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Luna Island, in the foreground, offers awe-inspiring views of Niagara's American and Bridal Veil falls (see page 31).



Our roundup of 10 luxury Class C's includes Jayco's Seneca, which is built on a Freightliner M2 106 chassis. Pg. 50

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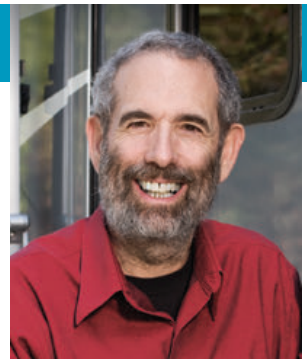
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ON THE COVER

The Jayco Alante takes a backroad off Old Highway 150, 5 miles east of the quiet town of Ojai, California (see test on page 44). Photo by Scott Hirko.



By Bob Livingston

Sharing Great Moments

Photography has been a passion of mine since my dad gave me his old Argus 35mm camera when I was in grade school. I love taking pictures and seeing the world through the lens of a camera. To this day, everything I see is a composition of elements, color, subjects and light. Black-and-white stretches the imagination; vivid colors bring happiness to any image. In all cases, pictures make memories.

My camera guided me to a career in photojournalism; telling stories through the lens of a camera is creative and fulfilling. I've burned a lot of film in my life, and of course, roll film is headed for the Smithsonian Institution and embraced only by hardcore aficionados who still hold on to the art of creating images from emulsion. The rest of the world is hooked on the digital age. Today, pictures are an important part of the social media scene; just about everyone is holding a camera that's embedded in their smartphones.

Traveling in a motorhome allows enthusiasts to capture the moment, be that a fabulous sunset outside the coach, a soothing creek or even a colorful landscape. People shots are all the rage too. Every place we go in our motorhomes is a photo opportunity and in cooperation with Fleetwood

RV, we would like to invite you to participate in a special photo contest that drives home the essence of the motorhome lifestyle.

The "Picture This Adventure" photo contest is designed to capture your best moments while traveling in a motorhome. As a matter of fact, the primary rule is that the motorhome must be part of the scene — and having a Fleetwood is not required. The grand prizewinner will receive a 960-watt solar system along with a Truma AquaGo Comfort instantaneous water heater. That's \$6,000 worth of prizes!

While there can only be one grand prizewinner, two runners-up will be awarded prizes worth \$1,000 and 12 people will get honorable mentions, a Truma hand-held propane LevelCheck and a die-cast replica Bounder. All of the winners will be published in the

October issue and online.

Coincidentally, Alan Rider in his "The Road Ahead" column this month (page 82) presents another unique photo op: taking pictures of the stars in the universe — the ones up above, not in the movies and on TV. Quite frankly, capturing good images of stars is not an easy proposition. But taking lessons in the Grand Canyon, where extraneous light is almost nonexistent, is a good place to learn how to make these stars jump off the screen. Not sure it's possible to work in a motorhome for the contest, but you never know.

You can find the rules, entry requirements and other small-print declarations for the "Picture This Adventure" contest by visiting www.motorhome.com/picturethis.

Traveling in a motorhome becomes a mobile palette of your experiences. Taking pictures memorializes the good times, the interesting people we meet and the beautiful places that energize our senses. It's easy to capture all these memories using simple cameras (and smartphones) that take the mystery out of making good images. We look forward to your contributions to this exciting photo contest. **M**

Contributors | June



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



Arline Chandler is a freelance writer and speaker who lives in the Arkansas Ozarks. She travels with her husband, photographer Lee Smith, and their dog, Spot, in a Class A Mountain Aire motorhome.



Bill and Jenn Gehr, along with their two Boston bulldogs, are full-time RV adventurers who enjoy sharing their technical knowledge with fellow RV enthusiasts wherever they travel.



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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How much success have you had being spontaneous with last-minute reservations or finding on-the-fly campsites during your motorhome travels?

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



Wanderlust

My wife and I have been RVing for 15 years and we can count on one hand the number of times we have made reservations in advance. Most of our trips are loosely structured. We might have a set destination, but usually no set schedule, and we like to explore. Sometimes we explore so much we don't make it to our original destination. We love to wander the lesser-traveled byways. It takes a different mindset to travel this way, but the rewards are well worth it.

Dan and Pam Duncan | Albany, Oregon

On-the-Fly Isn't Best for Everybody

It all depends on where and when you are traveling. I would never plan a summer RV trip to Yosemite or Yellowstone national parks without advanced reservations. However, we took a three-month summer RV trip to western Canada and Alaska with

no reservations at all: no campground reservations, no Alaska Marine Highway ferry reservations, no marine tour reservations, no Denali National Park bus reservations. We got a site at the first campground we tried every night that we wanted one (we did boondock occasionally).

Maybe Douglas Flannery needs to try going without reservations for a one-week trip. Then he could use his level of frustration from that experience to decide if he is cut out for "no-reservation" RV travel. Just because some people do it on a regular basis doesn't mean it is the best way for every RVer to travel.

Steve Hart | Lakewood, Colorado

Time of Year is Crucial

We do a lot of traveling in the winter and on-the-fly campsites are no problem. Most RV resorts are not full and are glad to take you on a last-

minute call. Summer is another story. There have been times in the summer when we couldn't find a place to stay, especially in popular locations or places having special events — like Quartzsite, Arizona, in January.

Leo Aragon | Via email

Venture Into the Unknown

My wife and I have had motorhomes since the early 1980s. We used to travel with my dad, who also had a motorhome. Finding two sites next to each other was difficult, so my dad always reserved ahead of time. That worked out OK, except when we had delays because of repairs or weather.

Since my dad passed away, my wife and I travel solo. We took a three-month trip from California to the East Coast visiting Civil War battlegrounds. We talked to people in the areas we visited and found even more places to go as we traveled. I guess I am saying

Featured Letter

It Depends on Size and Time

In response to Douglas Flannery's question ("Risky Business?" March) about spontaneous travel, we think it depends on the size of your rig and how early in the day you arrange for a site. We have a 28-foot motorhome with no slides. In 2009, we went to 23 states in 57 days, and were on the road 41 of those days. We had a recent Good Sam RV Travel & Savings Guide, which I perused while my husband was driving, when we were getting close to stopping for the day. I would check out the possible parks listed in the directory and pick one that was as inexpensive as possible and met our needs, then called ahead and arranged for a site.

Barbara Walter | Milton Freewater, Oregon





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the best way to go is on the fly, and not worry about where you will be staying.
John Doezie | Placentia, California

Touring Shoulder Season

Finding on-the-fly RV sites hasn't been a problem for us. For the past seven years we have traveled coast to coast during shoulder season. We stay a couple of nights and then move on. We look ahead for nasty weather everyday (www.spc.noaa.gov/products/wwa) and drive around it. The secret is to remain flexible, be polite and keep smiling.
Rick and Suzy Fritz | Via email

A Quest to See the Most and the Best

My wife and I have been RVing for 12 years and spend three to five months a year taking an extended vacation. During that time, we have traveled more than 100,000 miles. This year, we are excited to begin travel in our dream RV, a Winnebago Grand Tour 42HL.
 Generally, we have a good idea of where we are going to land for the

day by lunchtime. My wife/co-pilot/navigator will consult the Good Sam RV Travel & Savings Guide and call ahead for availability. We might not get our first choice, but we'll find something (and a full RV park is usually willing to recommend an alternative). So keep it spontaneous and have fun on the road!
Danny Miller | Winter Park, Florida

Reservations Required in Michigan

Here in Michigan being spontaneous can be problematic. With only three months of nice weather, the state parks, and most private RV parks, get filled up nearly every weekend. We look at the calendar and plan early to get reservations. We had to reserve our spot at a local state park online in January this year. I dislike being spontaneous and then getting to the destination and not getting a spot.
Dan Fritzsche | Via email

The Only Way to Travel

I think that being spontaneous is

the only way to go. We have more than 25,000 miles on our Hurricane motorhome, and usually only reserve a site for our first day of travel. After that, we have no set itinerary. When we decide we are almost ready to call it a day, we get out our Good Sam RV Travel & Savings Guide, find a nearby campground, and call ahead for a reservation. Everywhere I go, I am amazed at the number of RV parks out there.
Rob Rapp | Bakersfield, California

RVing is not a Sport, it's an Adventure

For years we would take RV trips all planned out as Douglas Flannery does. Last year, we did a three-month trip and we are doing it this year again, though we have changed our philosophy. We now start with a general idea of where we want to go to and perhaps a first destination. We have had no trouble getting last-minute reservations or even just showing up. Our first choice might be full, but we always find a place,

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and many times it turns out to be a gem. On our past two trips, we had at least four wonderful surprises that we would have missed if we had preplanned. Follow your dreams and take advantage of opportunities.

Bob and Linda Jackman
New London, New Hampshire

Go With a Good Sam Park

We have a 36-foot Monaco Cayman. We have traveled to Canada, and have been in all but four of the U.S. states. We have made reservations only a few times and have not had any problems getting into a campground. We are lifetime members of Good Sam so we always try to stay in a Good Sam park.

Carolyn and Darrell Brasier
Galeton, Colorado

The Journey is More Important Than the Destination

My wife and I have spent three months a year on the road since 2008 and rarely make plans beyond the next

week or so. We have had little difficulty finding campgrounds. Flexibility is critical. Spontaneity will drive you insane if you are the type of person whose traveling plans must include a specific campground.

Last summer we had planned to travel from Largo, Florida, to an undetermined location in Maine, but we ended up in the Adirondack Mountains of New York and salmon fishing in the Upper Peninsular of Michigan. Maybe this year we'll actually go to Maine!

Tony and JoAnn DeCicco | Largo, Florida

Less Stressful Vacations

We have traveled in a variety of motorhomes and have never planned our overnight campsite ahead of time, even when traveling to Alaska. There were a couple of times when we were put in overflow parking, but even that was not bad. It makes for a less stressful trip if we are not pushing hard to make it to our preplanned campground for the night. You have

the option of stopping for an interesting side trip you just discovered, or for a restaurant that someone at the last night's campground recommended.

Bob and Judy Heim | Via email

Spontaneity is a Good Thing

During the summer of 2013, my wife and I spent 3½ months traveling across the lower U.S., up the West Coast across British Columbia into Alaska, then back home with no advance reservations. Each evening we would look at our Good Sam RV Travel & Savings Guide or The Milepost and find a campground or place to park for the night. We had no problems.

Harold Rice | Seneca, South Carolina

Footloose and Fancy Free

We live on Long Island and sometimes when we leave home we have reservations for our present vacation, but that means sticking to a schedule that we don't usually enjoy. Many times we leave home with a destination in

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mind as we head down the Long Island Expressway, but before we go over the first bridge we have decided to go in a completely different direction. These have been the best, most memorable vacations we have had. This is the way we like to travel and have never had a problem finding a campground.

Alden and Chris Whitehead
East Northport, New York

Just Go for It

Starting in 2006, with our first Class C, we have 125,000 miles behind us. We have only made reservations 12 times out of almost 500 days on the road. Mr. Flannery, we say, "Go for it!" With the right books and a little knowledge you should always be able to find a campground to spend the night.

Clifford and Jo Ann Zea
Newville, Pennsylvania

Plan in Advance for Multiple-Day Stays

In our 10 years of RV travel we have had success with spontaneous one-night reservations from Sunday through Thursday, even during summer. We travel in a 43-foot diesel pusher towing a pickup truck, so we require a minimum 65-foot pull-through site. We rely heavily on the Good Sam RV Travel & Savings Guide for descriptions regarding site length and hookups. If we plan to stay for multiple days, especially straddling the weekend, we make reservations well in advance.

Kathy and Rich Knight
Mickleton, New Jersey

Adopt a Pioneering Spirit

My wife of 53 years and I started camping right after we got married. Our Bounder has more than 100,000 miles and we do not make advance reservations except when we know it would be unwise not to do so.

Abandon your corporate-structured ethos and adopt an adventurous pioneering attitude. Yes, you may find a campground is full, especially Friday and Saturday evening, so arrive early, or go find another. Your Good Sam RV Travel & Savings Guide campground directory is an outstanding resource.

Gary Blackburn | Palo Alto, California

Are You Adventurous?

In my years of traveling I've only been without a campsite one night and that turned out to be a great problem to have! Traveling in Oregon another couple and I stopped at an RV park and were told all the spots were full, but if we were self-contained we were welcome to stay to the side of the parking lot at a municipal golf course adjacent to the park. We had beautiful grass, no neighbors, ample room and no cost even though we offered to pay! Really the question is, are you adventurous or a control freak? Some of the best times are the unplanned ones.

Van L. Dossey | Old Hangtown, California

Towing With a Dolly

I've read a lot about flat towing a dinghy, but not about towing a vehicle on a tow dolly. I realize towing four down is easier and better, but it requires a vehicle that can be towed. I have a Toyota Prius and want to take it with me behind my motorhome, but it isn't towable, so I need to use a dolly and I have several questions.

What kind of brakes do tow dollies have and are they adequate for stopping the dolly with the vehicle? If you have to remove the dolly at an RV park, is it light enough to take off the coach easily? How difficult is it to drive a vehicle onto the dolly and how easy is it to attach the vehicle to the caddy? What are some of the things to look for in a tow dolly and what brands are good? Do I have to consider the weight of the dolly and the vehicle in the combined gross vehicle weight rating?

Michael E. Vaughn | Via email 

Question of the Month

Have you used a tow dolly to transport a vehicle behind your motorhome, and, if so, what was your experience?

Send your comments to:

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A View From the Top

Louisiana is home to the tallest state Capitol in the U.S. at 450 feet high with 34 floors

By Neala McCarten

Despite being about 84 years old (construction began in December 1930), Louisiana's state Capitol in Baton Rouge is persistently referred to as the "new" Capitol building. That isn't quite so puzzling when visitors realize the original Capitol (now a museum) dates back to about 1847. Clearly, "new" and "old" are relative terms in Baton Rouge.

But there are other unusual aspects of this building. At 34 stories tall, the Louisiana Capitol remains the tallest state Capitol in the nation, and the 27th-floor observation deck offers beautiful 360-degree panoramic views of Baton Rouge, and the Mississippi River.

The office that was once that of Louisiana's controversial governor, Huey P. Long, is now the speaker's office, but what makes it extraordinary is that Long was assassinated just outside that office on Sept. 8, 1935. He died two days later. If you look carefully at the column on the left you can see a bullet hole remaining from the shootout that took place there.

Almost every inch of this magnificent edifice is decorated and tells a story — statues, panels, flags, even the steps. Certainly the walk up to the building sets the tone. Each of the 49 steps is carved with the names of the 50 states in order of admission to the Union. The exception is the last step that lists both Alaska and Hawaii.

Find your state's step and take a photo — a personal remembrance of a visit to the nation's tallest Capitol and perhaps the building with the most unusual history.

The nearest campground, Farr Park, is 6 miles south on River Road and has 108 partial-hookup sites.

The Louisiana State Capitol, a National Historic Landmark, is located at 900 N. Third St. on State Capitol Dr., Baton Rouge. For more information, call 225-342-7317. — *Neala McCarten*



By Bobbie Hasselbring

Soft-shell Lobster: Maine's Finest



From above top: Lobster boats create a picturesque sight on Maine's coastline. A lobsterman lowers a trap into the ocean.

Mainers, those who live along the rocky coast of Maine, are keeping a secret from you: Soft-shell lobster season is coming.

American lobster, the species of lobster found on the Atlantic coast from Labrador to New Jersey, is also commonly known as Maine lobster. These crustaceans, which range in size from a pound or two to more than 40 pounds, have become a prized delicacy for their sweet, succulent meat. In fish stores, these bluish-green to brown-colored creatures fetch \$12 or more per pound; in high-end restaurants, as much as \$40 for a whole lobster dinner.

While Maine lobster has been harvested for generations, it wasn't always highly esteemed. According to the Gulf of Maine Research Institute, lobsters were once so plentiful that people used them as fish bait and to fertilize their fields. They were considered "poor food" and fed to prisoners and indentured servants, who finally had it put in their contracts that they wouldn't be "forced" to eat lobster more than three times a week.

Today, you can get live or frozen whole Maine lobster or lobster tails at restaurants across the country and online fish stores will ship these delicious creatures right to your door. And lobster, an excellent source of protein, is full of amino acids, potassium and magnesium, B vitamins, calcium, phosphorus, iron and zinc. It's also low in calories and fat. A 100-gram portion of lean beef contains 216 calories and 9.9 grams of fat; boneless chicken, 165 calories and 3.6 grams of fat; and lobster only 98 calories and 0.6 grams of fat.

Soft-shell is King

What local Mainers won't tell you is that the sweetest lobster, the soft-shell lobster, is available only for a short time during the summer months, which might be why National Lobster Day is June 15. They celebrate the soft-shell lobster season with festivals — they just don't broadcast it much.

Lobsters will keep growing indefinitely, but their hard shells don't. To accommodate growth, once a year, every adult lobster shimmies out of its old shell and forms a new, softer shell. The lobster fills part of the new shell with water that it will grow into. And, during this molting season, the lobster's meat is softer and sweeter.

Soft-shell lobsters yield a bit less meat than hard-shell lobsters, but they're also easier to crack and pick. The soft shells crack easily even with your hands. Hard-shell lobsters require a cracker, mallet or hammer, gloves for handling and plenty of brute force. And the taste? Soft-shell lobsters are sweeter, more tender and have pronounced lobster flavor that entralls lobster lovers. Pass the melted butter!



The Maine Event

Lobster "boils," whole lobster, corn on the cob, a roll and melted butter are the favorite dish served at the Maine Lobster Festival each July.

Where's your favorite place for soft-shell lobster?

Email Bobbie at bobbie@realfoodtraveler.com



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Places for Maine lobster

Maine Lobster Festival This five-day event runs July 29-Aug. 2 in Rockland where some 20,000 pounds of the freshest soft-shell lobster will be served (207-596-0376, www.mainelobsterfestival.com).

Red's Eats At 41 Water St., Wiscasset, Maine, this is just one of dozens of lobster shacks that serve up delicious lobster rolls — chopped lobster meat and mayonnaise on specially made buns (207-882-6128).

Simplylobsters.com If you can't make it to Maine, this company sells and ships cooked soft-shell lobsters (800-796-3189).



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Everyone can appreciate more stable handling. The Hellwig auxiliary rear sway bar (part No. 7798) stiffens the roll rate of the popular 2014-15 Ram ProMaster 2500/3500 van for better handling and safety, according to the company. The 1-inch-diameter sway bar is made in the USA from heat-treated, chrome moly steel for long-lasting performance and is installed in addition to the factory sway bar. The kit includes everything needed to mount the sway bar, including axle clamps, end links and hardware, and is backed by a lifetime warranty. The installation only requires basic hand tools and can be performed in a shop or a driveway. MSRP: \$439.95.

**Hellwig Products Co., 800-435-5944,
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That's a Wrap

Cooking in your motorhome is fun, but who wants to be saddled with galley cleanup on a family vacation? Well, now Atwood makes cleanup easy with its new Stove Wrap, a patent-pending stovetop liner made of nonflammable, washable and reusable material. Presewn and cut to fit, Stove Wrap will fit on any Atwood, Suburban range or three-burner cooktop.

Stove Wrap is easily installed by placing the three openings in the stovetop liner over the burner heads and fastening it to the feet of the grates in each corner. Stove Wrap is available from a variety of retailers, and the MSRP is about \$35.

**Atwood Mobile Products, 800-546-8759,
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Speed From Space

If you've got an older motorhome with a faulty or nonfunctioning speedometer, it can be hard to find a replacement. Auto Meter's highly advanced GPS Speedometers require no interface with your vehicle aside from power and ground. The ultrafast, omnidirectional micro antenna is included for true plug-and-play functionality and never requires calibration — even changes in gear ratio or tire and wheel size have no effect on these units' pinpoint accuracy, according to the company. Plus, a configurable Rally Nav display shows odometer, trip odometer, time/date, GPS coordinates, heading info, compass and peak speed recall. MSRP: \$332.82-\$435.97.

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Record Number of Visitors at North Carolina State Parks

North Carolina's state parks and state recreation areas had record attendance in 2014, with 15.6 million visitors, a 10 percent increase over 14.2 million the previous year, according to the N.C. Division of Parks and Recreation.

Among 39 state parks and state recreation areas, 27 reported increases in attendance in 2014.

William B. Umstead State Park (with 28 dry-camping sites) in Wake County reported the highest attendance at 1.29 million visits, and was among six state park units logging more than 1 million visitors. The others were Fort Macon and Jockey's Ridge state parks and Falls Lake (with more than 400 campsites, 176 with hookups), Jordan Lake (with more than 1,000 campsites, 690 with hookups) and Kerr Lake (with nearly 700 campsites, 342 with hookups) state recreation areas.

Mike Murphy, North Carolina state parks director, said, "The state parks system will hold its centennial in 2016 and planning is underway for special events and opportunities to celebrate a system that has become an institution for recreation, conservation and connection with nature in our state."



Photo: Bill Fluss

RV Rally Draws Crowds

The Camping World/ Good Sam Rally, held Feb. 26-March 1 in Phoenix, Arizona, drew more than 5,600 RVers and 7,600 local RV

enthusiasts to view hundreds of RVs on display and shop the 325 indoor exhibitors.

Registered attendees enjoyed the Rally Dog Show, evening entertainment and other fun activities, and participated in a salute to military veterans. RVers generously donated 20 units of blood to United Blood Services, and 376 handmade blankets were crafted for Project Linus, an organization that provides blankets to children who are seriously ill or traumatized (www.projectlinus.org).

Efforts fell short of the 1,087 couples needed to break the world record for the Largest Wedding Vow Renewal, but attendees didn't seem to mind as they blissfully recited their "I do's" and sealed them with a kiss, as ordained by Reverend Neil Hollis. The smiles on the couples who participated indicated that they enjoyed trying to break the record — regardless of whether the record was broken. Prizes were given to the longest married couple (64 years) and the shortest married couple (3 days), and the best dressed couple received round-trip airfare for two to anywhere in the continental United States.



NEWS BRIEFS

Roadtrek Leads Class B Sales

► For the 25th straight year, Kitchener, Ontario-based Roadtrek Motorhomes ranked as the top-selling Class B builder in 2014, according to recently published numbers by Statistical Surveys Inc. Class B motorhome retail numbers showed Roadtrek with a 35.6 percent market share overall in North America as the company captured the No. 1 ranking in the U.S. and Canada.

"In this competitive landscape, we are proud that our leading quality, technology and customer service has kept us firmly in the No. 1 spot," said Roadtrek President Jim Hammill.

Camping World Opens Two New Stores

► Camping World Inc. recently opened stores in Anniston, Alabama, and Summerset, South Dakota. The Alabama site, Camping World of Oxford, is located off Interstate 20 and marks Camping World's second full-service location in the Birmingham market.

"We've experienced tremendous success at our Calera, Alabama, location and are excited to expand our efforts in the Birmingham market with this second supercenter in Anniston," commented Marcus Lemonis, CEO and chairman of Camping World and Good Sam and host of CNBC's "The Profit."

Camping World of Rapid City, located in South Dakota off Interstate 90, is the company's first full-service location in the state, and is near local attractions such as Mount Rushmore National Memorial and the Black Hills.

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Wildwood, New Jersey

Jersey's Wildwood Boardwalk

On Wildwood's famous boardwalk you can wander through more than 2 miles of souvenir shops, food stands, games-of-chance booths and amusement rides, including Morey's Piers. The "piers" include a high-speed looping roller coaster, the Giant Wheel (carousel), bumper cars and more. And of course the food at the boardwalk has all of the favorites, including Coney Island-style hot dogs, pizza, seafood, cheese fries, funnel cakes, cotton candy and ice cream. When you get tired of the amusement rides and the boardwalk, take your beach chair and towel and go under the boardwalk to enjoy the Jersey Shore.

Since the turn of the last century, the Wildwood boardwalk has hosted millions of visitors and the Jersey Shore continues to be a destination for a few days, or a few weeks. Short-term and seasonal camping are available inland, along Route 9; Wildwood is just a short causeway trip away.

Adjacent to the boardwalk are parking lots that will take motorhomes and fees run \$5 to \$20 depending on the time and season. There is also free street parking four blocks west of the boardwalk.

For more information, go to www.moreyspiers.com. — *Morey Edelman*



Photo: Kip Dawkins

Danville, Kentucky

Volunteers Camp Free at Pioneer Playhouse

Pioneer Playhouse, a professional outdoor summer theater located in Danville, Kentucky, will open its 66th season June 5. The Playhouse began in 1950 by Col. Eben C. Henson in an effort to "bring Broadway to the Bluegrass." Playgoers have seen more than 3,000 aspiring young actors performing here, including John Travolta, Jim Varney, Bo Hopkins, Lee Majors and Kim Darby.

The identifying feature of the Playhouse is its famous box office, which was originally built as a train station for the 1957 movie "Raintree County," starring Elizabeth Taylor and Montgomery Clift. Photos of the filming are on exhibit at the Playhouse.

For three summer months each year Pioneer Playhouse is alive with activity, including five different productions in the outdoor amphitheater. The box office opens at 6:45 p.m. and dinner is served at 7:30 p.m., with live folk music in the courtyard. Visitors can take a stroll through the adjacent 19th-century village. At 8:30 p.m., the Old Danville Fire House Bell alerts everyone that it's show time.

Pioneer Playhouse is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, and depends on support from volunteers, which are needed every night of production during the 10-week summer season. For those who enjoy the theater, this is an opportunity to live on the grounds in the adjacent campground with water and electric hookups. Volunteers with RVs can park their rigs at no charge, and meals are provided. Volunteers have Sundays and Mondays free to explore the area's attractions or simply relax and enjoy camping.

For more information, call 866-597-5297, or visit www.pioneerplayhouse.com. — *Robert Powell*



Photo: Robert Powell

Bismarck, Arkansas

DeGray Lake Resort State Park, Arkansas

Located in the foothills of the Ouachita Mountains and along the north shore of the 13,800-acre DeGray Lake (one of five Diamond Lakes near Hot Springs) is Arkansas' only resort state park. DeGray Lake Resort State Park offers all kinds of outdoor activities, like fishing and water sports, golf, horseback riding, hiking, biking and camping in shaded woodland or on the lakeshore. The park has 113 sites with partial hookups.

If you want to get on the water, rental boats are available at the marina or visitors can take a guided lake cruise on a party boat or kayak for bird and eagle watching. In addition, snorkeling excursions are popular in this clear lake.

For more information, call 800-737-8355 or visit www.degray.com; to make campsite reservations, call 501-865-5810. — *James Richardson* **M**



Photo: James Richardson



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Nevada City, Montana, storefronts.

Virginia City and Nevada City — Living Ghost Towns

Experience the excitement of Montana's gold rush in these two historic Old West cities frozen in time

By Arline Chandler

Back in the mid-1800s in the American West, towns sprang up at the mere whisper of the word "gold." In 1862, Bannack (now a ghost town in Montana) was the site of the earliest significant gold discovery in what would soon become Montana Territory. Five prospectors, led by William Fairweather, lost interest in Bannack and searched for gold along the Yellowstone River. Crow Indians turned the men back.

The prospectors headed through the Madison Valley back to Bannack, planning to restock supplies and try their luck again. On May 26, 1863, they camped near a gurgling stream thick with stands of alder. To the south of the gulch Mount Baldy rose; to the north, the Tobacco Root Mountains. The men pulled out their prospecting tools and before darkness fell, they had found a major gold strike. Staking

the claim in what they named the Fairweather Mining District, they called the place Alder Gulch. They rode on to Bannack, agreeing to keep their gold a secret. Henry Edgar, one of the prospectors, wrote in his diary that total strangers in a saloon were already "... telling we brought in a horse load of gold." After filing their claims, the men tried to slip out of Bannack, but soon realized at least 200 prospectors followed them. On June 6, 1863, the group arrived at the site that would become Virginia City. The Fairweather prospectors convinced the gold-hungry men that they had filed legal claims. To their credit, the crowd calmed.

NEVADA CITY AND
VIRGINIA CITY



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GETAWAY

VIRGINIA CITY AND NEVADA CITY

Nevertheless, the Montana Gold Rush was on. Within a few months, 10,000 gold seekers crowded into a 14-mile stretch in Alder Gulch, seeking their own claims. Above Virginia City, four settlements sprouted; below, three more, including today's reproduction of Nevada City. Virginia City, the largest of the communities, stands as a footprint of the past frenzied days when fortunes were gained — and lost.

The boomtown drew prospectors, but also merchants, ladies of the night, schemers, outlaws, citizens of many nations and members of numerous religious groups. Men and women from every social class and economic status flocked to Virginia City, and soon, miners became a minority population.

Within three weeks of the Fairweather gold strike, Virginia City was planned and platted as a permanent community with straight streets and square corners. The city transitioned from a chaotic mining camp of mud huts, tents and lean-to shacks to an organized town. Storefronts went up and some residents built Victorian-style homes. While the early days sound exciting, daily life was difficult and dangerous. Human comforts were few. Days were dull and filled with mundane chores of existence.

Violence and crime followed the money being made in Virginia City. Daily, miners and merchants suffered

robberies, beatings, lootings and murders from lawless individuals drawn to the area. A local vigilante group formed. Today, stories conflict about its motives and its success. However, a few men were determined to bring law and order to the area with their motto: "Do your duty, men." Outside Virginia City on Boot Hill, graves of hanged road agents mark the rough and dangerous times — and the determination of the vigilante group — in Virginia City's early days.

Fairweather, for whom the Fairweather Inn is named today, led his prospectors to fortunes, but in the end, only one of the six invested his gold into a thriving business. Fairweather died penniless in Montana at age 39. In beginning days, the Fairweather Inn housed the Anaconda Saloon. The proprietor prepared for all occurrences by storing a casket in the building's basement. Today, the Fairweather Inn is a popular overnight lodging choice in Virginia City.

The city grew rapidly and within a few years of its establishment, merchants and businessmen outnumbered gold miners. Signs on storefronts boasted general merchandise, jewelers, bakeries and furniture. Services such as ox and mule shoeing, legal advice, restaurants, saloons and overland stage transportation were available.

Many of the buildings, like the

A view of Virginia City, Montana, from nearby Boot Hill.





Fairweather Inn, started as one business, and then transformed into another. Sauerbier Blacksmith Shop began as a notorious dance hall in 1863. The building encompasses a small V-notched log cabin, one of the first buildings in Virginia City. Tall French doors and a few dentils still cling to the façade, recalling its former days. Charles Sauerbier and his son converted the building to a blacksmith shop in the 1870s and operated their business until the 1940s. In the early years, they repaired stagecoaches and shod ox teams that pulled huge freight wagons of goods into the city.

The old buildings lining board sidewalks, most of them original to the town, owe their continued existence partly to Montana’s dry climate. However, the major credit goes to Charles and Sue Bovey, Montana citizens who directed their energy and financial resources to preserve the old town. Today, Virginia City is a National Historic Landmark and is listed in the

Virginia City, Montana, seems to be frozen in time. The well-preserved “ghost” town has 132 permanent residents.

National Register of Historic Places.

Charles Bovey, one of the heirs to a milling corporation, later known as General Mills, grew up with the advantages of education, travel and a position in his father’s business. However, Bovey found his niche in ranching rather than flour milling. He married a Montana girl, Sue Ford, and together, they fed their passion for Western history by starting a collection of old Montana buildings and artifacts. As a Montana House representative, and later as a state senator, Bovey worked to create public awareness of the preservation of old buildings and communities.

John Ellingsen, a curator of Virginia City and Nevada City, and author of “Witness to History: The Remarkable Untold Story of Virginia City and Nevada City, Montana,” worked closely



It’s a 25-minute ride from Virginia City to Nevada City on the Alder Gulch Shortline Railroad.



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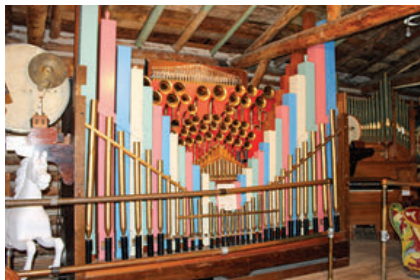
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Clockwise from above: In Nevada City, Montana — a living-history museum with one of the largest collections of Old West artifacts outside the Smithsonian Institution — visitors can see a Steinway piano in the parlor of the Sedman House, and antique music machines, including a calliope, at the entrance to the city.

with the Boveys for two decades. He writes that Bovey said he knew when he first entered Virginia City that the place was a national treasure. He and his wife recognized the downtrodden and mostly abandoned buildings presented a unique opportunity to preserve an entire town and the eras of history it represents. On their first visit, they witnessed boards being pulled off the old structures for firewood or scrap lumber. Timing to restore and preserve the town was crucial. Bovey, with the help of historians and other citizens, formed the Historic Landmark Society of Montana. Bovey himself bought many of the important Virginia City buildings. Soon, he owned more than 100 houses and shops, including the Bale of Hay Saloon, Buford Store, the Judge Blake House, the Hangman's Building, and the Gilbert house and brewery.

Ellingsen remembers Bovey as a "hands-on" man, working tirelessly on restoration and becoming acquainted with every board, beam, shingle, brick, stone, nail and dowel in Alder Gulch. The old train depot at Nevada City



displays information and memorabilia about the Boveys.

While Virginia City is an authentic town with restored original buildings, Nevada City — only 2 miles down the road — is a fictional historic town, reproduced on the original plat of the city, but with buildings brought in from other parts of Alder Gulch and Montana. On weekends, costumed interpreters live in Nevada City. Some act out scenes of the past with arguments in a saloon over a boxing match; others go about the daily chores of baking, laundry, spinning, sewing and even teaching the school children of Nevada City.

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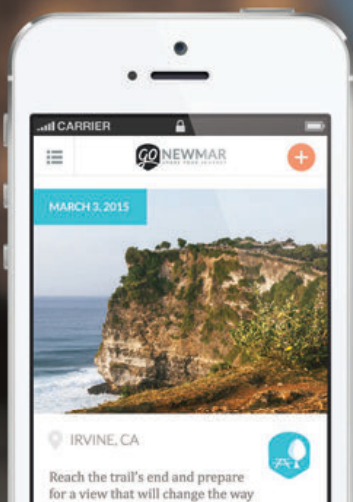
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Those who visit Nevada City, Montana, during the weekend can interact with living-history interpreters such as Dan Thyer (above left), and Harlan and Joal Olsen (above right).

original, including the Star Bakery Restaurant. The reproduced city behind the row of original buildings requires an admission ticket. Entrance is through a museum of music machines that once filled the front room of the Bale of Hay Saloon in Virginia City, a place where even kids were welcome. The old saloon operated until about 1908, and then stood empty until 1945 when it was restored by Bovey. He added rare music machines to his player piano collection, but a fire in 1983 badly burned many of the machines. Some were restored in other parts of the world and stand today in the museum at Nevada City. The Bale of Hay Saloon in Virginia City remains much as Bovey found it, except for the ornate 1880-vintage bars, which were brought from Benchland, Montana.

The dirt streets of Nevada City are lined with various structures, mostly modest, unpainted dwellings and cabins. One two-story white house, obviously owned by an affluent family, was the home of Montana's first politician. An interpreter, seated on a bench outside the fence with a basket of mending, told of tragedy in the household — the deaths of a wife and young daughter, and eventually, the father. The house is elaborately furnished, although dusty with age. Many claim the old home is haunted.

The livery building in Nevada City, once the dining hall at Canyon Village in Yellowstone National Park, displays various conveyances used in the area during the mid- to late 1800s. Interpreter Harlan Olsen points to an old milk wagon, tour wagons at Glacier National Park and enclosed family carriages. The livery also holds parts and pieces from an old carriage company once located in Butte, Montana. Olsen and his wife, Joal, spend weekends in a primitive cabin on one corner of the old city, acting as interpreters.

Without the Boveys' commitment to preservation, visitors today could not stroll the boardwalks of Virginia City or the dirt streets of Nevada City. There would be no stores filled with merchandise of long ago, no musical sounds from the Opera House, no restaurants occupying old buildings and no Alder Gulch Train running between the two cities. Both historic towns are places to visit again and again, letting imaginations fly back to 1863 when the mere mention of gold started prosperous new cities. **M**

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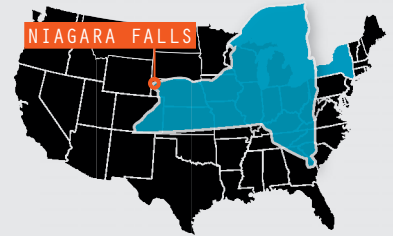
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By Christine Goodier

THE TOWERING FALLS OF NIAGARA

One of North America's most famous natural wonders is just dripping with adventure



Getting Here

Niagara Falls is situated along the U.S.-Canadian border. To reach the American Falls, most visitors drive in from Interstate 90. If using a GPS, the nearest address is 24 Buffalo Ave., Niagara Falls, NY 14303.

Remember begging your mom and dad to let you run through the lawn sprinklers on hot summer days? During a sultry spell last July, I was ready to indulge my inner child in the mother of all water parks as my husband, Bob, and I aimed our Class B Sprinter motorhome toward New York state. Our destination was America's oldest state park, established at Niagara Falls in 1885, and our plan was to have fun.

Arriving at the park just before 9 a.m., Bob nabbed a shady parking space for the motorhome in the state park's lot No. 1. Since we were staying at a New York state campground,

parking was free, instead of the usual \$10 daily fee, so we skipped past solicitors trying to wave drivers into pricey commercial parking.

At the park's visitor center we

bought Discovery Passes for admission to multiple attractions, saving money and time versus buying tickets separately. (Entrance to the state park itself is free.) Our priorities were set: Bob wanted to see the Cave of the Winds, and I had heard of the iconic Maid of the Mist all my life.

Back in 1846, travelers boarded a steamboat ferry to cross the Niagara River. After a bridge was built two years later, the boat turned into the Maid of the Mist tourist attraction that



Every evening beginning at dusk, the falls are illuminated in the colors of the rainbow. Check the Niagara Falls State Park website for the year-round schedule.

has endured in various guises, from wooden paddlewheel steamers to today's 80-foot, 300-passenger diesel-powered boats. Reservations aren't taken since boats depart every 15 minutes to give visitors a close-up look at the three falls that make up Niagara Falls.

We followed signs beyond the visitor center, exchanged tabs from our passes for tickets, and rode the Observation Tower elevator down to the landing. Staff members there handed us thin blue ponchos (think drycleaner bags with drawstring hoods), and within minutes our boat departed the dock. Along with everyone else on board, we dutifully donned our rainwear, put our cameras into baggies and found a place by a rail.

As our sturdy craft approached the rocky base of the American Falls, mist turned to spray and we looked up at 75,000 gallons of water per second cascading in our direction. The "Maid" cruised past Bridal Veil Falls and continued on toward Horseshoe Falls on the Canada side. The wind came up, hoods flew off and blue plastic billowed above our waists. Talking was impossible as water thundered down from three sides, so we laughed instead. Cruising back to the dock, we watched seabirds fly through rainbows that formed as sunlight hit the mists.

We squished off the boat, tossed our ponchos into recycling bins and found a bench to dry out in the sun before

riding the elevator back up to the top of the Observation Tower. We lingered awhile to take photos, since the 282-foot tower extends over Niagara Gorge for panoramic views of all three falls.

Back at the visitor center, we took a break

FALLS FACTS

An astonishing 3,160 tons of water flows over Niagara Falls every second. This accounts for 75,750 gallons of water per second over the American and Bridal Veil falls and 681,750 gallons per second over Horseshoe Falls.



From above top: Wearing blue plastic ponchos, passengers on the Maid of the Mist spend 20 wet minutes cruising close to the American, Bridal and Horseshoe falls. Viewpoints abound at Niagara Falls, New York, from the Observation Tower at Prospect Point (top left) to Luna Island beside the spillway (below right).

in an air-conditioned theater to watch the park's half-hour action movie included in our passes, "Niagara: Legends of Adventure." We absorbed a quick history from Native American settlers to modern-day daredevils who have gone over in a barrel or crossed on a wire. But we didn't pause to browse the gift shop — we were there to see more of the magnificent falls waiting right outside.



We trotted toward a trolley stop, admiring the layout of footpaths and gardens designed by America's first landscape architect, Frederick Law Olmsted, who also created New York City's Central Park. Much of what we saw appeared new, evidence of a \$25 million makeover plan the state adopted for Niagara State Park in 2012 and continues to implement.

Our destination was Goat Island, reached via either a pedestrian or vehicular bridge. We rode the vintage-style trolley to a stop in front of the Top of the Falls Restaurant, which sports a view of Horseshoe Falls, and chose seating up on a canvas-shaded outdoor terrace.

Fortified by burgers and frozen drinks, we crossed a pedestrian bridge onto little Luna Island, which reopened in 2013 after its restoration. The island perches atop the edge of the spillway, and river water rushes past it on both sides, plunging down to the gorge to form Bridal Veil Falls on the west side of the island and the American Falls to the east.

Peering over the railing to the base of Bridal Veil Falls, we could see tiny figures through the mist below, swathed in yellow versions of our morning's blue raingear. We decided to join them and, at the Cave of the Winds

entrance on Goat Island, surrendered another set tab from our Discovery Passes. A staff member requested our shoe sizes and supplied green-and-blue souvenir sandals with ribbed soles made of sturdy plastic foam. (Tip: If you go to the Cave of the Winds first, your feet will be suitably outfitted for riding the Maid of the Mist, too.)

Wearing our jaunty footwear, we stuffed street shoes into staff-provided plastic bags, took another elevator ride 175 feet down into the gorge and donned our yellow ponchos. Gripping handrails, we followed a series of red-painted, wet, wooden walkway levels leading up numerous stairs, ever closer to the Hurricane Deck. Finally, we stood in tropical stormlike wind and water, not in a true cave, but about 20 feet from thundering Bridal Veil Falls. It was a dramatic way to feel Niagara's power at the closest falls encounter in the park.

On the elevator ride back up, an employee told us that carpenters take down the walkways each November to prevent winter storm damage, and reassemble them every spring. Soggy and satisfied with our day of fun in the sun, we rode the trolley back to the parking lot and drove 20 minutes north on the Robert Moses State Parkway to our campsite.

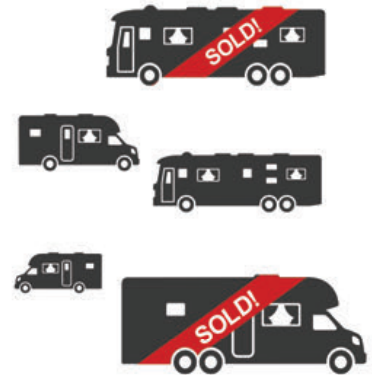
The towpath along the Erie Canal at Lockport, New York, once trod by barge-pulling mules, now offers visitors a shady spot for a stroll.



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THE TOWERING FALLS OF NIAGARA



Clockwise from above: Three historic flags commemorate the nations that have held Fort Niagara, New York, on Lake Ontario since 1726. About 20 minutes north of Niagara Falls, costumed interpreters at Old Fort Niagara provide tours and musket demonstrations. New York's popular Four Mile Creek State Campground has 50-amp electric sites and is located 15 miles north of Niagara Falls.



The Four Mile Creek State Campground on Lake Ontario bustled with camping families during our four-night stay. Part of the State of New York Parks system, the campground has 275 sites (130 with electric hookups, some with 50-amp service), fire rings, hot showers, flush toilets and laundry facilities as well as water fill-up spigots and a dump station. Pets are permitted and campers are asked to show proof of rabies inoculation.

After supper, Bob built a fire and we discussed the next day's plans. We had our passports, so why not visit Niagara Falls, Canada, too? So Saturday morning, under threatening skies, we drove south again, pausing to inspect two other state parks by the parkway, both with hiking and nature trails down to the Niagara Gorge level. At Devil's Hole State Park we could see the lower rapids, and at Whirlpool State Park, overlooks provided us with views of a whirlpool created by the abrupt bend in the Niagara River below.

Back at Niagara State Park lot No.



1, we saw signs for a walkway to the Rainbow Bridge that links the U.S. and Canada for pedestrians and vehicles. Cars were at a standstill, so we left the motorhome parked and simply walked into Canada within minutes after only the briefest of border formalities. (Note: U.S. citizens must present a valid U.S. passport or NEXUS/FAST card at the border.)

On the other side, strolling landscaped plazas by the river, we could appreciate the full breadth of the American and Bridal Veil falls, and of the rocky base where water pounds with 280 tons of force. We saw Horseshoe Falls again, where it

hits the base with 2,509 tons of force, but from a different angle. And just as on the U.S. side, cruise boats left the Canada side to approach the falls, but with a difference — Hornblower Niagara Cruise ponchos were maple-leaf red.

As rain started falling, we ducked indoors for coffee and talked about a return trip someday to investigate the Canada side more fully. We had noticed the 775-foot Skylon Tower, with observation decks and a revolving dining room, a promising spot for viewing fireworks or the colorful nightly falls illumination on a clear evening.

Unexpected discoveries always make an RV trip more fun. Just a short ride from our campground the next morning, we found Old Fort Niagara State Park on a bluff above Lake Ontario, guarding the entrance to the Niagara River as it has since 1726. Costumed re-enactors explained that the fort's key Great Lakes location gave it a critical role in the French and Indian War, the American Revolution and the War of 1812.

At the visitor center, we admired an enormous artifact on display: the actual 15-star, 15-stripe American flag that flew here during the War of 1812. Taken as a war trophy by the British in 1813, the flag spent 170 years in a Scottish castle until its return in 1994. We covered our ears for a musket-firing demonstration, and walked through restored stone structures, including the impressive 1726 "French Castle," North America's oldest building in the Great Lakes region.

Our second unexpected find was the historic canal town of Lockport, New York, less than 30 miles from Niagara Falls. We parked our motorhome at the Erie Canal Discovery Center and picked up a National Park Service brochure about the 363-mile-long public engineering feat. Built between 1817 and 1825, the Erie Canal was the first all-water link between the Great Lakes and the Atlantic Seaboard.

We looked down upon the canal's electric-powered Barge Locks 34 and 35 that still displace more than

2.7 million gallons of Lake Erie water while locking boats through a 60-foot difference in elevation. Parallel to these functioning locks, restoration was finishing for two of the original Lockport "Flight of Five" locks. Dormant since the early 20th century, the two now function with 1842-style wooden lock gates and balance beams.

We parked the motorhome below the locks, strolled along the towpath where mules once pulled barges, and waved to passengers onboard the "Lockview V" headed toward Lock 34 to begin their two-hour cruise.

Our final discovery was the Niagara Wine Trail linking 20 wineries. Local soils and the microclimate of the Niagara Escarpment protected by Lake Ontario create ideal conditions for growing grapes. On our last afternoon before heading south, we stopped into Schulze Vineyards & Winery close to our campground to taste samples and buy a few bottles of a wine we liked to take home.

Historic sites, a great American waterway and welcoming wineries all added up to a bonus at the end of our vacation. But like two oversize kids in plastic ponchos, we still thought the best part of Niagara Falls was getting wet on purpose. We had great memories — and plastic sandals — to take home. **M**

For More Information

Erie Canal
www.eriecanalway.org

Four Mile Creek State Park
716-745-3802,
www.nysparks.com/parks/6/details.aspx

Lockport Locks
800-378-0352,
www.lockportlocks.com

Niagara Falls State Park
716-278-1796,
www.niagarafallsstatepark.com

The Niagara Wine Trail
www.niagarawinetrail.org

Old Fort Niagara
716-745-7611,
www.oldfortniagara.org

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TOURING THE SAGUENAY REGION

North of Québec City, this route follows the St. Lawrence River to the

When I mentioned to friends last summer that I'd be traveling to Québec's Saguenay Fjord region, I drew a lot of blank stares. Most had never heard of the Saguenay Fjord. Others associated fjords with Scandinavia — and they were partly right, as Norway is home to most of the world's major fjords.

In the simplest of terms, a fjord is a long, narrow inlet with steep cliffs on three sides, formed over several ice ages by glacial erosion — in essence a U-shaped glacier valley filled by the sea. There are more than 2,000 fjords worldwide, most of them in the Northern Hemisphere, with Scoresby Sund in Greenland being the longest and deepest, followed by Norway's Sognefjord and Hardangerfjord.

At 65 miles long and with an average depth of 690 feet, Saguenay Fjord can't compare with those giants, but it is one of 38 of the world's fjords more than 60 miles long. It boasts other distinctions as well, being the southernmost fjord in the Northern Hemisphere and the only navigable and inhabited fjord in North America. Most significant though is its accessibility — from the busy St. Lawrence River and by land. The mouth of the fjord, near the village of Tadoussac, is just 135 miles north of Québec City.

I knew nothing of the Saguenay Fjord myself — until I happened to sail into it briefly during a cruise along the

St. Lawrence River 10 years ago. I've wanted to visit it in more depth ever since, and finally did so last July.

My companion for the trip was my Canadian friend Melinda (aka Mel). I flew from my home in Florida to Québec City, meeting her there to begin our journey to the Saguenay region. Our northeasterly course, following Routes 138/362/170 along the St. Lawrence River through the Charlevoix region en route to the fjord, proved to be utterly pleasurable.

Day one led to Baie-Saint-Paul, a town that's not only pretty, but historic as well. Founded in 1678, it's one of Québec's oldest settlements. We found its legacy well-preserved in the traditional Québécois architecture of shops, galleries and restaurants lining its main street, rue Saint-Jean Baptiste.

Following a stroll through the downtown area, we squeezed into busy Le Saint-Pub & MicroBrasserie where the first order of the evening was a tasting of the microbrewery's highly acclaimed Dominus Vobiscum and Vache Folle home-brewed beers — all

worthy of praise. As was a selection of house specialties including foie gras, mussels, smoked meats and a serving of poutine, a tasty but sinful mix of crumbled white cheddar cheese, gravy and fries, popular throughout Québec.

Four miles north of town is Camping du Gouffre. The park nestles in a quiet wooded setting and features 125 mostly shaded sites, some with services. The next morning we hit the road, bearing east on Route 362 toward the harbor at Saint-Joseph-de-la-Rive where we'd board a ferry bound for l'Isle-aux-Coudres.

The ferry makes free hourly runs back and forth to pint-sized Coudres, a largely rural islet measuring a mere 12 square miles. Soon after we rolled off the ferry onto the 16-mile road circling the island, we learned of its long history. French navigator Jacques Cartier discovered it in 1535 — naming it after hazelnut trees (coudriers) he found growing there. A monument to Cartier stands near the ferry terminal.

We visited its most popular attractions, including Les Moulins de l'Isle-aux-Coudres — a beautifully restored and fully operational flour mill from 1825, still powered by a venerable old stone windmill — and Cidrerie et Vergers Pedneault, where products of the Pedneault family orchards, including fruit wines and ciders, jams



From far left: Charming galleries, boutiques and cafés line rue Saint-Jean Baptiste in downtown Baie-Saint-Paul, which is one of Québec's oldest settlements. Situated at the confluence of the St. Lawrence River and Saguenay Fjord, Tadoussac is often touted as Québec's prettiest town.

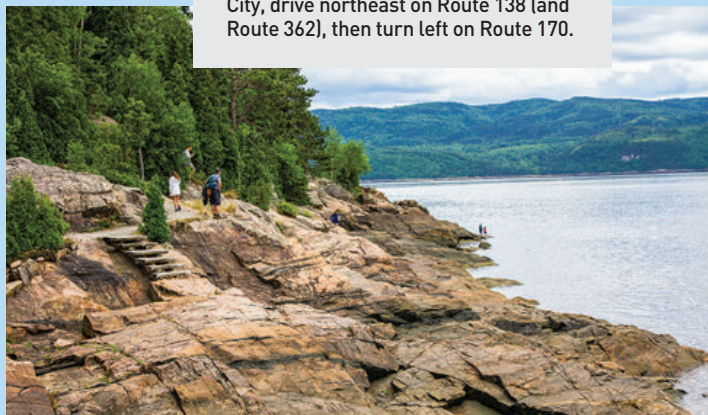
OF QUÉBEC, CANADA

Saguenay Fjord – a site of extraordinary beauty



Getting Here

The starting point, Québec City, is located 381 miles from Boston and 524 miles from New York City. From Québec City, drive northeast on Route 138 (and Route 362), then turn left on Route 170.



and syrups are on display and available for tasting at a roadside emporium.

Circling Coudres, we became absorbed in its pleasant, pastoral landscape dotted with farms, cozy cottages and tiny stone chapels built by fishermen in the 18th century in honor of their saints. We capped an enjoyable morning with lunch at Boulangerie Bouchard, a bakery that's been turning out pastries and crunchy-crustéd baguettes for 70 years. We smeared chunks of it with pâté. Good? Oh, yes!

Back at Saint-Joseph-de-la-Rive, we continued along Route 362, aptly known as River Road as it overlooks the St. Lawrence, we slowed the pace to take advantage of viewpoints offering dramatic vistas of the river.

Steering toward the precipitous Pointe-au-Pic cliffs at La Malbaie, we

Above from left: The Discovery Center is a great source of information and a long list of ranger-guided activities at the Rivière-Éternité sector of Parc National du Fjord-du-Saguenay. The village of Sainte-Rose-du-Nord, nicknamed "La Perte du Fjord" (the fjord's pearl), nestles on an inlet of Saguenay Fjord where visitors, arriving by land or water, can settle into its cafés or stroll a path along its rocky shore.

soon arrived at our destination for the evening, the majestic Fairmont Le Manoir Richelieu. A driving rain obscured our view of the hotel, perched like an ancient castle above the river — nonetheless it looked to us like the perfect place to wait out a storm. Built originally of wood in 1899 by Richelieu & Ontario Navigation Co. to accommodate passengers cruising the St. Lawrence on its luxury steamships, the hotel was destroyed by fire in 1928 and was soon rebuilt of stone to its present configuration.

We had originally planned to overnight at Camping au Bord de la

Rivière, a park with 165 sites, a large pool and all kinds of facilities for sports and recreation, but we decided to treat ourselves to a night's stay here at the Fairmont, unquestionably the Charlevoix region's finest hostelry. I won't regale you with the details of our lavish evening, but I will urge you to pay this elegant cliff-top retreat a visit should your travels bring you to the Charlevoix region.

Driving east on Route 138 to Saint-Siméon

The St. Lawrence River, one of the world's longest rivers, is navigable to the Great Lakes. It has a rich ecosystem, diverse wildlife and countless islands. Various species of marine mammals, birds and fish live, stop over, reproduce or feed here, particularly during the seasonal migrations.



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Above from left: The Air Defence Museum, next to Bagotville Canadian Air Force Base, explores Canada's military aviation history through indoor exhibits and an outdoor display of fighter aircraft. The golf course at the Fairmont Le Manoir Richelieu overlooks the St. Lawrence River.

and then along Route 170 northwest to the village of L'Anse-Saint-Jean, we finally gained our first look at Saguenay Fjord in all its grandeur.

Following a tasty lunch of homemade barley soup and smoked salmon salads at Restaurant L'Islet overlooking the water, we made our way across the road to the marina for a much-anticipated cruise on the fjord with Croisières du Fjord. Our 2½-hour voyage offered dazzling views of Cap Trinité and Cap Éternité from which rise some of the fjord's most impressive cliffs. We also spotted the white blips of cavorting beluga whales, a few seals, cormorants and gulls — and folks with binoculars observed peregrine falcons perched on the cliffs.

Back at the marina, we met a family who had just returned from a three-hour guided sea kayak excursion and they were ecstatic in telling us about the experience. The family hailed from the Chicago area, and were

among the few Americans we encountered during our visit. One reason for that might be that most Americans know little of Québec — beyond Montréal or Québec City. Or perhaps it's the language barrier. French is the predominant language of Québec, and especially so in the area we were traveling. At that, it's a Québécois variation of the language — older and a bit different from the schoolbook French you may have studied.

We found that many folks here speak some English, and while Mel is fluent in French, she rarely had to use it at the campgrounds, restaurants and attractions on our agenda. So don't let the notion of a language barrier dissuade you from visiting Québec. It's a wonderful and amazing place.

Exiting L'Anse-Saint-Jean we came upon a covered bridge known as Pont du Faubourg (with a 13-foot height clearance) — a picturesque scene indeed — one you'll find depicted on the

➔ Crossing the Border

Canadian law requires a valid passport or "appropriate documentation" that establishes identity and nationality to enter the country. Such documentation can be a birth certificate, a certificate of citizenship or naturalization, a U.S. Permanent Resident Card or a Certificate of Indian Status along with photo identification.

An Enhanced Driver's License (EDL), currently issued in Michigan, New York, Vermont and Washington, is acceptable

to establish both identity and citizenship. The EDL is an acceptable standalone Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative-compliant document for entry into the United States. The state EDL is only available to U.S. citizens legally residing in the state of issuance. When an EDL is presented by a U.S. citizen traveler, no other documentation is required for purposes of proving identity.

Persons driving into Canada also must have

their vehicle's registration document and proof of insurance. Both persons and vehicles are subject to search. You also may be asked to verify your travel plans, return date and financial means.

Be aware too that a criminal record, DUI convictions included, can be grounds for inadmissibility.

Visit www.cbsa-asfc.gc.ca/menu-eng.html for more information about crossing the border from the U.S. into Canada.

back of Canada's thousand-dollar bill.

Just minutes up the road we entered the Rivière-Éternité sector of Parc National du Fjord-du-Saguenay where we looked in on the park's campground, hidden away in the forest. RV sites have partial hookups and can accommodate RVs up to 32 feet. At the Discovery Center, visitors can secure trail maps for the park's extensive network of hiking trails and sign up for a variety of ranger-guided experiences, including sea kayaking, Zodiac boating or climbing on the park's three new Via Ferrata courses. Here, thrill-seekers can edge along sheer-walled escarpments above the fjord aided by steel handholds and foot pegs — all under the watchful eye of experienced guides.

We took a short hike and then settled down on the shore below the Discovery Center to absorb the majesty of the fjord and surrounding cliffs.

Next on this busy day was a visit to Musée du Fjord in La Baie, about 45 minutes beyond the national park on Route 170. Exploring the museum's multimedia exhibits, touch tanks and giant aquarium, we learned about the fascinating science of Saguenay Fjord.

La Baie, as its name suggests, sits on a large bay near the terminus of Saguenay Fjord. It is a borough of Saguenay, the region's largest city, and

Camping La Descente-des-Femmes sits within view of Saguenay Fjord in Sainte-Rose-du-Nord.

a busy port. Most cruise ships sailing the fjord dock here for a day of sight-seeing. Fortunately it also was home to our campground for the evening.

We were pretty weary when we pulled into Jardin de Mon Père campground. Tired though we were, I'll have to say the sight of this park, scenically situated on Rivière-à-Mars — a popular salmon fishing river — rejuvenated us. It's beautifully landscaped and maintained, and loaded with amenities, including a restaurant, recreation center, laundry facilities, heated pool, playground and a long list of recreational facilities.

Jardin de Mon Père has consistently achieved high ratings — the Good Sam RV Travel and Savings Guide accords it an average 9.5 rating. We rate it hands-down the best campground we encountered during our travels. Following a hearty breakfast of blueberry pancakes and ham and eggs at the campground restaurant, we headed out for another action-packed day along the fjord.

Our first stop was at the nearby Air Defence Museum adjacent to Bagotville Canadian Air Force Base. This museum explores Canada's military aviation history through indoor exhibits and a sprawling outdoor

CAMPING QUÉBEC

RVing is immensely popular in Québec, and statistics seem to reflect that: Québec ranks second only to Alberta in the number of registered RVs in Canada. There are plenty of campgrounds too, more than 650 private ones plus more located in provincial and national parks. Keep in mind the short season here — most campgrounds are open mid-May through September.



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display of fighter aircraft.

Skirting the top of the fjord along the city of Chicoutimi waterfront and now headed down its opposite side on Route 172, we stopped next at Chevrier du Nord in Saint-Fulgence, a working angora goat farm and atelier where master artisans and sisters Annie and Lise Pilote weave and knit angora wool and other fibers into high-quality clothing and accessories.

Just a few miles down the road, we visited Parc Aventures Cap Jaseux, a campground and outdoor recreation center — something like the national park we'd seen the day before — on steroids. Activities include Via Ferrata courses, zip lines, treetop canopy tours, kayaking and more. In addition to camping here, there are some intriguing and truly creative rental alternatives, such as geodesic domes and "suspended spherical treehouses."

Lunchtime found us in Sainte-Rose-du-Nord, a village of about 400 residents with a big reputation for charm. Nicknamed La Perle du Fjord (the fjord's pearl), it nestles on the shores of a rocky inlet and as we dined at a quayside café we watched sailboats come and go and folks picking their way along a granite ledge for a better view of the fjord. On our way back to the highway we paused to take a look at Camping La Descentes-Femmes, a rustic campground with a few RV spaces but limited facilities. It does, however, offer spectacular views of the fjord.

Continuing our southeasterly course along Route 172, we watched for the entrance to the Baie Sainte-Marguerite sector of Parc National du Fjord-du-Saguenay where we would overnight. A sister park to the Rivière-Éternité sector we'd previously visited, this one was just finishing up construction of its RV campground, bringing online a couple dozen sites with electric and water service.

I should mention that rates at the parks I've described fall within a \$25-\$40 (Canadian) range per night for a serviced site.

Next morning, we dropped by the Discovery Center for a look at its

exhibits, most of them focusing on beluga whales, which frequent the inlet just outside, where the Rivière Sainte-Marguerite flows into the fjord.

Our fjord-circling adventure came to a pleasant end with a visit to Tadoussac — a village often described as the most beautiful in all of Québec — sublimely situated at the confluence of Saguenay Fjord and the mighty St. Lawrence. Walking along its busy harbor and sparkling bay beyond, we came upon some of Tadoussac's landmarks, which alerted us to its extraordinary history. Jacques Cartier was the first European to set foot here in 1535 and what is now Tadoussac was settled as a fur trading post in 1600 — eight years before the founding of Québec City. That makes it the oldest continuously inhabited European settlement in Canada.

Reminders of the village's history include a replica of that 1600 fur trading post, North America's oldest wooden church (1747) and the massive 1864 Victorian-style Tadoussac Hotel that helped usher in the modern age of tourism along the St. Lawrence River.

As we departed, we wished that we had had more time to undertake everything that there is to see and do here during our whirlwind visit to the Saguenay region of Québec. **M**

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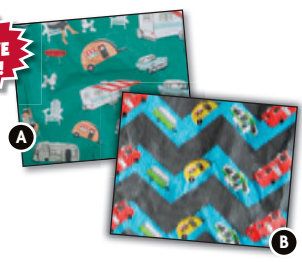
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The Simple Life

Jayco's new Alante Class A is a right-sized motorhome that makes buying — and living — easier

By Chris Hemer

The world is turning. Time marches on. As keenly aware as we all are of this, and as much as we can appreciate the modern world, we often find ourselves longing for the simpler things in life. Certainly, appreciating our nation's landscape from behind the wheel of a motorhome can be counted as one of these; just leave the hustle of daily life and all its trappings behind (literally) and enjoy the many pleasures that discovery brings. Today, there are lots of motorhomes in the \$100,000 to \$125,000 price range that will help you do that. However, many keep the price in check by offering a handful of standard features and a long list of options that can quickly put you

over budget. The 2016 Jayco Alante, however, strikes a good balance with well-equipped, traditional floorplans that offer just a handful of options, making buying — and enjoying — a new motorhome much easier.

Let's start with the floorplans. There are only four to choose from, ranging from the 26X at 27 feet, 4 inches, to the 31V (which we tested) at 32 feet, 3 inches. And in another nod to simplicity, there are no more than two slideouts offered. The test unit that Jayco supplied was loaded with every available option, which included full-body paint in Topaz (\$8,088), power front overhead bunk (\$2,199) and a bedroom TV (\$375). It also came equipped with the Customer Value

Package at \$6,787, a mandatory option (we love that term) that brings niceties like backup and sideview cameras with monitor, an electric awning with integrated LED lights, living area flat-screen TV, touch-screen audio system, MCD night shades, slideout toppers and other features, bringing the grand total to \$124,059.

Depending on your needs, you may be able to do without the bunk and the TV, but we highly recommend the paint option. The standard Blue Ribbon and Sensational Red gelcoat/graphics packages, with their black-framed storage compartments, aren't visually appealing — and the paint is a vast improvement. Not only is the finish admirable even for a motorhome that costs twice as much, but it eliminates those contrasting black lines, and ties in beautifully with the tinted, frameless windows.

Jayco is a family-owned company

ABOVE: The Alante looks great in the optional full-body Topaz paint scheme. Streetside slideouts mean there's more patio entertaining space.

that, while better known for its travel trailers and fifth-wheels, has built its fair share of Class A motorhomes — so we were eager to step on board and take a road trip in this, the company's latest offering. Packing up was easy, thanks to side-opening doors and storage compartments in the middle of the coach that, while narrow at the top, do pass all the way through. We used the narrow section for a folding table and chairs, which worked perfectly.

We soon found out, however, that actually driving the Alante would be the least enjoyable part of our test. The Ford chassis subjects passengers to a harsh ride that can become downright uncomfortable over rough pavement or expansion joints, and the cacophony from the V-10 engine was, quite simply, unacceptable. Forget about conversation when climbing a grade, and the drone can't be overcome by the stereo, either. You just have to hope for smooth, level pavement down the road. If you do decide on this motorhome, put some money aside to better insulate the doghouse area, and to fit the chassis with better shocks and some handling aids.

Certainly Jayco can't solve the chassis' shortcomings, and its contributions to the overall success of this motorhome are commendable. The one-piece windshield is huge and provides outstanding visibility, the driver's seat features power adjustment, and both front seats pivot easily to face the living area without having to adjust the seat-back angles

BELOW: Galley is well-organized and spacious, and the TV is mounted high enough so that it won't be in the way. The area is light and bright, but the entry-door window needs a shade.



or some other nonsense. There's shag carpet underfoot, and the perforated vinyl upholstery has a pleasing textured leather appearance, although it did get sticky in hot weather. At the driver's left are a single cup holder and a change cubby, plus switches for the heated exterior mirrors, battery boost, accent lighting and MCD windshield power shade up/down. Also conveniently located on this side are the controls for the standard Power Gear four-point automatic leveling system, a nice feature that makes campsite setup a push-button affair.

The center stack features an XM-ready Jensen AM/FM/CD/DVD/

MP3 touch-screen audio system that also displays the rearview and sideview camera visuals. We found the sound from the audio system to be on the tinny side, and the sideview cameras do little more than display the sides of the coach — not much of the adjacent lane is visible. Underneath the Jensen unit are the Ford-supplied HVAC controls, plus switches for the lights and generator start/stop, which is a logical placement. We appreciate Jayco's intentions in making the dash driver-oriented, but this is both a plus and a minus in a motorhome. The driver can see everything better, but the co-pilot can't help the driver figure

Below from left: Captain's chairs swivel and the driver's seat is power adjustable. Loft bed deploys quickly and comes with a ladder.



PHOTOS: SCOTT HIRKO



out the audio system, for example, without unbuckling his or her seat belt and crawling over.

Sleeping capacity is perhaps the biggest surprise in the Alante. Where most Class A's sleep two or four, Jayco says the 31V is designed to sleep up to six, but we think this is conservative. By our count, seven to eight people should be able to spend



The mirrored medicine cabinet is huge, but we had to duck under it when brushing our teeth.

the night depending, of course, on their size. Behind the driver's seat in the living area slide is a jackknife sofa and a fixed dinette that has room for four. The sofa is reasonably comfortable to sit on, and it turns into a bed for one adult or two kids very quickly. Ditto for the dinette, which features handy storage underneath the seat cushions. Two can obviously sleep in the rear bedroom, and with the optional overhead bunk system mentioned earlier, there's easily room for two more. This bed is power-operated and deploys rapidly, and Jayco supplies a ladder for easy access and a panel that prevents sleepers from rolling off. The platform is appropriately rated for adults at 750 pounds, and the mattress, with its faux suede upholstery, is firm but comfortable.

It may not be for everybody, but we liked the nostalgic look and feel of the laminate table and countertops, which have that old-school white marble look, and hard, non-beveled edges. The curbside galley has quite an expanse of the stuff on the countertop, affording plenty of space for prepping and serving food. There's a plastic double-bowl sink and a residential-style brushed-bronze faucet for washing dishes, and to the right, a three-burner stove with oven. Hovering just above the counter in the middle is a 38-inch flat-screen TV, which is perfectly located for viewing from the couch or dinette, and is placed high enough so that food splatters shouldn't be a concern. There's plenty of cabinet/drawer space, and the fit and finish, especially for a coach in this price range, is exemplary. A residential-size microwave, refrigerator with a matching wood front and a narrow, but deep, pantry round out the galley.

The living area has plenty of windows, which makes for a light and bright space, but there are a few curiosities here. For instance, Jayco places a small window directly above the entry door, which is an unusual, but welcome detail. It has its own MCD shade, but the entry door window directly below, does not. It seems to us that it would have been easy to make the shade longer, then it could cover both windows. Instead, the entry window is tinted, which only provides privacy during the day; at night, the interior lighting makes occupants plainly visible to anyone outside. The

WHAT'S HOT

Functional floorplan, huge windshield, great sleeping capacity, optional paint.

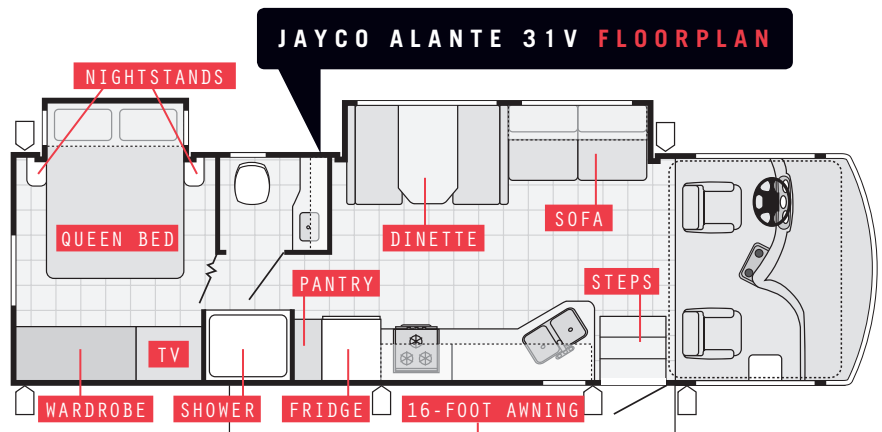
WHAT'S NOT

Noisy and rough riding, 30-amp power.



rest of the windows are all tilt-outs, which makes them easy to open, but doesn't allow a lot of breeze to flow through on warm afternoons.

You won't be wanting for light in the evenings, either, because there is an abundance of overhead LED lighting that can be turned on or off at once with a switch by the entry door, or individually at each fixture. Switch placement is intuitive for the most part, but there are a few places where it's a bit odd, especially in the bathroom. On the entry wall, there is a row of four switches that includes water pump, tank heater, bath light and shower, with the switch for the overhead fan on its own just above. It would make more sense to have the light switch on its own, and put the tank-heater switch in the hallway along with the tank monitor, thermostat, generator and front slide control. It also seems odd that the light switch for the shower, which is across the hall, is in the bathroom.



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Specifications

Chassis

Model	Ford F53
Engine	V-10
SAE Hp	362 @ 4,750 rpm
Torque	457 lb-ft @ 3,250 rpm
Transmission	5-speed automatic
Axle Ratio	5.38:1
Tires	245/70R19.5
Wheelbase	190"
Brakes	disc with ABS
Suspension, Front/Rear	leaf/leaf
Fuel Capacity	80 gal
Fuel Economy	9.16 mpg
Warranty	3 years/36,000 miles

Coach

Exterior Length	32' 3"
Exterior Width	8' 5"
Exterior Height	12' 5"
Interior Width	8' 2"
Interior Height	7'
Construction	Laminated side walls, seamless crowned fiberglass roof, seamless one-piece front cap, bead-foam insulation
Freshwater Capacity	71.5 gal
Black-Water Capacity	51.5 gal
Gray-Water Capacity	41 gal
Water-Heater Capacity	6 gal
LP-Gas Capacity	16.5 gal
Air Conditioner	15,000 Btu
Furnace	31,000 Btu
Refrigerator	8 cubic foot
Converter/Charger	60 amp
Battery (1)	Group 27 12-volt
AC Generator	4 kW
MSRP	\$113,397
MSRP as Tested	\$124,059
Warranty	2 years/24,000 miles

Wet Weight

(Water and Heater, Fuel, LP-Gas Tanks Full;
No Supplies or Passengers)

Front Axle	5,120 lbs
Rear Axle	10,600 lbs
Total	15,720 lbs

Chassis Ratings

GAWR, F/R	7,000/12,000 lbs
GVWR/GCWR	18,000/23,000 lbs
ROCCC	2,280 lbs (deduct weight of passengers for net cargo capacity)
GAWR	Gross Axle Weight Rating
GVWR	Gross Vehicle Weight Rating
GCWR	Gross Combination Weight Rating
ROCCC	Realistic Occupant and Cargo Carrying Capacity (Full Water, No Passengers)



Above from left: Dinette seats four and has under-seat storage. The table is tapered at the end. The bedroom is small, but has a large mirrored closet, plus drawers and overhead cabinets.

Otherwise the bath area works well. It features a plastic sink and '70s-style faucet and handles, which again, we liked. There's plenty of countertop space, a huge, mirrored medicine cabinet, a tilt-out drawer for soap, etc., and a large cabinet below. Other nice features include an open-shelved area, two sturdy towel hooks, a towel hoop and a 120-volt AC outlet next to the sink. The plastic toilet does the job, but if this were our coach, we'd replace it immediately with a porcelain unit.

If you open the bathroom door all the way, it becomes a divider between the living area and bed/bath area, and there is a rubber grommet/bracket arrangement that holds the door in place. If you want to leave the bath accessible to guests, there is an accordion door that just separates the bedroom from the living area and bath, a thoughtful feature. We only had three complaints with the bath area: There's no heat in the bathroom, the shower could use a more flexible hose and a shut-off valve on the showerhead, and the door needs to be trimmed to allow for a bath mat between the shower and bathroom.

The bedroom is compact, but functional. The small queen bed was comfortable and offers under-bed storage, but accessing it is really a two-person affair; one has to lift, the other puts the single strut in place to keep the platform elevated. Gas struts would be a nice addition, but this is one of the few areas we thought could use improvement. We appreciated the powered Fan-Tastic Vent controlled by a wall-mounted switch, and all the storage at the foot of the bed. Although the lower drawers are blocked by the mattress once the slide is in the travel

position, you can still access the large mirrored closet and some drawers by climbing onto the bed. The 24-inch TV is appropriately sized for the room, and it flips up to reveal additional space behind it, though we don't know what purpose this serves. If you were to put a satellite box or DVD player here, for example, you couldn't control it once the TV was flipped back down, unless you invested in an RF remote.

We usually don't discuss the utilities in our tests, unless they're exceptionally good or bad. In the case of the Alante, they're both. We absolutely loved that the dump valves are situated directly on waste lines (both of which are 3 inches in diameter), so they're accessible, reliable and easy to repair should something go wrong. But, we really had a problem with the 30-amp electrical service. While it's true that the Alante only has one roof air conditioner, the circuit breaker would pop if both the air conditioner and the microwave were turned on at the same time, for example. It's for this same reason we can't understand the purpose of an electric hot-water tank (in addition to an LP-gas burner) in this case.

Balancing desirable features with a reasonable price tag is never an easy task for any manufacturer, but Jayco has done a very good job overall with the Alante. It's just the right size, and with its generous list of standard features, it should make it easy for a family to enjoy the great outdoors, togetherness and friendship. In other words, the simple things. **M**

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BORN FREE IMPERIAL

The Born Free Imperial is a good fit for RVers looking to downsize, or for someone who wants an easy-to-drive motorhome. The standard Imperial is shown here, and options for dual slides, handicap accessibility and different sleeping configurations make the selection process a custom affair. Every Born Free is constructed with three tubular steel rollbars for safety, molded fiberglass body, fiberglass floor and running boards and all-LED body lighting. Inside, the handmade cabinetry features all hardwood doors and drawer faces, 3/4-inch furniture-grade plywood and dovetailed drawers.

Plus, each Born Free base model comes equipped with a 4-kW generator, navigation, backup camera, 15,000-Btu air conditioner, 32-inch LED TV, Blu-ray player, electric awning, 2,000-watt inverter and more. A fiberglass warranty protects against corrosion or hail perforation for the life of the coach (to the original purchaser).



Chassis	Ford F-550
Engine	6.7-liter Power Stroke turbodiesel
Fuel capacity	68 gal
Exterior length	33' 7"
Exterior width	8' 6"
Exterior height with A/C	11' 5"
Wheelbase	230"
Freshwater capacity	35 gal
Black-/Gray-water capacity	47 gal/47 gal
LP-gas capacity	19.5 gal
GVWR	19,500 lbs
Base MSRP	\$201,000

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C's of Tranquility

These big Class C motorhomes make living the good life easy

The words “luxury motorhome” generally evoke visions of mammoth Class A coaches, luxury buses and/or conversions with higher-end electronics, appliances and appointments than you’d likely find in a luxury Manhattan high-rise. For years these land-yachts have dominated the scene, and continue to enjoy immense popularity in the upscale RV-shopper market.

But not to be outdone, Class C motorhomes have evolved over the years to include many of the upper-crust features so often associated with Class A’s, with all the convenience of a (relatively) familiar ride and handling platform. Plus, many RVers prefer dual-cockpit entry doors afforded by the Class C configuration rather than entering the driver’s area via the living area as with a Class A.

Whether they’re part of the beefy “Super-C” segment or simply nimble brutes built on heavy-duty rails, today’s Class C motorhomes are so much more than the cabover sleepers built on a van chassis of years past. And, these beautiful beasts are strong, some even built on commercial-duty chassis found on semis, many of which sport a tow rating capable of pulling anything you’ll ever need. But this herculean strength is equally matched by the posh amenities on the inside, from the solid-surface countertops, hardwood cabinets and big-screen TVs we’ve come to expect, to the granite flooring, bath-and-a-half floorplans and flagship navigation systems we may not have seen coming.

So, from hulking Super C’s to robust Class C’s that are just plain super, the following motorhomes are good examples of what’s on the market today.



COACH HOUSE PLATINUM

Coach House Platinum motorhomes are constructed with a patented one-piece, hand-laid fiberglass shell reinforced with carbon fiber, which the company claims results in a stronger, more durable and quieter vehicle. The Platinum 261XL DT shown here is a twin-bed model with a streetside slide that houses a convertible dinette. A spacious bathroom spans the width of the motorhome at the rear.

Like all Platinum motorhomes, the 261XL is fitted with top-of-the-line appliances and fixtures, a porcelain toilet, separate stand-up shower, 32-inch HDTV, three-way refrigerator and microwave convection oven. Coach House also offers standards such as a generator, hitch receiver, auxiliary batteries, full-body paint, navigation system with backup camera, automatic rain-sensing roof vent fans and more.

Coach House motorhomes are sold only at the factory in Nokomis, Florida, and Coach House warranty service is available nationwide or at the factory.



Chassis	Ford E-450 Super Duty
Engine	6.8-liter Triton V-10
Fuel capacity	55 gal
Exterior length	26' 10"
Exterior width	8'
Exterior height with A/C	10' 5"
Wheelbase	176"
Freshwater capacity	32 gal
Black-/Gray-water capacity	25 gal/30 gal
LP-gas capacity	15 gal
GVWR	14,500 lbs
Base MSRP	\$162,000

Coach House Inc.
800-235-0984, www.coachhousesrv.com



DYNAMAX

Dynamax has been building Super C motorhomes for more than 17 years, and it shows. For the new 2016 DX3 lineup featured here, the manufacturer has introduced more aerodynamic front and rear caps and three new color schemes designed by artist Dean Loucks. Also included are thermal-pane windows, a 3,000-watt inverter with auto generator start, 4D AGM batteries, an Aqua-Hot hydronic heating system, a Thetford Sani-Con system, porcelain-tile flooring and quartz countertops. The interior is adorned with cherry hardwoods, upgraded upholstery and premium appliances. The redesigned DX3 lineup offers a long list of standard features, including a 20,000-pound tow rating, touch-screen audio/navigation system, electric fireplace (37TRS only) and a whole-coach water-purification system. Once you select a floorplan in the DX3 lineup, only three options are offered: Norcold 12-cubic-foot refrigerator with icemaker, stackable washer/dryer and bunk DVD players (37BH floorplan).



Chassis	Freightliner M2
Engine	Cummins 9.0-liter ISL
Fuel capacity	100 gal
Exterior length	35' 4"-39' 1"
Exterior width	8' 5"
Exterior height	13'
Wheelbase	270"
Freshwater capacity	110 gal
Black-/Gray-water capacity	52 gal/52 gal
LP-gas capacity	20.3 gal
GVWR	33,000 lbs
Base MSRP	\$296,978-\$308,878

Dynamax
888-295-7859, www.dynamaxcorp.com



HAULMARK

Haulmark Motorcoach is known for its durable, high-class motorhomes. Haulmark combines high-mile Volvo and Freightliner chassis with posh living quarters the company claims are designed to last 1 million miles. With features like solid-hardwood cabinetry, Corian countertops and granite flooring, in addition to the buffet table, 23-cubic-foot refrigerator and the convenience of a bath-and-a-half floorplan, we imagine those million miles in the 4501 GS configuration shown here would be more than enjoyable. Plus, it always helps to have an onboard wine chiller and glass holder; be ready to host all the parties at the RV resort. Haulmark coaches also offer ample subfloor storage in a solid-steel compartment, and a mind-boggling 40,000-pound towing capacity. A wide variety of options is available, including exterior paint packages and whichever interior upgrade you can think of; imagine the selection process for that aforementioned Manhattan high-rise, and you're on the right track.



Chassis	Volvo or Freightliner
Engine	600-hp Volvo or 600-hp Cummins
Fuel capacity	140 gal
Exterior length	45'
Exterior width	8' 6"
Exterior height with A/C	13' 3"
Wheelbase	341"
Freshwater capacity	135 gal
Black-/Gray-water capacity	65 gal/65 gal
LP-gas capacity	33 gal
GVWR	54,500 lbs
Base MSRP	starts at \$490,000

Haulmark Motorcoach
574-264-9661, www.haulmarkmotorcoach.com



ITASCA CAMBRIA

The Itasca Cambria is a low-profile Class C motorhome that combines upscale living amenities with a rugged Ford E-450 chassis. That combination makes it a great choice for RVers looking to scale things up a bit, as the Ford chassis is a familiar, friendly platform that's easy to maneuver. But this convenience comes without much compromise; the Cambria sports Ultraleather furniture, Corian countertops, available mosaic-tile backsplashes, a powered patio awning with LED lighting and TVs in the lounge and the bedroom. A large pass-through sliding tray and dinette below-seat compartment make storage easy. The 30J offers a split-lavatory footprint, and the master bedroom houses a walkaround queen bed, dual nightstands and a wardrobe. All this on a motorhome constructed using methods such as laser-cut structural-steel tubing, Thermopane side windows and a fiberglass roof.



Chassis	Ford E-450
Engine	6.8-liter Triton V-10
Fuel capacity	55 gal
Exterior length	32' 4"
Exterior width	7' 11"
Exterior height	10' 3"
Wheelbase	220"
Freshwater capacity	34 gal
Black-/Gray-water capacity	26 gal/34 gal
LP-gas capacity	18 gal
GVWR	14,500 lbs
Base MSRP	\$111,128

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



JAYCO SENECA

The Jayco Seneca features an impressive balance of sturdy construction and thoughtful upscale amenities. The Seneca is built on the Freightliner M2 106 chassis coupled with a Cummins ISB 6.7-liter diesel and fitted with a 10,000-pound-rated hitch receiver. A heavy-duty rear air suspension provides a smooth ride, while a front-axle stabilizer reduces the need for steering corrections. The seamless fiberglass front cap improves aerodynamics and increases durability. Inside, the padded ceiling makes for a soft, enjoyable atmosphere, while the cherry-stained, solid-hardwood cabinetry, high-gloss solid-surface countertops with tile backsplash and laminate flooring all offer a touch of class. The living area of the 37HJ shown here features a cabover queen bed and entertainment center with electric fireplace, while the master boasts a king bed, wardrobe, dresser and optional washer/dryer. Every Jayco features a two-year warranty.



Chassis	Freightliner M2 106
Engine	Cummins ISB 6.7-liter
Fuel capacity	74 gal
Exterior length	38' 11"
Exterior width	8' 6"
Exterior height with A/C	13' 1"
Wheelbase	276"
Freshwater capacity	71.5 gal
Black-/Gray-water capacity	30 gal/40 gal
LP-gas capacity	13.2 gal
GVWR	28,000 lbs
Base MSRP	\$225,757

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



RENEGADE RV

The 2015 Renegade XL 45RF is a 45-foot triple-slide unit featuring a large kitchen, solid-surface counters, maple cabinets and plenty of storage. Luxurious flourishes include soft-close drawers, day/night shades, a large pantry and an 18-cubic-foot residential refrigerator. The bath-and-a-half floorplan features a Flexsteel sofa bed and spacious dinette with storage drawers as standard. There's a mini-king bed and plenty of wardrobe and dresser storage, plus a private master bath featuring a vessel-bowl sink, vanity, and huge one-piece shower with integrated seat and glass surround. Outside, the XL features fiberglass walls and a one-piece fiberglass roof, and is finished with tri-color full-body paint, frameless dual-pane windows and side-swing baggage doors. Power comes courtesy of the impressive 525-HP Cummins ISX 15-liter diesel.



Chassis	Freightliner Cascadia
Engine	Cummins ISX 15-liter
Fuel capacity	140 gal
Exterior length	44' 10"
Exterior width	8' 4.5"
Exterior height with A/C	12' 10"
Wheelbase	346"
Freshwater capacity	150 gal
Black-/Gray-water capacity	75 gal/75 gal
LP-gas capacity	38 gal
GVWR	58,000 lbs
Base MSRP	\$412,672

Renegade RV
888-522-1126, www.renegaderv.com



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2016 DIPLOMAT



M O N A C O

Monaco, Circle 103 on Reader Service Card



THOR CHATEAU

Thor Motor Coach's Chateau Super C platform incorporates Ford's F-550 Super Duty chassis with the 300-HP, 660 LB-FT-torque Power Stroke diesel, increased fuel efficiency and a 10,000-pound hitch receiver. Some key elements include Thor's own HD-MAX Exterior with Graphics Package; automatic hydraulic leveling jacks; chrome, heated remote exterior mirrors with a side-view camera system; leatherette furniture; residential appliances; a power patio awning with integrated LED lighting and solid-surface kitchen countertops.

At bedtime, the 35SB bunkhouse featured here offers amidships bunk beds, in addition to the rear king bed, front overhead sleeper, sofa with air bed and dream dinette, upping the sleeping positions to double digits. Popular options include a cabover entertainment center with a 50-inch TV, DVD player and soundbar; a 12-volt DC attic fan in the galley or overhead bunk; and a 6-kW Onan diesel generator.



Chassis	Ford F-550 Super Duty
Engine	6.7-liter V-8 Power Stroke turbodiesel
Fuel capacity	68 gal
Exterior length	35' 11"
Exterior width	8' 3"
Exterior height with A/C	12' 4"
Wheelbase	245"
Freshwater capacity	75 gal
Black-/Gray-water capacity	40 gal/40 gal
LP-gas capacity	16 gal
GVWR	19,500 lbs
Base MSRP	\$145,010

Thor Chateau
800-860-5658, www.chateau-super-c.com



THOR FOUR WINDS 35SF

Thor's Four Winds 35SF Super C features an open floorplan matched to a 6.7-liter V-8 Power Stroke diesel engine. The motorhome features all the comforts of home, including two lav areas, a spacious split galley with a three-burner stove, microwave, 18-cubic-foot fridge and plenty of counter-space. The bath-and-a-half floorplan helps with privacy and convenience, while the large rear bedroom "retreat" sports a 60-by-75-inch queen bed, his-and-hers closets and a 32-inch LED TV — all with access to the adjoining bathroom. The kids will no doubt enjoy watching their favorite shows on the 32-inch TV mounted on a swivel in the cabover area (an even larger 50-inch TV is part of an overhead cab entertainment center option). There's also an exterior 32-inch TV for outdoor entertainment. Sleeping for up to eight is easily accommodated, based on options. Leatherette captain's chairs, a backup monitor, and touch-screen AM/FM radio with DVD/CD player are designed to make piloting the coach even more enjoyable.



Chassis	Ford F-550 Super Duty
Engine	6.7-liter V-8 Power Stroke turbodiesel
Fuel capacity	68 gal
Exterior length	36' 2"
Exterior width	8' 3"
Exterior height with A/C	12' 4"
Wheelbase	255"
Freshwater capacity	75 gal
Black-/Gray-water capacity	71 gal/40 gal
LP-gas capacity	16 gal
GVWR	19,500 lbs
Base MSRP	\$146,420

Thor Four Winds
800-860-5658, www.fourwinds-super-c.com



WINNEBAGO ASPECT

The Winnebago Aspect Class C incorporates the same feature and comfort level as the famous manufacturer's top-of-the-line Class A gasser. However, the lower ride height and automotive cab make the Aspect drive like a smaller motorhome while living like a larger one. This combination of luxury and ease of driving is what makes them so popular with RVers looking to downsize from a larger Class A gas or diesel-pusher motorhome. The triple-slide 30J featured here is one of three available floorplans and features a 40-inch LCD TV, powered RestEasy sofa/recliner, polished private collection Corian countertops, stone and tile backsplashes and upgraded Ultraleather furniture. Thoughtful appointments include a large shower in the mid-coach split bathroom, flip-up countertop extension and an exterior rear trunk and table. Popular configurations also include premium adjustable-firmness mattresses, hydraulic leveling jacks and satellite TV dish.



Chassis	Ford E-450
Engine	6.8-liter Triton V-10
Fuel capacity	55 gal
Exterior length	32' 4"
Exterior width	7' 11"
Exterior height	10' 3"
Wheelbase	220"
Freshwater capacity	34 gal
Black-/Gray-water capacity	26 gal/34 gal
LP-gas capacity	18 gal
GVWR	14,500 lbs
Base MSRP	\$110,989

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By E. Don Smith

Dry Cleaning

Reduce the mess — and the slippery slopes — with near-waterless fiberglass roof cleaning

Cleaning the roof of a motorhome is never a particularly easy task, but some ways of keeping it clean are easier than others. In the May 2010 issue (“Winning the Battle With Rooftop Mold and Mildew”) we covered some products and tips for cleaning a one-piece fiberglass roof that required the use of a water hose and various cleaners. Since then we have continued to search for better, easier ways of conquering this task and we found a new method that is waterless. We should point out that waterless cleaning doesn’t mean dry; rather, this method no longer requires access to running water. In fact, no water is required at all.

The disadvantages of the traditional way of cleaning a fiberglass motorhome roof are many. First, you need access to running water, and also to be in a place that allows you to use running water for washing your coach.



Since the Wash Wax All products are waterless, there is no mess and you can work on a small section or the whole roof in one session. The end result is a beautifully clean roof.

Since many RV parks don’t allow rig washing onsite, that alone relegates the procedure to your driveway or other areas where washing is allowed. The next problem is that while you are on the roof cleaning off all that mold and mildew, it invariably gets rinsed away with the water hose and down the side of your motorhome — which usually means streaks and residue are left on the paint and extra care is required. Another disadvantage is that

with the traditional hose-down method you are forced to do the entire job at once or else be faced with lugging the water hose and other products up and down the ladder multiple times. Then of course there is the issue of safety. Walking around on a wet, slippery roof is tricky at best and requires extreme caution.

When using the waterless method, all of those disadvantages are alleviated. We recently tried a number



From far left: The Wash Wax All products we used include the red Wash Wax All Degreaser, the purple Belly Wash, the blue Wash Wax All Cleaner, an Aero Scrubber Pad and a Waterless Mop Head.

of cleaners from a company that produces a waterless cleaning product called Wash Wax All (www.washwax.com) that we tested in the May 2011 issue ("Getting the Dirt Off"). Many of the company's products are used in the aviation industry, where cutting heavy dirt and crud from large aircraft is the norm. After reading about its line of aircraft cleaners, we contacted the company and asked if its product would work on a fiberglass roof — without hesitation, we were met with a resounding "Yes!"

We ordered a few bottles of each of the heavy-duty cleaners, Wash Wax All Degreaser and Belly Wash. The Belly Wash is aimed at the dirtiest areas when nothing else seems to work and is safe for aluminum and fiberglass, which makes it perfect for a typical fiberglass roof. We also ordered the Aero Scrubber pad and handle, which is manufactured to work with these cleaners as well as removing bugs from the front of a motorhome (with the Wash Wax All product) and other really dirty or hard-to-clean areas. Each cleaner has specific uses, so make sure you follow the directions to prevent any issues with using the wrong one on paint or sensitive plastics.

After trying countless products in an attempt to clean a motorhome roof using a waterless method, we had all but given up until these arrived. Nothing we tried would cut through the months of mold, mildew and road grime that had accumulated and, frankly, we didn't think these would either.

As a trial run we went on the rooftop of the motorhome (again, safety here can't be stressed enough) carrying nothing other than the two bottles of cleaner along with an Aero



[1] After a year of sitting outside, the roof on this coach was in need of some serious cleaning. Notice the black dirt as well as the green mold toward the front. If your coach is covered with leaves and other debris you will first need to remove the offending parties by sweeping or blowing them off with a leaf blower before you begin. **[2]** To get started, spray a small 2-by-2-foot area with the Belly Wash, making sure the area is completely covered before you begin scrubbing. The red-colored Wash Wax All Degreaser is safe for plastics and clear-coat paint, but the purple Belly Wash shown here is not. Make sure you use each product as directed. **[3]** After spraying the area with Belly Wash, use the Aero Scrubber and start scrubbing. You will see the dirt and grime start to dissolve quickly. Usually it takes two or three minutes of scrubbing per area to get it clean.



Scrubber pad and a few microfiber towels. First, we sprayed a small area with the "red" degreaser and started scrubbing with the pad. Within a few swipes of the pad we could already see the dirt and grime begin to dissolve. After a few moments of scrubbing we then used a clean microfiber cloth to wipe up the residue. All that was left was a bright white and clean section of fiberglass roof. Since time didn't allow

[4] Use a microfiber towel to wipe up the dirty remains from the surface. If an area dries out while cleaning, simply spray it again and wipe it up. Some really stubborn stains may require two applications. Turn the towel frequently, and swap out with clean ones after both sides get dirty. [5] While on the roof we also used the red Wash Wax All Degreaser product to clean the HVAC covers, the plastic skylights and the TV antenna, as well as the roof vents and satellite antenna dome. Since it is safe for plastics, you only want to use the degreaser on these more sensitive areas. As you can see it worked great and removed all signs of mold and mildew. We used the same method of spray, scrub and wipe clean.

that day to clean the whole roof, we had some time to carve out a plan. In doing so, we quickly realized that this was a huge advantage in waterless

cleaning. Since you no longer have to haul the water hose and worry about runoff from the roof and/or soiling the painted sides of your motorhome, you

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[6] Instead of cleaning the entire roof in one fell swoop, we split up the work and did it over a period of three sessions, each one about 40-50 minutes long. The ability to divide the work while not worrying about the cleaning solution and dirt running down the sides of the motorhome are two of the biggest advantages of this method.

can clean as much or as little of the roof as your schedule (or physical limitations) allow. That alone makes this a much easier and more convenient way of cleaning a motorhome roof.

And, since many of us are still

employed and our time for coach maintenance is limited to periods after work and on weekends, we decided to tackle the rest of the job on a weeknight after work to see how long it would take. If you are a full-timer in an



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RV resort this method allows you the flexibility of getting up each morning and cleaning a small section before the sun is bearing down on you, or waiting until near sunset and working to beat the darkness.

The very dirty roof shown in these photos is on a 36-foot Tiffin Phaeton motorhome. To completely clean the roof as well as the HVAC covers, skylights and satellite dish cover (we used the red Degreaser on them), it took almost 32 ounces of each of

[Micro Mania]

We used a lot of microfiber towels, so we suggest you buy a large pack at a local warehouse club like Sam's Club or Costco, or at Camping World. Since you are just mopping up the residue off the roof there is no need to buy a really expensive microfiber towel.

After each session we washed the dirty (and they were VERY dirty) microfiber towels in a (home) washing machine in hot water and they bounced back for subsequent days on the job with no signs of distress. If you are full-timing you may want to wash these towels somewhere other than your built-in washer. After wiping each area dry, the towels actually take the majority of the moldy, dirty mess, so make sure you have plenty. It's also a good idea to have something to place them in on the roof, like a bag or a nonabrasive container; otherwise the dirty towels will contaminate the areas that were just cleaned.

HOLLAND Motor Homes



[7] The entire process took a total of 2½ hours and as you can see the results are amazing. Not only is this method easier, it is also safer as you are not walking on top of a wet and slippery roof. [8] After the roof was shiny and clean, we applied the Wash Wax All product using the two-sided "mop." Spray the product on one side, simply mop the (already cleaned) roof with it, and flip the mop over to dry it off. The Wash Wax All leaves a smooth, slick surface that will stay cleaner longer — just, as we found, it does on the painted surfaces of the coach. [9] This job requires that you crawl around on your hands and knees, so a good pair of kneepads will ease the pain.

the products shown. The Degreaser sells for \$14.95 for 32 ounces (less expensive per ounce if you buy a gallon) and the Belly Wash is \$13.95 for 16 ounces (we used two), or \$39.95 for a half gallon. Our total chemical cost was a very reasonable \$42.85.

On most areas of the roof, the red Degreaser worked just fine, but on the really stubborn areas we resorted to the heavy-duty Belly Wash instead. Both are really good cleaners, but

if you are going to only use one and your rig's roof is heavily soiled, you should probably opt for the Belly Wash. Although it is more costly, it simply cleans better. Some areas may need to be scrubbed twice depending on the degree of cleaning needed. **M**

Source

Aero Cosmetics Products
800-927-4929, <http://washwax.com>



Dynamax Grand Sport



Explorer by Renegade



Dynamax DynaQuest XL



Villagio by Renegade



Leisure Travel Vans Libero



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Excel Fifth Wheel

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Website:
www.holland-motorhomes.com
Holland MI 49423

By Bill and Jenn Gehr

A CLEAR VIEW

New direct-replacement entry-door window allows occupants to see outside while providing an element of privacy



How many times have you wished you could see out of your motorhome's entry-door window, especially at night when someone knocks without warning? Not many people are comfortable opening the door without visual identification, yet just about all entry-door windows are frosted to admit light while providing privacy. Since visibility out of this window is blurred at best, most of us fumble with a day/night blind or shade in a nearby window to get a view of who's knocking. Ross RV Innovations solves this common problem with its easy-to-install, direct-replacement Clear View entry-door window kit.

Installation shouldn't take longer than 45 minutes. One person can perform most of the job, but it helps to have a couple of extra hands when reinstalling the inside and outside frames at once. The Clear View entry-door window kit comes complete with instructions, adhesive sealant tape and the black tempered glass. You will need duct tape, a Phillips-head screwdriver, a small putty knife (use plastic unless you're experienced with this procedure), rubbing alcohol and glass cleaner.

Before starting the removal, four large pieces of duct tape are used to secure the outside frame to the glass

The Clear View RV window is made from a unique type of tempered safety glass that lets you see out, day or night, while keeping prying eyes from peering into your motorhome. The kit is designed to fit 90 percent

of the entry-door window frames in service, replacing the existing glass with a black glass that will give the motorhome a more modern look. The glass matches the dark tinted windows on all sides of most RVs.

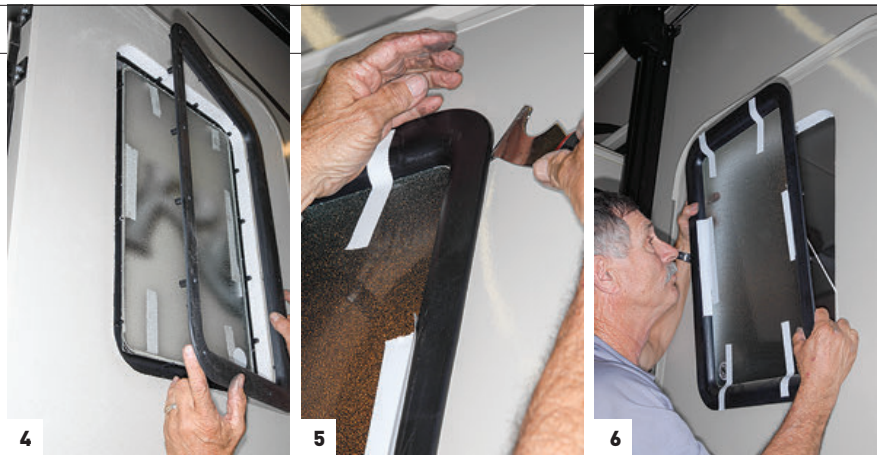


[1] The Clear View entry-door window kit comes packaged to prevent damage during shipping. [2] Use high-quality duct tape to ensure adhesion and prevent accidents. [3] When removing the inside frame, have a helper hold the outside frame and glass assembly.

to prevent the window from falling out when removing the frame assembly. Once the screws are removed from the inside frame, the putty knife is used to pry off the outside frame (with the glass duct-taped to it) in one piece.

The top of the outside window frame is marked (this will be used to locate the top side of the window frame), and the frame is then set on a flat surface for glass removal. After removing the four pieces of duct tape, the glass is pried loose from the adhesive tape and frame. The adhesive seal tape will have to be removed from the edge of the frame and the inner window surface. Any caulking that remains on the outside edge of the exterior frame and the surface of the entry door will also have to be removed.

With the exterior window frame on a flat surface, the inner and outer window seal tape is installed, starting at the top center of the window frame. The tape is slowly unrolled, following

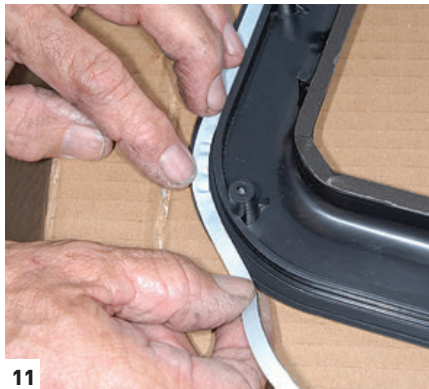
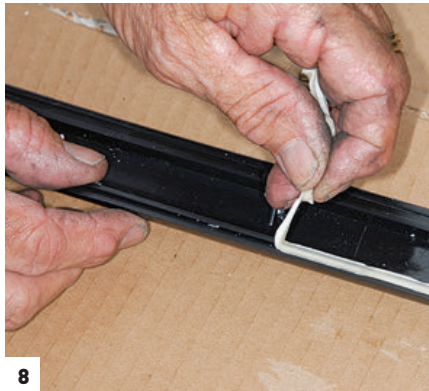


[4] Mark the top of the inside window frame before removal to help with placement during reinstallation. **[5]** Carefully pry the frame and glass assembly from the entry door to prevent breaking the plastic frame and scratching the entry door. **[6]** Grasp the glass and frame assembly together — just in case the glass separates from the frame.

the instruction diagram, and pushed firmly onto the surface. Care must be taken when going around the corners so the tape stays even. This tape is very sticky, but if you make a mistake, don't worry — just cut out that section and apply another piece of sealing tape.

Using glass cleaner and a paper towel, both sides of the black tempered

glass are cleaned and set aside. The backing is removed from the seal tape and the glass installed on the outside window frame by pushing it securely into place using firm pressure all the way around the edges. While the glass should be sealed in place, using duct tape on the outside of the frame and the glass allows for extra insurance



[7 and 8] Pull gently while removing the original inner and outer sealing tape to prevent leftover pieces. **[9]** Gently remove the original glass from the outside frame. **[10 and 11]** Install the new inner and outer seals, taking extra care not to damage the delicate material around the corners. **[12]** Set the new glass against the bottom stops and use your fingers to center the glass for a final installation.

during reinstallation.

Before the window and frame are reinstalled, it's best to clean the outside surface of the entry door with alcohol. The backing is then slowly peeled off the outer-door seal tape and the frame and glass pushed into place so the seal comes in contact with the surface of the entry door. You'll probably want two people for this process, because once the seal tape on the frame makes contact with the entry-door surface, it will be very difficult to move.

After aligning the holes in the outside and inside frames, the original screws are reinstalled. The frames are plastic, so go easy here to prevent stripping. If the seal tape is installed correctly, sealant will not be required around the outside window frame.

Although the new window really dressed up the door and provided a wonderful view of the outside, it's not completely private at night when the interior lighting is on. If the lighting inside is low, it's more difficult to see inside. During the day it's virtually impossible to see inside without putting your eyes flush with the glass.

To help with the privacy issue, the company has recently introduced a window shade with a new twist: It's designed to be installed on the screen door, using strong magnets. Four sets of two magnets are used in a clever way to provide points of connection



13



14



15

[13] Use duct tape to hold the glass and outer frame in place for a one-person job. [14 and 15] Install the inside frame top side up and do not overtighten the screws. The plastic frame will certainly crack when overtightened.

for the corners of the shade, without altering or damaging the screen. When in place, the shade overlaps the window area; it measures 12 by 21 inches. Attaching to the screen works much better than mounting the shade directly over the window, which would require the user to open the door and separate the screen to remove during the day. The shade can also be rolled up and snapped in place or simply removed and stored in a cabinet — which was our preference. The textured vinyl is easy to clean and it provides total privacy while keeping out the morning light.

The company will also start offering window frames that have been painted. The advantage here

is that over time the plastic will not become sun bleached or weathered and turn white, which can look pretty ugly against the exterior wall and dark tinted window.

Clear View entry-door window products are sold exclusively at Camping World (888-626-7576, www.campingworld.com, catalog item 74221), and the website has an instruction video. The window kit retails for \$134.99, the window cover is \$79.99, and the painted window frame sells for \$89.99. **M**

Source

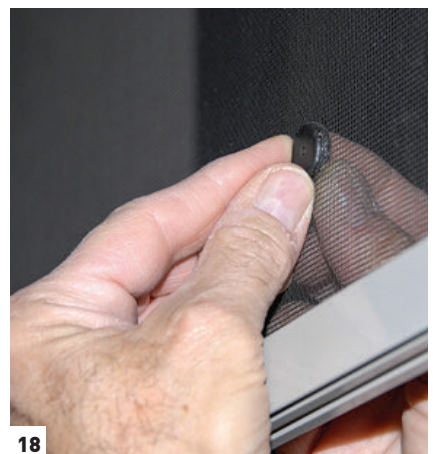
Ross RV Innovations
585-703-9002, www.rossrvinnovations.info



16



17



18

[16] The Clear View window shade is unique in that it installs on the screen, not the entry door. [17] During the day, the shade can be easily rolled up and snapped into place, or removed and stored in a cabinet. [18] The shade is held in place at each corner by a pair of strong magnets (one on either side of the screen) that are attracted to each other. They effectively secure the shade without damaging the screen.

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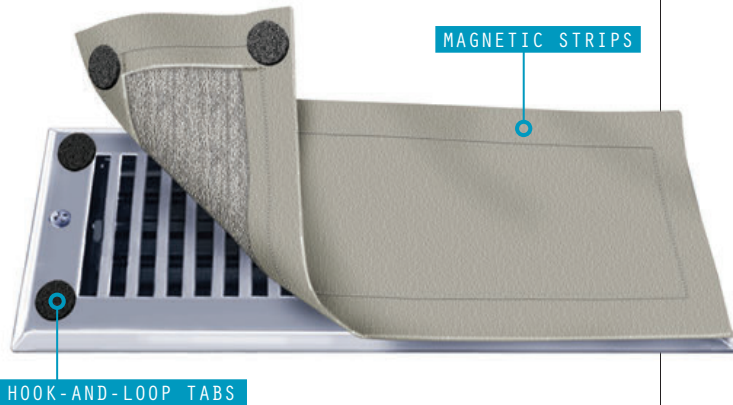
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Traveling With Furry Friends

Like many RV owners, we enjoy traveling with our pets. We quickly saw that some areas in our motorhome seem to attract pet hair, especially the recesses of the floor registers. We wanted a simple solution to keep the fur balls out of the air vents and one that would not require us to constantly remove the register screws and covers.

I purchased two 18-by-21-inch 100 percent cotton fabric quarters (found in the quilting section at a craft store) in a color that matched my RV flooring. The cost of materials to make vent covers to protect three 3½-by-11-inch registers was less than \$10. I also bought magnetic strips and self-stick circular hook-and-loop fastener tabs.

Using a medium heat setting, I ironed out the wrinkles and cut the fabric 1¼ inches larger than the register. I folded over ½ inch from the edge and creased it with the iron. Then I aligned magnetic strips along the crease, leaving ½ inch from each corner. I folded the material over the magnet within the crease and sewed it into a seam. I placed the circular self-stick hook-and-loop tabs at each



corner on the underside.

The weight of the magnets is enough to keep the cover in place when the furnace is not in use, but not enough to prevent the protective covering from rising up when the furnace is running. The tabs hold down the corners and make vacuuming over the material a snap.

Jacquelin Leonard | Livingston, Texas



Shower Stall Stand

Our current motorhome did not have any shelves inside the shower. So we purchased a corner shower caddy on a spring-loaded pole in the household department of a discount department store. We had to cut a little off of the metal pole to fit the height of our motorhome's shower, but other than that it was a snap to install. We placed it in the corner of the shower and it works like a charm! It holds soap, shampoo, razors and other accessories while allowing the water to flow through the holes on the shelving. The three shelves are also adjustable to any height you need.

Sharon Miller | Dillsburg, Pennsylvania



Save the Clinking for Toasts

We love our wine, so when my husband installed a hanging wine glass rack and I placed the glasses on the rack, I was not happy to find that the glasses clinked together when we were driving. No one wants broken glasses, and I did not want plastic wine glasses, so we slipped some can koozies over the glasses.

It works perfect! Now we can entertain as soon as we are parked. No more fighting the cupboards for a glass that may have slid around or broke.

Beverly Weege | Tomahawk, Wisconsin



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

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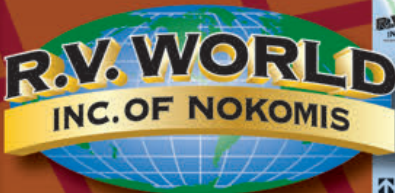


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The Pressure's On

Hatchlift Bedlift gas springs keep cumbersome bed platforms from crashing down on one's noggin

By Bill and Jenn Gehr

CONVENIENCE UPGRADE

Cost: \$46-\$54

Time: 1 hour

Difficulty: 2/10

The hidden storage underneath the mattress in your motorhome is a great place to stash extra gear, seasonal blankets and clothing, and in our family, extra fly-fishing and horseback-riding equipment. The task of holding

up the mattress and bed platform while hunting for a particular item is relegated to hydraulic struts that can be overwhelmed by the sheer weight of the bed system — and end up bopping one on the head as gravity pulls it down. Hatchlift has made a science out of properly pairing sturdy hydraulic gas springs (struts) for compartment doors and has banked that experience by perfecting a similar system for holding up a mattress platform. The company's Bedlift Kit provides the strength needed to make under-bed storage practical and convenient.

The Bedlift system is designed to take the effort out of lifting most beds. There are five kits available, which cover the gamut of mattress sizes and platform configurations. Beds with smaller front compartments can use the lighter versions; heavy and large kits are designed for queen- and king-size beds with access to larger storage areas. Interestingly, the company places a limitation on exceptionally heavy mattresses, like extra-thick queens and kings made of memory foam, but in our case, the heavy Bedlift worked fine with our queen-size mattress, which was custom made and is much heavier than most beds on the market. Part of this success is attributed to the moderate-size platform compartment, but most of the credit goes to the

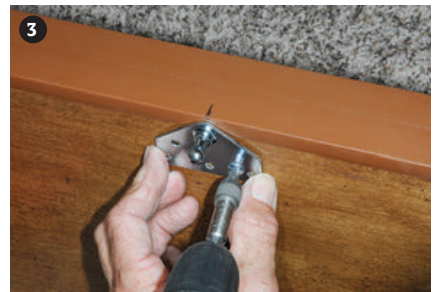
Gas springs are designed to handle most bed platform configurations, taking the effort out of accessing the storage area.

stout springs and bulletproof mounting system.

Complete kits come with various style brackets, high-quality springs, wood supports and screws to adapt to any style platform bed, using detailed instructions that show bracket locations for different scenarios. While the instructions are complete, it's important to recognize that not all bed platforms are equal and finding the right spring angle might take some experimentation. Hatchlift also offers an informative installation video on its website that is helpful when planning the installation.

Installation time will run roughly one hour and the process is relatively simple for most do-it-yourselfers. Tools required: variable-speed drill and bit, measuring tape, pencil, #2 Phillips screwdriver, 2-by-4-inch lumber that can be cut to the proper length and wood glue or construction adhesive. All gas springs are under high pressure, so care must be exercised during installation, and always wear safety glasses.

To begin the process, the mattress and all bedding must be in place to ensure proper placement of the springs. You'll need to cut a length of 2-by-4-inch lumber to support the platform when making the measurements and installing the brackets. It's best to enlist the help of another person for this process. Once the two-by-four is in place, you may need one or two small wooden stops to



[1] Using the instructions as a guide to identify the platform configuration, measurements are made to locate lower brackets. [2] Pilot holes are drilled into the platform frame and brackets attached [3] using a screw gun. In this case, the backing was solid, so a support was not necessary.

keep it from slipping during installation. We identified our platform configuration in the instructions and proceeded with the measurements for installing the lower brackets. Once this was done, the gas springs were attached. From here, the positioning of the upper brackets was estimated and they were attached to the supplied wood blocks. The springs were then attached to the upper brackets and the blocks positioned under the bed platform, marking the location with a pencil. After disconnecting the gas springs from the upper brackets, we mounted the blocks in place using the supplied 1¼-inch gold-color screws. The springs were then reconnected and the two-by-four support removed to test Bedlift operation.

We needed to adjust the upper and lower brackets because our initial test revealed that the bed was too difficult to lift and lower. Once we dialed in the position that worked best, the wood blocks with the upper brackets were removed, glue added and they were re-installed permanently. The glue or the adhesive should be allowed to dry for at least 24 hours before operating the Bedlift. In our case, the location for the lower brackets provided a solid-wood backing. In some situations, the mounting location might require structural reinforcement using wood blocks.

Operation of the bed platform was effortless after installing the Bedlift and it stayed put until we wanted it lowered. Since the springs come in various sizes, you might even find additional uses for this system, like assisting a laundry hamper door or any interior storage bin that's in need of a little bit of help.

Kits are priced from \$46 to \$54 and are available at Camping World and other RV retail stores. It's best to check the company's website before ordering, so the right kit can be specified. Hatchlift backs each kit with a 12-month warranty. **M**

Hatchlift LLC

303-233-6083, www.hatchlift.com



[4] Blocks of wood are used to attach the upper brackets. [5] Once the position is marked on the blocks, the brackets are screwed in place. [6] With the help of an assistant, measure the distance specified in the instructions and cut a piece of 2-by-4-inch lumber to hold the platform up during the installation. [7] The gas spring is attached to the upper and lower brackets to determine positioning on the platform. [8] Once established, the spring is disconnected from the upper bracket and the block is predrilled. [9] Measurements are confirmed a second time and then the wood block and bracket [10] are attached to the platform with 1½-inch gold screws and glue.

Diagnosis Dispute

Unable to obtain a refund from a facility for unsatisfactory work on his motorhome, a reader asked Hot Line to help. He wrote:



“ Last June, our Cummins ISB 330 diesel engine quit on U.S. Highway 25 near Travelers Rest, South Carolina. Good Sam ERS towed our 2001 Dutch Star motorhome to Christopher Trucks, a Freightliner dealer in Piedmont. After nine weeks of what seemed like trial and error adding parts, and a bill of \$3,525.89, I was told the electronic control module (ECM) might be bad. The cost was about \$1,700. They installed a test ECM, but the engine still would not start. Then I was told it was the high-pressure fuel pump, which would cost \$6,020.90. I decided to tow the coach to West Carolina Freightliner (WCF) in Asheville, North Carolina. The tow bill was \$500.

WCF found the problem in 16.5 hours at a cost of \$2,486.73. Something had broken inside the engine and the valve train was messed up. All they had to do at Christopher Trucks was pull the valve cover and they would have found the problem. I asked the service manager at Christopher Trucks for a reimbursement for the \$3,525.89. He said he would talk to his boss and call me. After no call back, I called again and he said his boss refused.

I called Freightliner Custom Chassis (FCC) and asked for some help on a refund. I was told to go online and fill out the customer survey, which I did at the end of August. I have had no response from Freightliner. I appreciate any help you can give on this matter!

Harold Lunsford | Candler, North Carolina

Hot Line contacted Christopher Trucks and Daimler (the parent company of FCC) to see if there was anything else that could be done for Lunsford. We eventually heard from Lunsford as to the final outcome of his case. He wrote:

“ Thanks to *MotorHome* Hot Line for its help. I have settled with Christopher Trucks; it was a mutual agreement. Without your intervention, it would not have happened.

HL

Slide Glide Strife

When an aftermarket product failed to meet his expectations, a reader asked Hot Line to get involved. He wrote:

“ I would like Hot Line's help in assisting me to get reimbursed \$125.41 for purchasing new parts for my 2015 Fleetwood that was not covered under warranty. The two slideouts in our coach were marking the floor with black streaks every time we retracted the slides. I took the motorhome back to Niel's Motorhome in Mission Hills, California, where I purchased the coach to help correct the problem.

The dealership contacted Fleetwood and found out that the parts needed to correct the problem were not covered under the warranty plan. I was upset to hear that I would need to buy four slide glides to help prevent the black streaks on the floor. I was given the distributor's information to contact directly to order the parts.

I placed the order and was surprised to learn that the cost for the parts was \$24.99 each. I received the coach slide glides and they looked like mini-skis; they were too cumbersome and complicated to install every time we use the motorhome.

Michael Trujillo | Mission Hills, California

A letter was sent on Trujillo's behalf to Fleetwood RV. Following is a copy of the letter to Trujillo from Allied Recreation Group (Fleetwood's parent company), which closes the case:

We are writing in response to your recent request for reimbursement. Thank you for bringing this matter to our attention and giving us the opportunity to assist you. In the interest of customer satisfaction, we have enclosed a check for \$125.41, which represents final reimbursement for the slide glides for your motorhome. Your satisfaction with your Southwind coach is very important to us. We apologize for any inconvenience you may have experienced.

Cara Lynch,
Owner Relations Representative
Allied Recreation Group
Decatur, Indiana

Take Action Contact Hot Line for Help

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

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 EQUAL HOUSING LENDER

By Ken Freund

Slow Refueling

Q I have a 32-foot 1998 Bouncer Class A and my problem is with refueling. Sometimes the coach will take fuel readily and at other times it only allows fuel to trickle in to the tank. I try to find stations with a slope where I can park with the front end down, which sometimes helps, but is not always possible. In Oregon, where self-fueling is not allowed, it is very irritating.

Darrell Inman | Auburn, Washington

A This is a fairly common problem. Your fuel filler vent tube is probably pinched, or there's a low spot that fills up with gasoline and blocks the venting action, which backs up fuel and causes the gas pump to kick



off. Crawl under the motorhome so you can get a view of the fuel filler neck; a flashlight will be helpful here. Look for the vent hose, which is smaller than the filler hose, and check for sag that might trap fuel, or a place where the hose gets pinched or has a kink in it. If you replace any hose, make sure you use neoprene hose rated for gasoline, not coolant hose.

Diesel Loses Power — Comment

Q This is in reference to Jim Swinford's "Diesel Loses Power" letter in the March issue. We had the same problem and we also have a Freightliner chassis with an 8.3-liter diesel. We were on our way home from a trip when the light came on warning of low coolant; we had not overheated nor did we have low coolant. I called the Freightliner hot line number that is on the driver's-side window. I told them that we did not have any issues that would cause this problem. We were advised to disconnect the two wires, which I did and then I was able to drive home. We replaced the sensor but still had problems. Freightliner told us to look for a bad ground and told us where to look for it on our chassis. We found the bad ground on the driver's side at the front access behind the compartment. I accessed the area in front of the front wheel by opening the front genset slide. The bolt, nut and washer were still there, but very loose. I tightened it and the problem was solved!

Curt Gibson | Santa Clarita, California

A Thanks for sharing your experience, Curt. Many diesels have systems that reduce power when potentially damaging conditions occur, such as low coolant, overheating, or low oil pressure. Anything that might "fool" the system, such as a faulty connection or sensor, can trigger a reduction in power.

Bad Ground Connection

Q We have a 2003 Newmar Dutch Star motorhome with 80,000 miles. The left turn signal works fine. The right turn signal turns both sides on. But there's more. Turn the headlights on and both work fine. It's been sitting for six months. I just took a short pretrip ride to get new tires.

Greg Rudowsky | New Rochelle, New York

A There's almost certainly a bad ground causing this, feeding back power into the circuit. First, check out the wiring integrity for the right front turn signal. If that doesn't fix it, check the ground connections for the headlights and left signal. It could be corrosion in the bulb sockets and contacts on the bulbs or any wires

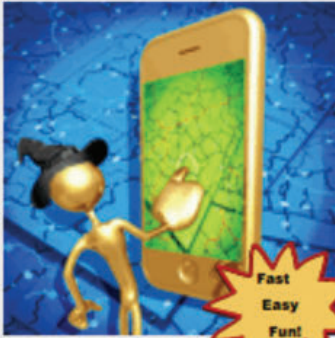
that run to ground. Run a temporary ground jumper wire with alligator clips to verify/test it, and then repair as needed. If you find a lot of corrosion in the sockets, consider using special bulb-and-socket grease available at auto parts stores. For further information on this subject, consider reviewing the article "Lost Ground Connections" in the February issue.

Towing a Traverse

Q We are in our third year of RVing, and we own a 31-foot Four Winds Five Thousand Class C motorhome. Up to now we have not wanted to tow a dinghy vehicle, since we can take the coach just about anywhere. When we visited Yellowstone and the Grand Canyon we used tour buses, which allowed us to take in all the sights. Now we are considering spending the winter in the Southern states, and we feel we will need a dinghy vehicle. I currently lease a Chevy Traverse with front-wheel drive and the contract does not prohibit me from towing it. Since it has front-wheel drive I'm thinking a tow dolly would be the right option. Do you

(continued on page 76)

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(continued from page 73)

think the dolly is the correct option, and do state laws require breakaway brakes installed on it? The curb weight of the Traverse is 4,100 pounds. The gross combination weight rating (GCWR) of the motorhome is 17,600 pounds and the unloaded vehicle weight (UWV) is 11,990 pounds.

Fred Hommes
Shelby Township, Michigan

A The Traverse is approved by its manufacturer for flat towing, so a dolly isn't necessary. However, base curb weight (without options) is 4,713 pounds, not 4,100 pounds. Throw in some options, a baseplate, cargo, etc., and it could exceed 5,000 pounds. Although this might be within the GCWR (make sure you have actual weights of your motorhome, fully loaded for a typical trip with passengers), the

weight of the Traverse could exceed the 5,000-pound rating of the motorhome's hitch receiver, so you should weigh it as well. Braking systems for the towed vehicle are always a good idea whether required or not, but you can look up requirements by state and province at www.readybrake.com/state-towing-laws.html.

Charging AGM Batteries

Q I just purchased two new 12-volt coach batteries for my 2007 Winnebago View motorhome. These are AGM type, deep cycle, Group 31 (Exide Megacycle XMC). They replaced my two flooded cell 12-volt batteries that were almost 4 years old and would no longer hold a charge. It is my hope that these batteries will be better over the long haul, and also that they will last a lot longer than the flooded cell-type batteries. My question is: Am I able to continue to use the original converter/charger that came with this motorhome? It is the OEM unit used by Winnebago, and I believe it is 45 amps. Will this unit successfully charge these batteries? Or would you recommend a new type of converter/charger for these batteries?

Tim Taylor | Port Orford, Oregon

A The charging process for AGM batteries is a little different than for flooded cell batteries. If they are not charged fully, don't expect them to last any longer. The charger/converter in your coach is part of the Magnetec 7345 distribution panel. The charger section is not that efficient and will likely not charge your AGM batteries properly. You can consider upgrading the panel with a model 45TCRU converter section. Your best bet, without making modifications, is to charge the batteries independently of the converter in your motorhome using a three-stage battery charger.

TCRU is short for "temp-comp replacement unit" and the unit is 10 inches deep versus 7 inches, so there needs to be some space at the rear of the power distribution panel for this component to fit. This multistage

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charger has a temperature-compensating provision for more efficient charging, so you'll need to route a cable from the panel to the battery terminal.

AGM batteries can handle the initial "bulk/accept" charging at 14.2-14.4 volts very easily, but they really want to float at voltages in the 13.2-volt range, depending on brand. Your existing converter floats at 13.6-13.8 volts.

Tire Inflation Concern

Q We have a 2010 Winnebago View with 215/85R16 Goodyear tires. I have always inflated the tires to 61 psi, according to the RV manufacturer's inflation plate on the doorframe. On a recent trip, I got a flat tire and went to a nearby tire shop. Upon completion of the repair, the mechanic inflated my tire to 80 psi. When I told him I had them at 61 psi, as dictated by Winnebago, he told me these tires had an E rating, therefore they should be inflated to 80 psi, adding that the tire manufacturer knows the tires better than anyone else. My reply was that the coach manufacturer must know better than anyone else what sits on these tires, and must therefore specify accordingly. After a mean look on his part, he deflated the tire to 61 psi. What should I learn from this situation?

Yvan Jérôme | Laval, Québec, Canada

A Tire manufacturers don't have any way of knowing what vehicle a tire will be used on, or how it will be loaded, so the only inflation information provided on the sidewall is the minimum pressure recommended for the maximum rated load. The technician was apparently uninformed and did not understand tire loading. Vehicle manufacturers provide a placard of recommended inflation pressures based on actual weight and the gross axle weight rating (GAWR) and gross vehicle weight rating (GVWR) for the specific model. I checked with Winnebago's technical services department, and the posted pressures are based on inflation values necessary to handle the maximum rated load of

the axles, as specified by the chassis manufacturer. In your case, Winnebago is recommending lower pressure because the motorhome is not heavy enough to require the E-rated tires to be run at the pressure for the maximum load. Running the pressure for the maximum load listed on the tire's sidewall could cause an unnecessarily hard ride and uneven tire wear at the center of the tread. This again points out why it is important for owners to know the actual weight of their motorhomes, loaded for a typical trip. It's even better to have individual wheel weights, which can be compared to the tire manufacturer's load and inflation tables.


Tips for "Loses Power Intermittently"

A very useful, inexpensive tool for intermittent control problems, or error code identification, is the Vgate Bluetooth OBD II Scan tool, which sells for \$11.49 on www.amazon.com. It is a small Bluetooth dongle that plugs into the OBD port under the dash (above the driver's feet) and sends data to a \$5 app on any Android smartphone. The app "Torque" is available online at the Google Play store. The OBD II data port is mounted under the dash on all cars, and most trucks and motorhomes sold in the U.S. after 1996.

Traditional error code reading is only a small part of what this tool provides. Any data point that is available in your vehicle's computer can be monitored in real time on your smartphone. Trending is also available. Difficult diagnostic problems — like throttle position, timing, manifold absolute pressure, injector pulse width, injector timing, RPM, fuel pressure, etc. — can be monitored in real time as well as logged and later downloaded to an Excel spreadsheet for analysis.

Available data varies by year and manufacturer. For example, my 2002 Ford Escort provides fuel pressure; my wife's 2013 Ford Explorer does not have fuel pressure available. Our 2012 Ford F53 motorhome chassis

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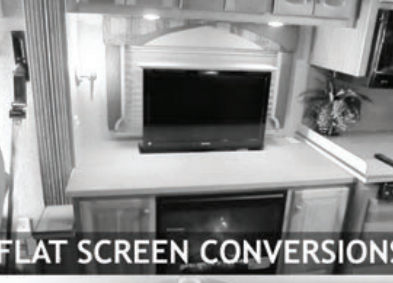
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does have fuel pressure data available. Even if you're not mechanical, this setup may be helpful in identifying a possible trouble area, along with providing useful data to your mechanic. A fault code database is available to identify what the error codes mean. There are several manufacturers providing Bluetooth dongles; I chose this one because of the positive online reviews and the price. There are also units available that communicate with iPhones. I don't leave home without it.
Bill Bailey | Gulfport, Mississippi

In the March issue there was a question from Walter Sanclemente regarding intermittent power loss ("Loses Power Intermittently"). I experienced the same issue with my Winnebago motorhome's 8.1-liter GM engine. Nobody could find out why, because it would not leave a code, until eight years later. The problem turned out to be the oxygen sensors.
Albert Caporale | Klamath Falls, Oregon

Delamination

Q I own a 2003 Coachmen Mirada that I bought new in 2004. It has a problem with side-wall delamination. I notified Coachmen and the customer service representative told me the problem was water entry from neglect. This coach is in mint condition, has a mere 13,000 miles on it and has been garaged since new.
Paul Meyers | Louisville, Ohio

A Side-wall delamination is often related to water incursion around edges, seams, windows, doors, etc., where rain and moisture get in and wick into the side-wall material. But it can also be the result of a defect in the manufacturing process. Even with today's adhesives and assembly processes, it's possible for an RV manufacturer to still have problems with delamination.

Have a qualified RV body repair specialist take a look at it and determine the cause and cure. It's unlikely, on an 11-year-old vehicle, that a manufacturer will **(continued on page 81)**

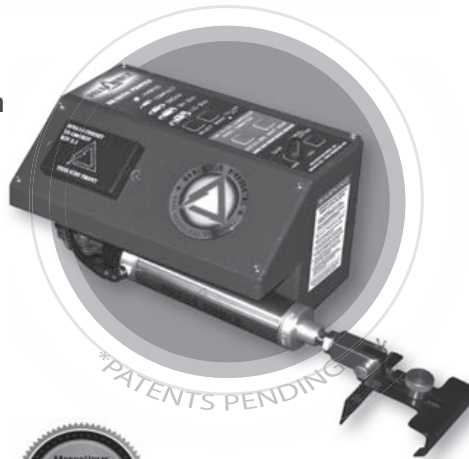
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(continued from page 78) cover this under any kind of warranty policy adjustment, but you might contact the company again and ask to speak with a manager. It's worth a try. Sometimes manufacturers will offer some kind of discount on repairs. Coachmen's motorhome division is based in Middlebury, Indiana, not far from you.

Towing an Older Car

Q My mother passed away and left me her 1999 Cadillac DeVille d'Elegance. It has 61,000 miles on it, and I would like to use it to flat tow behind my motorhome. Can you tell me if this model is capable of being flat towed, and what has to be done to allow this to be done? This car has a lot of sentimental value and it would be a blessing for me to be able to use it.

Ronald Stevens | Byron, Georgia

A Your Cadillac has a V-8 engine with front-wheel drive and a 4T80E automatic transmission. It cannot be flat towed without damaging the transmission, but it can be flat towed when equipped with a Remco Lube Pump Kit (800-228-2481, www.remcoindustries.com). However, this is a heavy car with a curb weight of just over 4,000 pounds, which may exceed the tow ratings of some motorhomes. Also, I cannot find a listing for a base-plate for this car. It may have to be custom made, which would be costly.

Hot Starter Tip

This is in regard to the letter in the January issue from Dennis Mendonsa ("Starter Failures") about the starter motor failing in his 2012 Georgetown on a Ford chassis. I have a 2011 Georgetown 337DS, and at approximately 16,000 miles, the starter wouldn't work until it had time to cool. A Ford dealer in Montana replaced the starter motor. At the time, the service manager said Ford had problems in the past that were caused by the heat, but he thought it had been corrected.

When I returned home, I purchased and installed a Thermo-Tec 14150

Starter Heat Shield. It's a small "blanket" that wraps around the starter. I also wrapped the exhaust pipe with Lava Header and Exhaust Insulating Heat Wrap because the exhaust pipe was only a couple of inches from the starter. Both items were inexpensive and easy to install. I currently have about 29,000 on my motorhome and the problem has not recurred.

Bob Yeckley | Colton, California

Fogged Dual-Pane Glass

One option for fixing fogged glass is to replace it with new glass if you are doing it yourself, which can be very cost-effective. You can contact Atwood at windows@atwoodmobile.com. Company representatives are very knowledgeable and will help you get the exact replacement for your motorhome.

Raymond Houghtaling | Via email

Ride Recommendation Results

Thanks for your recommendations on improving the ride and handling of my 2010 Allegro Open Road. After weighing the coach and checking Michelin's load-inflation charts, I was able to lower front tire pressure by 10 psi and rear by 5 psi, which helped improve the ride. Also thanks for suggesting Eric's RV in Sequim, Washington. Eric recommended the Davis front track bar and Roadmaster rear sway bar. Adding those resulted in a big improvement in controlling sway in wind and traffic, and I no longer experience coach-body roll on curves. I highly recommend this company to all motorhome owners.

Sloan Trigg | Richton, Mississippi

Have a Tech Question?

Contact our experts:

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



In the Dark

Wanna see more on your next trip than you've ever seen before? Spend some time looking up after the sun goes down

By Alan Rider

When it comes to celebrities, I'll admit I'm pretty much in the dark. Frankly, I have absolutely no idea who most of the "stars" being endlessly clucked over on TV programs like "Entertainment Tonight" are or why they're famous. And I honestly don't care.

Which isn't to say I have no affinity for stars. Quite the contrary. It's just that I prefer mine where they belong: in the nighttime sky.

Now, the truth is I don't know much about these kinds of stars either, beyond being able to recognize Orion's Belt and the Big Dipper. In this case though, that lack of awareness is no barrier to enjoying the simple act of looking up after the sun goes down.

In fact, I'd be willing to argue that many of us motorhome aficionados may be missing a big part of what makes the places we routinely travel to so special. Sure, the Grand Canyon is a spectacular sight by day. But at night — when the Milky Way is so bright it actually casts shadows — the views can be at least as awe-inspiring.

Which is why I'm so excited to be attending the Grand Canyon Star Party this month (www.nps.gov/grca/plan_yourvisit/grand-canyon-star-party.htm). For eight days every June this event brings together the sky-curious public with amateur astronomers who set up their telescopes to give everyone an up-close look at planets, galaxies, nebulae and more.

Of course the Grand Canyon isn't the only place the stars come out to play. Nearby Natural Bridges National Monument in southern Utah was named the first of two dozen International Dark Sky Parks (www.darksky.org) back in 2007. Death Valley and Big Bend national parks have also recently been added to the list. Other candidates currently being considered include Capitol Reef and Canyonlands national parks.

Spend enough time staring up at that night sky and eventually you'll want to capture some of what you see to share with friends and relations. Which is where photographer David Kingham comes in.

Kingham, who's authored the e-book "Nightscape: A Complete Guide to Photographing Under The Night Sky" and teaches multiday landscape

and night-sky photography workshops (970-372-0752, www.exploringexposure.com), says he can teach a serious amateur photographer how to take surprisingly beautiful star shots in as little as 72 hours. With that in mind, he says there's no reason curious folks shouldn't give it a try on their own, even if all they have is an ordinary consumer camera.

"The only three things you really need are a tripod, a camera with manual settings and a way to turn the autofocus off, plus good photo-editing software like Adobe Lightroom," he explains. Kingham also emphasized that amateur photographers shouldn't get discouraged if their first efforts aren't exactly stellar.

"It's just a matter of going out there, choosing a slow shutter speed like 30 seconds, a wide aperture like f/3.5, and a high ISO setting like 3200," he explains. "From there you can play around with your settings to see what works best for your camera."

As for me, I'm a big believer in that idea of trial and error. The one thing the process has taught me over the years is that some of the coolest things happen when you don't quite know what you're doing.

Which is how I've ultimately come to the conclusion that I don't really mind being kept in the dark, because that's very often where you'll find the truly good stuff along The Road Ahead. **M**

“Spend enough time staring up at that night sky and eventually you'll want to capture some of what you see ...”

Shooting Stars ☞

Photographer David Kingham offers night-photography workshops at beautiful locations such as Grand Teton National Park (right) and Arches National Park (far right).



Photos: David Kingham

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Fig. 1 Saturn



Fig. 3 Asteroid Gaspra



Fig. 5 Mercury

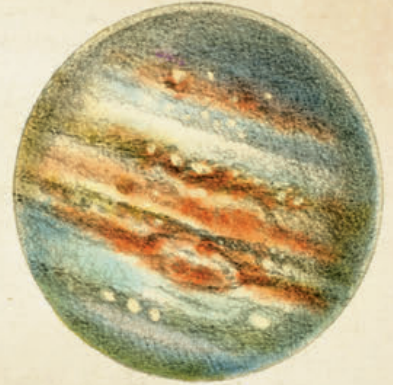


Fig. 7 Jupiter

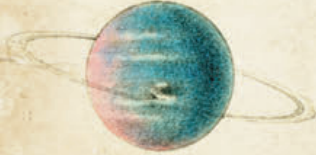


Fig. 2 Neptune

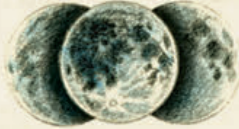


Fig. 4 Phases of the Moon



Fig. 6 Mars

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