.

When we arrived home, we took the coach to a local Cummins dealer and told them what had happened. We left the motorhome there for more than four months so they could diagnose the problem. They finally gave it back and told us they had run out of ideas as to what the problem might be. They checked the turbo, the cooling system and everything else they could think of and could not explain where the oil is

going. They, too, were unable to find any leaks. They also cut open the oil filter and were unable to find any indications of problems such as metal fragments.

We have now changed the oil and filter twice in the last 1,000 miles without it helping. One suggestion was to start using heavier weight oil.

RUSS WHITCOMB | HELENA, MONT.

These engines run well in most conditions using 15W40 diesel oil, and going to slightly heavier oil, such as 20W50, won't make an appreciable difference in your situation. Make sure you are not overfilling the engine oil.

Due to their high compression ratios, diesel engines can burn a lot of oil before it starts to show in the exhaust. There are several things that can cause high oil consumption similar to what you report. A blocked crankcase ventilation system can cause a sudden rise in oil use. A cracked oil ring could

also cause high oil consumption. It should cause blue smoke, but it might not. One easy way I check for internal blow-by and cylinder-sealing problems is by removing the oil filler cap while the engine idles. Compare the amount of fumes coming out to a known-good engine. If it is blowing out a lot of fumes, have a cylinder leak-down test performed to locate the problem.

The most likely cause is a failed oil seal in the turbocharger. Heat and age get to them, and cause engine oil to migrate into the air stream going into the engine, where combustion burns it up. I know you mentioned that they "checked" the turbo, but how did they check it? You can't tell by looking at it, and boost will be normal. A faulty turbo oil seal is consistent with all of the other factors you provided, which indicate an otherwise healthy engine. Turbo seals are likely to go bad if you run the engine hard, such as up a grade, and then shut it off without letting it idle to cool down for several minutes. It only takes one time.

DIESEL FUEL IS PRONE TO CONTAMINATION FROM WATER AND OTHER SUBSTANCES PICKED UP FROM STORAGE TANKS, TRANSPORT AND THE VEHICLE TANK.

IN FACT, ONE OF THE MOST COMMON CAUSES OF ON-ROAD BREAK-DOWNS OF DIESEL VEHICLES IS DUE TO FUEL CONTAMINATION AND CLOGGED FILTERS.



TOWING MILEAGE

We own a 2011 Winnebago Adventurer with Ford gasoline V-10 engine. For the past three years I have been towing my 2004 Jeep Grand Cherokee across the country. I am erratic in that sometimes I use cruise control and go a reasonable 60 to 65 MPH. At other times, I get impatient and go at higher speeds and lose mileage. On average, I am between 6.5 to 7.5 MPG. Now I want to replace my Grand Cherokee with a new one. However, the 2014 version of the same vehicle weighs 1,000 pounds more. Though this weight (4,800 pounds) is still within the safety limits for my motorhome, I am wondering how the extra weight will affect my mileage.

BILL ROSTRON | MIDDLE ISLAND, N.Y.

The fuel economy you report is within the typical range for this kind of use. Best fuel economy will probably occur at a slightly lower speed, between 55 and 60 MPH. Going 70-plus (or into a strong headwind at lower speeds) can easily result in a 20 percent penalty.

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Accelerating that extra weight and hauling it up hills requires more fuel than cruising on the flats. There's no accurate way to estimate the difference to expect, because rolling resistance, wind resistance, etc., vary among models. However, you can get a rough idea by calculating the difference in weight. For instance, if you add 5 percent additional weight, expect up to a 5 percent loss in mileage. The loss of fuel economy will also be greater in hilly country than on flat roads at steady speeds. Make sure the tires are properly inflated, as this can make a significant difference too.

CONTAMINATED DIESEL FUEL

Can diesel fuel become contaminated to the point that it would cause major fuel system components to fail? I was unaware of such a thing, but I've learned it happens after consulting with others, and apparently this could have been why our coach died on a busy highway shortly after filling up at a fuel station.

To replace the pump, my bill was \$3,150 (\$2,200 for the pump, plus labor) and I am trying to ascertain whether the root cause was the fuel itself or the failure of the 12-year-old fuel pump. I have been driving motorhomes since 1973 and a diesel pusher for the past 10 years. Is fuel contamination myth or truth? If truth, what recourse, if any, can be taken?

ROGER HADDOCK | GENEVA, OHIO

Diesel fuel is prone to contamination from water and other substances picked up from storage tanks, transport and the vehicle tank. Temperature changes often

result in water vapor in the air above the fuel condensing into water and settling to the bottom of the tank. Microbes often live in this combination of fuel and moisture. That is why diesels have such large fuel filters and often have water separators. In fact, one of the most common causes of on-road breakdowns of diesel vehicles is due to fuel contamination and clogged filters.

It's very difficult to prove the source of contamination, as it's often a gradual buildup. If your engine quit shortly after refueling, and the tank was found to contain a large amount of water or other contamination, you would have a stronger case against the fuel seller. The tank should have been inspected and cleaned out if any contamination was found. Also, the injection pump should have been disassembled and inspected by a diesel specialist to determine the cause of failure (sudden, due to contamination, or long-term due to wear and tear). Armed with this information, you would have had a better chance of recovering your costs from the seller, if, in fact, the station was the source of contamination. This could have been done with a direct request, or if that was refused, through small claims court.

SHATTERED SHOWER DOOR

Last spring, my wife and I were enjoying the peace and quiet of a Wisconsin campground in our 2004 Fleetwood Southwind when we heard a crash. We went to the rear of our motorhome and saw that one of the glass shower doors had shattered into a million pieces. The shower door hung in

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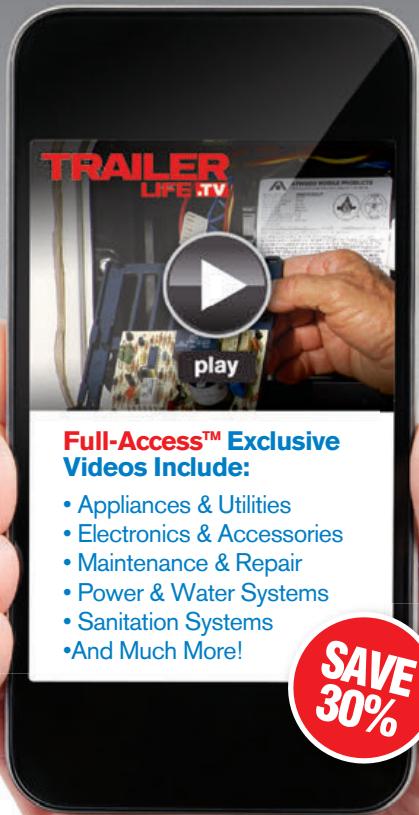
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COACH & POWERTRAIN

a track and was under no stress. We were parked on a level asphalt site and had been parked for several hours. We've had the motorhome since it was new. The dealer from whom we purchased it new was as baffled as we were. After the experience, we decided to replace the door with an accordion pleated shower door from Camping World. What happened to cause this?
DON WIBERG | FRANKFORT, ILL.

These doors are made from tempered glass, similar to what is used in many automotive side windows. They are designed to break into small pieces, which aren't as dangerous as long shards from non-safety glass. However, they can still cut you. Tempered glass can be broken fairly easily. What is likely to have happened is that there was a small flaw in the glass, either from manufacturing, installation, or use. Then, on that day, when the glass warmed up, thermal stresses caused it to fail catastrophically.

REFRIGERATOR TIP

How well your RV refrigerator cools is a function of how quickly and effectively the cooling unit can exchange and dissipate the heat. On a hot summer day, especially if the sun is hitting the refrigerator side of the vehicle when the cooling is most needed, the unit often has a difficult time getting rid of the heat in the coils. Some people open the outside refrigerator access doors to let in more cooling air. I found a better and more efficient way was to place a muffin fan inside the cooling coils pointing upward. Using plastic ties, I secured a fan a few inches off the bottom and oriented the fan so that the air passes up through the center of the coils. There are usually plenty of places to wire the AC or DC fan in the compartment. I installed a switch so that I can turn the fan off when it isn't needed. I found the refrigerator's efficiency increased to the point I had to turn the temperature setting up.

**HAROLD BORLAND
COTTONWOOD, CALIF.**

Thanks for writing and sharing your experience, Harold. Camping World and other RV stores offer several fan kits, including one that's solar powered, which ensures it can't run down the battery.

WINDSHIELD POPPING OUT

I have a 2005 Santiam Class A motorhome built by Beaver. The windshield on the passenger side has started to fall out of the coach on three occasions. Twice, this happened while on the road. I went to a windshield repair shop and had it "fixed." The first time, they removed the glass, cleaned it and the gasket, and reinstalled it. About 50 miles down the road, it started to fall out again, coming loose in the lower right corner and beginning to slide out. Lots of duct tape held it in place until I got home. The third time, the coach was sitting in the driveway for two months when I noticed it was beginning to come out again. I have searched the Internet to find a solution with no luck. Help!
JOHN WESTON | HESPERIA, CALIF.

The windshield opening is probably just a little too large. This allows the glass to pop out when the coach flexes as it goes over bumps. As you probably know, Beaver is no longer in business and Allied Recreation Group has taken over. You may be able to obtain dimensions and perhaps a drawing of the windshield opening from the company by calling 877-466-6226.

You can take it to the Beaver/Monaco facility in Coburg, Ore., to have the opening checked and, if necessary, modified. I checked with a factory tech rep and was told the shop will offer this service on your coach (for a fee). There should be between 3/8 and 1/2-inch of clearance to the body opening edge, evenly around the glass. The factory uses a urethane glue on the glass and the body where they contact the rubber seal. The tech rep also recommend that the coach sit for one to two days to allow the glue to set fully. Alternatively, a good RV shop that does collision repairs should be able to get the windshield to fit properly by building up the opening, if necessary.

INTERMITTENT POWER LOSS

We have a 2001 Newmar Dutch Star with a 3126B Cat engine and a Power EZ module (ECAT1000), which is set to increase horsepower from 300 to 330. I installed a boost gauge to help troubleshoot a problem where the engine will not increase power. It started last year on a trip and happened a half-dozen times. I didn't have a boost gauge installed then.

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Recently, we were on a trip and had no problem at first (boost pressure went from about 10 to 35 psi depending on load). Then, as I was in traffic going about 40 MPH, I stepped on the accelerator and there was no change in boost pressure. I floored the pedal and dropped a gear, but still no change in boost pressure. Finally, after about three minutes, the boost pressure went up to 35 and my speed increased.

There are no exhaust leaks, and the coach has new air and fuel filters. It seems that if the wastegate had stuck open, then the problem would be all the time. I know it's hard to troubleshoot intermittent problems, but any suggestions would help.
RODNEY NELSON | EUREKA, CALIF.

This aftermarket power module modifies fuel delivery and boost pressure. It was made by Edge Products (888-360-3343, www.edgeproducts.com). Unless you have an increase in fuel delivery, you won't build more boost, even with the wastegate closed. It's likely that your engine isn't responding because it isn't getting enough fuel, not because the wastegate is stuck open. If the wastegate was stuck open, you would still get some engine response, although it would be weaker than usual. I recommend installing an exhaust gas temperature (EGT) gauge whenever the engine is modified with aftermarket parts. High EGT would indicate excessive fueling; low EGT would show that it wasn't getting enough. It's fairly easy to temporarily disconnect the aftermarket module. Try doing this, as it will eliminate or verify the unit as a source of the problem.

POWER AWNING PROBLEMS II

This is regarding "Power Awning Problems" in the March Coach & Powertrain. I had the same trouble and it turned out to be caused by crossed wires in the RT-11 connector at the wind sensor. The problem could occur at either end of the cable. The solution is simply switching the wires.
RICHARD MCGREGOR | ELKTON, VA.

Thanks for sharing your solution. It's something you wouldn't normally expect. ♦

TO CONTRIBUTE TO COACH & POWERTRAIN, refer to Contact MotorHome, on page 10.

order the batteries are inserted. Within a few minutes the inside and remote temperatures should be very close and the accuracy of the monitor is designed to stabilize within 2 degrees Fahrenheit after around 48 hours. Ours was dead on.

Locating the transmitters is a matter of personal preference. I put one in the refrigerator, one in a shaded spot outside and a third in the utility bay to monitor the pipes and dump valves when traveling in areas with potentially freezing temperatures. The receiver was mounted on a wall next to the bed, so I can roll over and check temperatures. It can also be placed on a counter using the built-in "kickstand" and moved at will. Minder recommends lithium batteries in temperatures below minus 4, but I use them in the receiver and all the transmitters because they have superior service life — especially for the one in the refrigerator.

Programming the receiver takes a few minutes following the step-by-step instructions. The screen displays time, day, date, current and minimum/maximum temperatures, and a button can be pushed to toggle between the remote transmitters. That process went smoothly since we followed the instructions precisely. We did experience a little difficulty syncing the transmitters the first time. After clearing the info and reprogramming the monitor, the syncing process went without a hitch.

There are a few things to consider when using this wireless monitor: The transmitters are not waterproof and should be protected from rain or road spray; when the batteries need to be replaced in any component, the syncing process must be restarted; and signal interference can impact the 165-foot rating for the transmitters, even though they will be much closer to the receiver when used in a motorhome.

The TempMinder works better than expected for a device that sells for around \$20 (additional transmitters are \$8 each). Accuracy is good and the temperature range — minus 58 to 140 degrees Fahrenheit — is well outside the limits most of us consider comfortable.
Minder Research, 772-463-6522,
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Into The Unknown

WHILE WE ALL LIKE TO KNOW WHAT'S WAITING FOR US DOWN THE ROAD, IT'S THE UNKNOWN THAT OFTEN CREATES THE MOST LASTING MEMORIES

by ALAN RIDER



In a time when it seems science

has provided us with rational explanations of — or at least well-informed guesses at — the workings of everything from subatomic particles to the goings-on at the farthest reaches of the universe, it would be easy to assume there are no more mysteries left in the world. Ask anyone on the front lines of

mankind's quest for knowledge, however, and they'll tell you nothing could be further from the truth.

Which is why, this month, I'd like to suggest we all take a moment to give the Unknown its due. Because, despite centuries of tramping about by intrepid adventurers and plucky field researchers, the fact is that what we actually understand about the world around us is positively dwarfed by what we *don't* know.

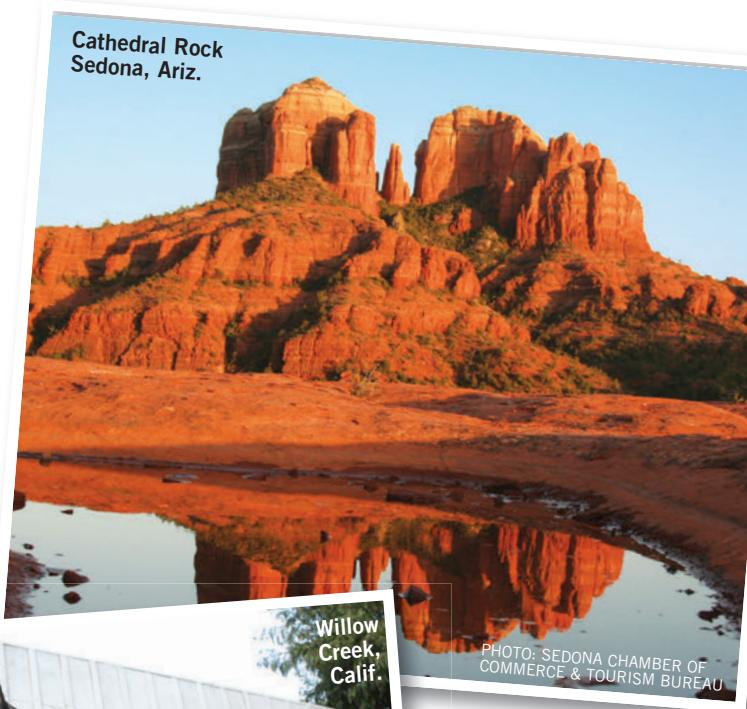
And that, as far as I'm concerned, is what keeps life interesting. Because it's these unknowns — when combined with our innate curiosity as a species — that keep humanity from de-evolving into lethargic lumps whose idea of exploration is limited to slogging through the seemingly endless jungle of available satellite TV channels.

Which, in an admittedly roundabout way, brings us to the start of the summer travel season, as motorhomers everywhere get their coaches ready to hit the road. Though few of us would consider ourselves explorers in the classic Meriwether Lewis and William Clark sense of the word, the truth is that each of us is secretly hoping to discover something entirely new — and maybe even awe-inspiring — every time we set a course for parts unknown.

Lest this assertion strike you as hyperbole, let's consider the alternative. For if any of us really believed that we've seen everything there is to see and done everything there is to do out there, chances are our RVs would never leave our own ZIP code.

While, in the broadest sense, every new sunrise and bend in the road brings with it an opportunity to encounter the unfamiliar, I'd like to narrow the focus a bit. Specifically, to those places where ordinary travelers can encounter extraordinary phenomena that have continued to defy explanation for decades.

Like the strange balls of light that have been seen floating on the outskirts of the small west Texas town of Marfa as far back



as the late 1800s. Or Willow Creek, Calif., a tiny hamlet surrounded by vast swaths of dense forest where hundreds of credible Bigfoot sightings (including

the October 1967 encounter that brought us the infamous color film footage) have been reported. The town also has a Bigfoot Collection Museum.

Then there are the less spooky but no less intriguing oddities, such as Sedona, Arizona's famous energy "vortexes" that are said to provide visitors with inexplicably uplifting experiences. Or why the gentle manatees in the waters surrounding Crystal River, Fla., seem to actively seek out face-to-face encounters with snorkelers as if they were as interested in us as we are in them.

At this point, I suspect the skeptics out there are likely rolling their eyes and dismissing all of the above as so much irrational nonsense. While I'm not here to argue that point, I will simply say it's been my experience that just because some things in this life can't be satisfactorily explained by science, doesn't make them any less real.

Ultimately though, it comes down to this: No matter how much we humans think we have figured out, there will always be more unknowns — and unknowables — waiting for us out there along The Road Ahead. ♦

Alan Rider has been wandering the backroads of America for more than four decades. Though he's never been big on traditional souvenirs, he's passionate about collecting memories of the remarkable people and unforgettable places he encounters along the way.

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