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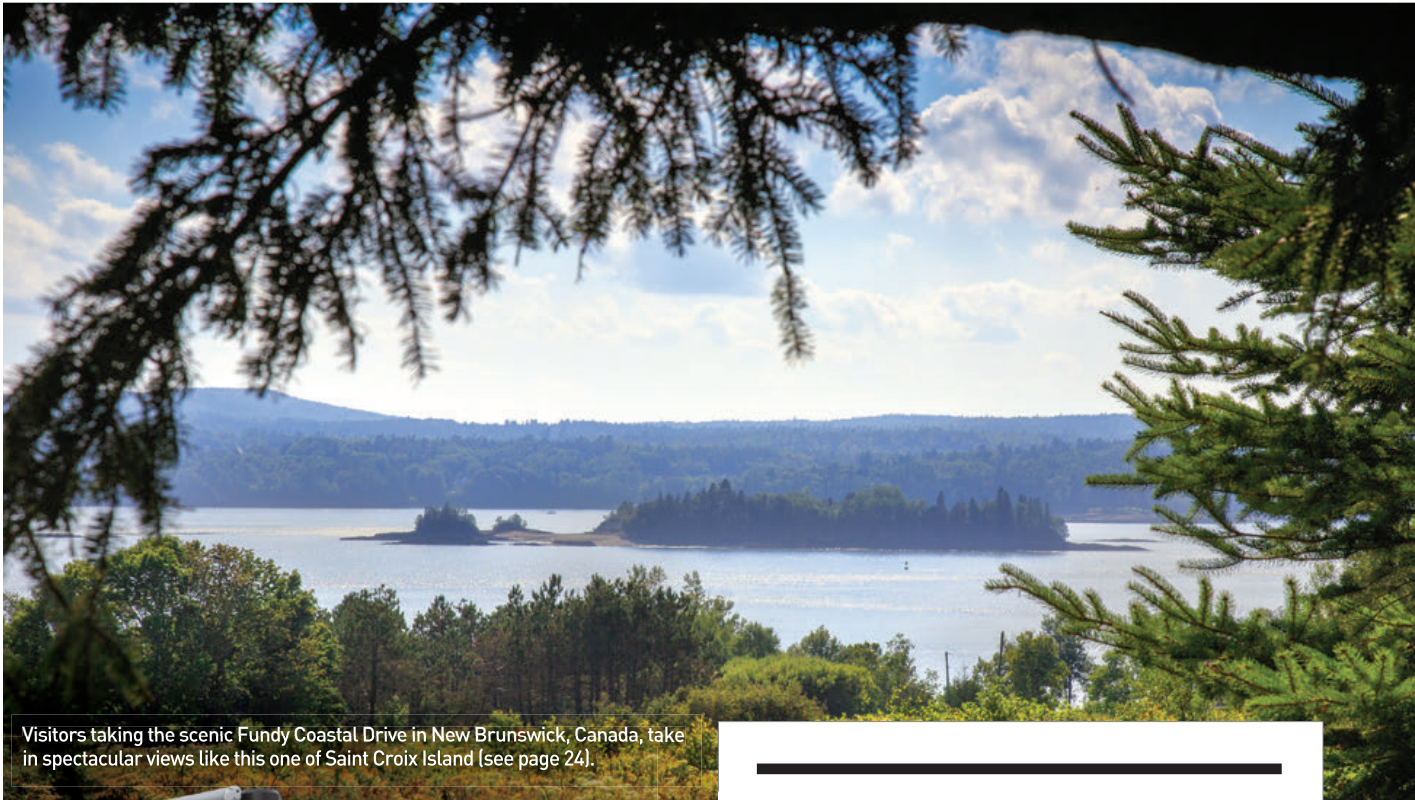
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Visitors taking the scenic Fundy Coastal Drive in New Brunswick, Canada, take in spectacular views like this one of Saint Croix Island (see page 24).



Eight Class B motorhomes that offer big livability in spite of their compact size. Pg. 42

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## ON THE COVER

With quality construction and luxurious amenities, the Coach House Platinum II 241XL DT is a great choice for discerning RV couples or small families (see test on page 36). Photo by Shawn Spence.

By Kristopher Bunker

# Sizing Up the Market

**A**s a society, it seems we are obsessed with size. And conventional wisdom dictates, the bigger, the better. A bigger house, a bigger car and even a bigger cellphone (remember when one of the top selling points was the compact size?) are often looked upon as benchmarks for success. This line of thinking has naturally spilled over into the motorhome market, with large Class A's and diesel pushers often being the envy of all at the RV park. But although a bigger motorhome does in fact lead to a less cluttered footprint, that doesn't mean you need to pilot a quad-slide 45-footer in order to enjoy the lifestyle, a point that becomes even more clear when considering the current trend toward smaller motorhomes that offer all the conveniences of their larger brethren.

Class B motorhomes, for example, have long been popular for their versatility, as their construction on a van chassis makes them easier to drive, more nimble and results in better fuel economy when compared to larger Class A's and Class C's. At the Recreation Vehicle Industry Association's annual trade show this past year, Class B's were especially well-represented, creating an impressive amount of foot traffic as attendees investigated the latest stylings and amenities. Most new models feature quality construction and top-shelf appointments, including on-demand hot-water systems, cutting-edge electronics and the latest in appliances and solid-surface countertops. In addition, their abbreviated floorplans lead to

some truly innovative uses of space, from convertible beds to fold-up sinks to double-duty seating areas. And, recognizing that many RVers prefer to make the most of their outdoor experience, electric awnings and side and rear screen doors that bring the outside in are becoming more common than ever. Some Class B's even include exterior entertainment centers (or a TV that can be viewed from outside).

For a look at some of the latest top Class B motorhomes, check out "High Marks," beginning on page 42. There you'll find eight Class B's that live even

larger than their length dictates.

And the benefits of a highly livable, easier-to-maneuver coach aren't confined to Class B motorhomes. As you'll read in "Sporty Size, Big Luxury," beginning on page 36, the Coach House Platinum II 241XL Class C is decked out with a host of residential amenities and space-conscious design, all in a package of less than 26 feet.

We already know that life in a motorhome does require some acclimation in terms of available space. When compared to a residential home, walkways are narrower, the bathroom more intimate and the galley more compact. But that's a small price to pay for the freedom to enjoy the open road, with all the comforts of home along with you. And, when you consider that many smaller motorhomes can be stored at home in your garage or the driveway, can be used as everyday vehicles and that what they lack in size they more than make up for with high-quality construction and thoughtful details, it's easy to see that size may not matter so much after all. **M**

**“ Although a bigger motorhome does lead to a less cluttered footprint, that doesn't mean you need to pilot a 45-footer to enjoy the lifestyle. ”**



Photo: Mercedes Morgan Photography

## Contributors | June



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



**Ann Eichenmuller** is a retired educator and freelance writer living in Virginia's Northern Neck. She and her husband, Eric, divide their time between sailing and traveling in their Minnie Winnie.



**Karen Lee Ensley** is a writer with a passion to explore and photograph the beautiful, the bizarre and the places people want to see. Her work has been published in books, magazines and newspapers.



**Bobbie Hasselbring** is an award-winning travel and food writer and editor of [www.realfoodtraveler.com](http://www.realfoodtraveler.com), which celebrates regional food and travel. Bobbie owns a 2015 Pleasure-Way Excel Class B.



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



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



# MotorHome

**Publisher** Ann Emerson  
**Editorial Director** Eileen Hubbard  
**Managing Editor** Kristopher Bunker  
**Technical Editor** Chris Dougherty  
**Art Director** Rick Damien  
**Production Director** Bob Dawson  
**Production Manager** Brenda Hutchinson  
**Business Manager** Katey Purgatorio  
**Publisher Emeritus** Bob Livingston

**Consulting Editors** Seana Dawson, Ken Freund, Jeff Johnston

**Contributors** Morey Edelman, Ann Eichenmuller, Karen Lee Ensley, Bobbie Hasselbring, Neala McCarten, Alan Rider, Shawn Spence, Mary Zalmanek

**Vice President National Sales** Terry Thompson

**RV Classifieds** Katey Purgatorio  
 3431 S. 257th St., Kent, WA 98032  
 Tel 847-229-6756 Fax 270-495-6278  
 katey.purgatorio@goodsam.com

**Advertising Sales Representatives**  
 Sue Seidlitz (Southwest Region)  
 847-229-6813, sue.seidlitz@goodsam.com

Kim Whitaker (Southeast Region)  
 919-412-6325, kim.whitaker@goodsam.com

Lou Cicirelli (Northeast Region)  
 954-297-9234, lou.cicirelli@goodsam.com

Scott Oakes (Northwest Region)  
 Tel 847-229-6758 Fax 270-282-7356  
 scott.oakes@goodsam.com

## Customer Service

**Subscriptions** (print and digital)  
**800-678-1201**  
 motorhome@cdfsfulfillment.com

**Website** www.motorhome.com

**Editorial** info-motorhomemagazine@goodsam.com



**President** Mark Boggess  
**Vice President/Publisher** Ann Emerson  
**Vice President/Advertising Sales** Terry Thompson



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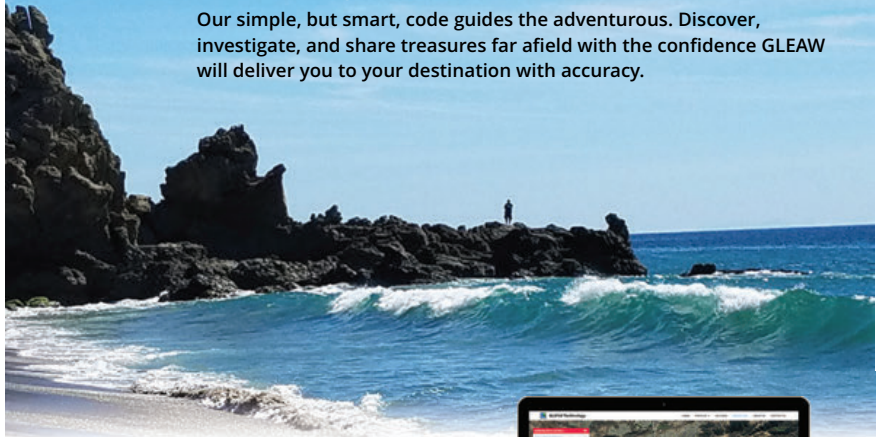
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**Have you experienced excessive smoke traveling from the campfire of an RV-park neighbor's site? How did you resolve the situation? And, do you think that campfires should be banned from RV parks/resorts, or do you have any suggestions on how RVers can be proactive about keeping unwanted smoke away from other sites at RV parks?**

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

#### Friendly Fire

Campfires are mesmerizing stress relievers that promote camaraderie and togetherness amongst both families and neighbors. There is nothing more peaceful than a campfire. We would not stay anywhere fires are not allowed, as we have met many wonderful people around the fire. Sounds like Mr. Rayner should find parks without fire rings rather than push his ideas on others.

**Bob and Sandy Oliverius | Traverse City, Michigan**

#### Sorry, Not Sorry

I have been camping for 50 years from tent to Class A motorhome. Common courtesy has been dropping a little each year and with the inclusion of the outdoor TV, it has reached a new low. But back to smoke; many people

make fires just because they can and that is generally OK when they are around. Some will make a fire, pile it up with damp wood and then leave with the foul smell headed your way. At one place I think everyone lit a fire. We were in trees and the smoke just settled under the branches — we left.

The outside TVs are a great idea, except the concept gets abused. I don't want to hear what you are watching. The fall is a great time to camp, no bugs or excessive heat. However, it is not a good time for weekend camping, as when football is in full swing, and the neighbor has an outdoor TV with a crowd, beer and a lot of volume so everyone can hear. A perfect time for fresh air with the windows open except for the noise that lasts so late that you can't sleep.

Sorry for venting but you asked for

it. I was asked once where I wanted to park and they showed me a map — I answered, "I just want a spot with no dogs, no kids and no smoke." The receptionist did not know how to respond and didn't.

I travel, but try to find places that are nice and quiet and the people are considerate.

**Warren Tinker | Via email**

#### Family Tradition

Many RV resorts have done away with campsite campfires and have gone to a centralized system. I realize camping these days has become very modernized; however, campfires have been a tradition and a necessity since the beginning of time. I enjoy cooking by campfire and the smell of burning wood. Let's not forget s'mores. Children and grandparents love this

## Featured Letter

### What's Your Type?

My wife and I have camped for more than 40 years, and we both agree that campfires are a major part of family camping. Yes, we have experienced smoke from a neighbor's site (I offered them some of my dried wood), and no, I do not think campfires should be banned from RV parks. My suggestion is that campgrounds must enforce rules as to what wood should be used, e.g., no pressure-treated wood, trash or used charcoal can be burned. People should only use dry, seasoned wood.

**Ken Bray | Land O' Lakes, Florida**







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quality time. I would hate to see this disappear.

**Paul Chapman | Via email**

**Fire Fees?**

I have asthma, and campfires are a big problem with me. I have been camping for five years now and my asthma has gotten worse over the last several years. I have come to detest campfires because it really hinders my

breathing. I never leave home without my nebulizer machine and inhalers. Last year, I experienced an adjacent campsite that was utilizing their campfire. Toward evening when the fire was diminishing, I politely approached them and asked if they wouldn't mind just letting the campfire die out due to my asthma, and that I'd like to open my windows for the evening instead of having to run the air conditioning. They

were very willing to do that.

However, I'm not so sure that will always be the case. It bothers me no matter what time of day it is burning. A couple suggestions are (1) people should be charged additional costs to have a fire pit, and (2) there should be a smoke-free area without fire pits for those experiencing breathing problems.

If my asthma continues to get worse in the future, I may be faced with the decision of discontinuing camping. I especially enjoy the national parks out west in Wyoming.

**Dan Murray | Lincoln, Nebraska**

**Light Up!**

Regarding "Campfire Clouds" in your March issue: Really, Richard? An evening without a campfire to most RVers is incomplete, whether in an RV park or a campground. Perhaps you are one of those who own an RV to serve as a rolling timeshare, where you spend your time anchored to an RV park versus enjoying the road. Regardless, purchase some wood, step outside your rig, fire up and enjoy the evening.

**Walt Harris | Lake Arrowhead, California**

**Pay It Forward**

RV parks/resorts are campgrounds. The only difference between an RV park/resort and a campground is the type of unit you carry, tow or drive in. We don't usually carry wood to burn in a fire ring when we camp, but we are not strangers to taking snacks to our neighbors and sitting around their campfire for an evening of camping fun and conversation. We can appreciate the fact that sometimes smoke travels sideways instead of straight up, and we have been known to shut the windows in our motorhome to keep the smoke out, but that's a part of camping.

Years ago, we vacationed on motorcycles and tent camped from state to state, cooking most of our meals over a campfire. I remember friendly retired couples in large campers laughing and telling us "you guys work pretty hard at vacationing." Today, we're the "older ones" and hopefully, we are

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as friendly and understanding as the folks who made our early adventures memorable.

**Henry and Cally Herman | Lock Haven, Pennsylvania**

### **It's All Part of the Experience**

My wife and I really enjoy campfires when out in our RV. Sitting around a nice fire is one of the highlights of our trip. In fact, I would not go to an RV park that does not allow campfires. We have been RVing year-round and have been at dozens of campgrounds/RV resorts. I don't recall ever being offended by a smoky fire. I don't believe RV parks should ban campfires. It is part of the experience of going out in our RV.

**Joseph Koveleski | Mechanicsburg, Pennsylvania**

### **Medically Speaking**

A question was asked regarding whether campfires were liked or not — definitely not! I have only one working lung, and am forced to breathe in all

my neighbor's smoke. In the Canadian national parks the firewood is supplied by the contractor and is seasoned. The smoke from this wood has the odor of burning tires and whenever I complain, I am told indignantly that "everyone demands" a campfire. Very few NP campgrounds separate the sites into all-fire or none. Not everyone benefits from anyone's fire.

**Mark Strang | Fairmont Hot Springs, British Columbia, Canada**

### **No Smoking**

Campfires have plagued me for years. I have asthma, and it is almost impossible to keep the smoke out of the RVs that we have owned. I like to be able to enjoy fresh air, especially in nature areas, away from the cities. Often there is hardly any space between rigs. A year ago, when we had a new RV, we had a persistent gas vapor leak that repair shops were having difficulty locating. They told us that we would be safe to continue

on our way home as long as we didn't smoke by the rig! We don't smoke, but there was no way to stop others from starting fires nearby. This issue is reminiscent of when we had to stop bowling because of all the smokers, prior to smoke-free legislation for public areas.

**Sue Sullivan | Andover, Minnesota**

### **Seriously?**

For heaven's sake, it is called camping! Campfires are part of it. If you don't like the smoke, close your windows/fans or go to a hotel. There is nothing better than campfires; even our dogs love them. It certainly beats sitting inside your RV, watching television.

**Debra DiCato | Las Vegas, Nevada**

### **Quick Tip**

To avoid unwanted campfire smoke from neighbors, I carry a 20-inch round high-volume fan (with a wire cage around the blades) for two reasons: keeping cool in the South and to move

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smoke in the direction I need to. My wife does not like to be in the line of smoke. I use the high-volume fan to blow smoke from my fire or my neighbor's fire in a direction away from where we're sitting.

I aim the fan above my fire to blow the smoke away from my wife. If I don't have a fire and my neighbor does, I blow their smoke away from where we're sitting. Be careful and consider-

ate of the camper on the other side of you (don't blow your fire's smoke at them). It works in most cases, but if your neighbor is burning green wood or rubber tires it will not be as effective.

**Mike Robertson | Bunkie, Louisiana**

**Get Over It**

I enjoy getting my subscription monthly and usually just read it, gain knowledge, and wait for the next

issue. However, the "Campfire Clouds" letter by Richard Rayner in the March issue made my blood boil. A campfire bothers you? How stuck-up and snobbish can you be! RVing/camping is all about the outdoors so if a campfire bothers you, then stay home!

**Rodney LaVancher | Clermont, Florida**

**Have Camp, Will Burn**

It seems almost inevitable that where there is a campground, you will find people building campfires. Perhaps it is a hard-wired part of the human DNA relating back to our cave-dwelling days where survival depended upon the existence of a fire. Today the "need" for a campfire seems to be completely independent of factors such as temperature, density of the campground, dryness of the surrounding brush, wind or rain: It may be 90 degrees outside, but for some people camping isn't complete without a campfire.

We, too, have suffered our share of campfire smoke. Sometimes the wind helps blow it away and other times, when the winds are calm, it just hangs around the campground causing coughing and watering eyes or worse. Sometimes the smoke is dense and stinks, like from wet wood or trash, and other times it rises quickly. Either way, it can be annoying.

How did we resolve these situations? Most people are considerate in this regard and will respect a simple request. But others are unconcerned and light up anyway. Asking fellow campers to put the fire out is almost a provocation and, besides, you can't just flip a switch and put a fire out instantly; it smolders all night long. What we usually do is just close up our RV, and turn on the air conditioner to minimize the smoke inside.

If having a campfire is an integral part of the camping "experience," then perhaps the better answer is for a campground to have a central fire ring where everybody can share in the campfire rather than having many small campfires. The central location can have enough clearance from other RVs so as to eliminate or at least minimize the impact of the smoke. It



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would also provide a convenient place for campers to socialize.

There is no way to eliminate the impact of a campfire. Thoughtful campers will take the impact on others into consideration when proposing a campfire; others just light them up. All you can do is try to position your campsite to be upwind.

**Gerry Brentnall | Loomis, California**

### What's the Problem?

I actually find the call to RV-park owners to ban campfires offensive. We normally camp with several other families, and campfire time is an experience looked forward to by kids and adults. I don't recall ever being smoked out by someone else's campfire. And our campfire smoke always concentrates on one of us sitting around it (and the old adage "smoke follows beauty" is always mentioned). Maybe we just don't notice others because it is a part of camping/RVing.

**Carla Clements | Huntersville, North Carolina**

### Be Considerate

We like to have a small campfire once in a while. When we do, we try and eliminate the biggest issues I have seen at other sites. We do not throw trash such as Styrofoam cups and plates or plastic (especially water bottles) in the fire, as they all are a source of a lot of foul-smelling and toxic smoke. We also do not build large fires, and when we retire for the evening we extinguish the fire completely. A smoldering pile of coals is just a breathing smoke stack. I would add that most parks we have been in want to sell you "their" wood. I'm not opposed to this, but they could help by ensuring that what they sell is dry instead of green, fresh-cut wood. Dryer wood will burn with less smoke.

**E.G. "PeeWee" Scarborough | Via email**

### I Can Still Hear You

Your question in the March issue asking readers to share their experiences with fires at campgrounds got me thinking: How about posing a

question about noise level in campgrounds from fellow campers?

With rigs being built with outdoor entertainment centers with televisions, and groups of people gathered around them, it gives me pause to even want to stay in an RV campground these days. One of the joys of camping is to take naps, anytime, and not just during quiet hours.

**Jane Parks-McKay | Santa Cruz, California**

## Question of the Month

Have your campground neighbors ever been so loud that you had to ask them to keep it down? What was causing the noise, and how was the request greeted? And, if you enjoy utilizing your outdoor entertainment system, what steps do you take to ensure you don't disturb others?

Send your comments to:

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# ESCAPES

**Bug-Free Zone** ➔  
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keep mosquitoes away from  
the campsite. [pg. 16](#)



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## Blissful Beaches

Find repose and salty adventure at Sonoma Coast State Park in Northern California

by Mary Zalmanek

**S**onoma Coast State Park is an attractive destination for RVing beachcombers, fishermen and picnickers. For 17 miles along Highway 1 in Northern California, there are more than a dozen points for beach access. The beaches are separated by rocky headlands. The southernmost point is Bodega Head, a rocky promontory that forms the entrance to Bodega Harbor. The park runs north 4 miles past the mouth of the Russian River and the town of Jenner.

The Bodega Head Trail, a 1.8-mile path, offers breathtaking views — gasp! — close to the edge of the bluffs that drop to the Pacific Ocean. From January to May, it's an ideal place to watch mothers and newborn gray whales

hug the shore as they migrate from Mexico to Alaska.

On a sunny morning, we were enchanted by shorebirds probing the wet sand for invertebrate delicacies on South Salmon Creek Beach. We were perplexed by the Verna A II, a green fishing vessel stranded on the shore south of the birds' feeding frenzy. The 54-foot steel-hulled boat had run aground a week before our visit.

RV camping without hookups is available at two park campgrounds: Wright's Beach (maximum RV length of 27 feet) and Bodega Dunes (maximum RV length of 31 feet).

For more information, call 707-875-3483, or visit [http://www.parks.ca.gov/?page\\_id=451](http://www.parks.ca.gov/?page_id=451).

By Bobbie Hasselbring

## Celebrate the 'Stinking Rose'

**G**arlic is one of my favorite seasonings, second only to salt. I realized how much I use garlic when we recently hosted a friend who is severely allergic to both garlic and onion. I practically had to relearn to cook!

I love garlic's versatility. I cut off the top of an entire head and pour on a little olive oil. Then I wrap it in aluminum foil and roast at 400 F for 30-40 minutes (until the cloves are mushy-soft). Then I can squeeze out the slightly sweet, fragrant garlic and enjoy on crusty bread.

A close relative of onions, shallots, leeks and chives, garlic has been eaten by humans for at least 7,000 years. It's central to many cuisines like Mediterranean, Asian, African and many dishes in Europe. Garlic is also used in traditional medicines. Garlic is the perfect condiment for an RV trip. It requires no refrigeration, and heads keep for months. Some people love elephant garlic, giant-sized cloves much milder in flavor that are actually wild leeks.

Garlic is easy to grow. Separate heads into individual cloves (leaving on protective "paper") and plant in well-drained, sunny location. In colder climates, plant in fall (six weeks before freeze) and harvest in spring/summer. In milder climates, you can grow garlic year-round. Garlic will even grow in a pot in your RV!

When growing garlic, you'll see curly tops, called scapes. These should be cut off. They're delicious sautéed or eaten raw in salads. After harvest, cut off the plant's greenery and hang the heads to dry.

Garlic is also a great excuse to travel to festivals celebrating the "stinking rose." The Northwest Garlic Festival, one of the first, is held in Ocean Park, Washington, in June. In Gilroy, California, the self-proclaimed "Garlic Capital of the World," a huge garlic fest happens in July. Other great garlic festivals include St. Louis, Missouri, in June; Hutchinson, Minnesota, North Plains, Oregon, and Okanogan, Washington, in August; Bloomington, Indiana, on Labor Day weekend; and Bethlehem, Connecticut, in October, among others.

### Got a favorite garlic recipe?

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



From top: Heads of garlic will keep for several months. Garlic heads contain several cloves, each wrapped in a protective covering.

### GARLIC CAULIFLOWER



One of the mistakes people make with garlic is cooking it too fast, resulting in burned, bitter garlic. This delicious cauliflower recipe avoids that problem, and makes the garlic sweet and aromatic. You can use this same technique with other hard vegetables like broccoli and Brussels sprouts (cut into quarters).

- 1 head cauliflower
- 2 tablespoons coconut oil or olive oil
- 8 cloves of garlic, peeled
- Salt, to taste
- Pepper, to taste

► Preheat oven to 350 F.

Break cauliflower flowers and stems into bite-sized pieces. Sauté cauliflower in oil over medium heat, stirring occasionally, for 10-15 minutes (until veggies are oily and showing some brown spots).

While vegetables are sautéing, cut garlic into pieces the size of small pine nuts (not minced). When cauliflower looks done, stir in the garlic, salt and pepper and cook for another 3 minutes.

Transfer vegetables and garlic to heatproof pan and bake for about 10 minutes. The vegetables should be tender and aromatic, but not mushy.





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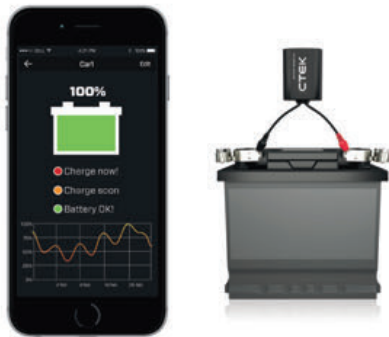


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## Makes Sense

Battery Sense from CTEK allows users to monitor the health of a vehicle's battery from a smart phone. Battery Sense is a Bluetooth-enabled battery monitor that provides detailed information about a vehicle's battery, which can help prevent unnecessary breakdowns and maximize battery performance. Users connect the Battery Sense to the motorhome's battery, and then download the free 2.0 app for iPhone or Android devices. Whenever the phone is in Bluetooth range of the Battery Sense, users receive instant battery voltage and temperature readouts — and push notifications should the battery's state of charge reach a critical level. The device can monitor the conditions of multiple vehicle batteries provided each vehicle is equipped with a Battery Sense unit. MSRP: \$57.99.

**CTEK | 800-941-7611, [www.smartercharger.com](http://www.smartercharger.com)**



## Raise the Bar

Adding a sound bar (or replacing the existing one) is a great way to enhance your motorhome's home-theater system. In order to bring out the boom, ASA Electronics introduces the JSB2000, which features a smaller mounting footprint for a clean installation, without sacrificing sound quality. With a mounting depth of just 5.65 inches, this sound bar boasts impressive, nonamplified sound via six speakers (two subwoofers, two midrange and two tweeters) and is rated for up to 48 watts. The ported and tuned enclosure features glossy black plastic construction, and a one-piece snap metal grille finishes the look. No remote control is necessary, as the JSB2000 has been designed to work directly with Jensen AM/FM/CD/DVD stereo head units. Fits 22.1-by-4.5-by-3.2-inch openings. MSRP: \$209.99.

**ASA Electronics | 877-305-0445, [www.asaelectronics.com](http://www.asaelectronics.com)**

## Grill Power

For those of us who love to grill at the RV park but don't like cramming a clunky barbecue unit in a storage compartment, the FireDisc portable LP-gas grill is a practical solution. The entire system consists of two stand sections that nest together, plus the disc itself, which sets onto the stand. The three-piece design makes assembly and disassembly easy, with no tools or hardware required. It takes less than a minute to assemble or disassemble, and the three pieces lay flat for easy transport or storage, according to the company. Once set up, the FireDisc operates on LP-gas canisters you can find at any camp store (or Camping World). The flexible stand has been manufactured to adapt to uneven surfaces, allowing users to select their cooking spot based on the view, not only where there's flat ground. Heavy-duty, high-polished, tempered ultra-high carbon-steel construction on the disc and stand ensures durability, while the powdercoated, adjustable three-temperature burner helps with reliable performance. Choose between a 36-inch (MSRP starts at \$299.99) or 24-inch stand (MSRP starts at \$279.99), in either shallow or deep configurations.

**FireDisc | 281-206-2678, [www.firediscookers.com](http://www.firediscookers.com)**



## Stop Buggin'

Spending time outside is one of the most enjoyable aspects of the motorhome lifestyle, but constantly being assaulted by mosquitoes can send you inside in a hurry. The new Thermacell Halo is said to provide a 15-by-15-foot mosquito protection zone in just minutes. The Halo operates using up to four butane cartridges to disperse a nontopical repellent that the company claims is virtually odor-free, with no open flame to worry about. This repellent, allethrin, is a synthetic copy of a natural repellent normally found in chrysanthemum plants. The heat fueled by the butane cartridge is directed to a metal grill, upon which a small mat saturated with repellent is inserted. Heat disperses the repellent from the mat into the air, creating the 225-square-foot zone of protection. MSRP: \$39.99. Refill cartridges and mats are available at a variety of home improvement and outdoor stores, and also at Wal-Mart.

**Thermacell | 866-753-3837, [www.thermacell.com](http://www.thermacell.com)**







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## ESCAPES CROSSROADS

Greenbush, Wisconsin

### Wade House Historic Site

It's not easy to wander back in time, but Wade House offers a special opportunity to visit the mid-1800s. From mid-May through October, tours start at the Wade House Visitor Center with a handcrafted reproduction of the Sheboygan Fond du Lac stagecoach. Next, take a wagon ride or a stroll through woods and apple orchards to see a blacksmith at work and a sawmill in full operation. A little further, the path takes visitors to a true highlight — the Wade House.

Sylvanus and Betsey Wade arrived in 1844 and a few years later opened the inn on the road between Sheboygan and Fond du Lac. The Wades prospered until railroad travel bypassed the town. Eventually the Wade House was abandoned until 1950 when Marie Christine Kohler and her sister-in-law, Ruth DeYoung Kohler, began a multiyear effort to restore the building to its 1850s peak. Today, visitors to the three-story Greek Revival-style Wade House are met by a costumed interpreter for a guided tour of the inn.

The visitor center also offers the Wesley W. Jung Carriage Museum. The Jung family owned a carriage factory, the Jacob Jung Carriage Manufacturing Company, and Wesley, the grandson of the founder, collected and restored horse- and hand-drawn vehicles.

The carriage museum is open year-round, but the historic part of the site, including the Wade House, is open mid-May through October and for special events throughout the year.

**For more information**, call 920-526-3271, or visit <http://wadehouse.wisconsinhistory.org/> — Neala McCarten



Photo: Neala McCarten

Tuscumbia, Alabama

### The Birthplace of Helen Keller

How often can you visit the site of a miracle? A trip to Ivy Green, in Tuscumbia, Alabama, allows RVers to do just that. At Ivy Green, visitors can explore the childhood home of Helen Keller. Born in 1880, Keller lost her eyesight and hearing due to a severe illness just 19 months later. Today, visitors to Ivy Green learn Helen's story as they tour the

grounds, including the well pump where she had the miraculous breakthrough with teacher and "Miracle Worker," Anne Sullivan. Only 6 years old at the time, Keller would quickly learn the fingertip alphabet from Sullivan, who had come to live with the family and instruct her. Keller went on to learn Braille at the age of 10, and in 1904 graduated from Radcliffe College, cum laude. She went on to champion improved conditions for the blind and deaf throughout the world. Keller's life and contributions are celebrated in Tuscumbia's Helen Keller Festival, which takes place June 19-25, 2017. Live entertainment, food, a parade and other events are scheduled for the festivities (call 256-383-0783, or visit [www.helenkellerfestival.com](http://www.helenkellerfestival.com) for more information).


**For more information** about Ivy Green, call 256-383-4066, or visit [www.helenkellerbirthplace.org](http://www.helenkellerbirthplace.org). — Morey Edelman 



Photo: Morey Edelman



# Inside and out, **BETTER BY DESIGN**



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Visitors stroll and interact with interpreters at the living history town of Nevada City.

## Where the Buffalo Still Roam

Take a step back into yesteryear, western Montana

By Bobbie Hasselbring

**W**estern Montana is renowned for gorgeous scenery and outdoor recreational opportunities. What is less well-known is its fascinating history, and we're taking our RV to step back in time to explore the native peoples, miners, pioneers and others who've shaped this western state.

We start our yesteryear exploration, appropriately enough, at the National Bison Range, halfway between Flathead Lake and Missoula. Bison were central to many Native American tribes, and their decimation — an estimated 50 million of them — key to conquering native peoples and opening the West to white settlement. By the late

1800s, there were only about 100 bison left in the wild. In an effort to bring back these magnificent creatures, in 1908 President Theodore Roosevelt established this 18,000-plus-acre refuge.

It's early, and the visitor center isn't open, but Red Sleep Mountain Drive is, so we drive in. We've been bouncing along the hard-packed dirt for 10 minutes when we spot our first large bull bison high up on a hill. Just as we remind ourselves that we may not see bison up close in this wild place, we come upon two massive bulls grazing contentedly along the road. These big animals, with their curved horns and giant heads and necks covered in thick, curly hair, are so close we can hear them chewing. We drive another 30 feet and find a huge bull in a dust wallow, his big tongue flicking each time he rolls. The animals seem completely unfazed by us and we hungrily snap photos.

We climb steeply through trees and then back into grassland. The speed limit is 25 MPH, but 10-15 on these narrow roads is safer. We reach the

WESTERN MONTANA



### ← Getting There

To reach the National Bison Range from Montana's capital, Helena, take U.S. 12 West for about 43 miles, then merge onto Interstate 90 West. After a little more than 75 miles, take Montana state Route 200 W/U.S. 93 North toward Kalispell. After 6 miles, turn right onto Montana state Route 212 North, then make a quick right onto Bison Range Road.





Above left: This historic armored car on display at the World Museum of Mining in Butte was used to transport payroll for miners. Above right: The cellblock at the Old Montana State Prison in Deer Lodge is framed by dark storm clouds.

4,885-foot summit and spot five young deer bedded down, their four-prong racks sticking up in the tall grass. The National Bison Range is home to not only 350-500 bison, but also Rocky Mountain elk, mule deer, white-tailed deer, pronghorn antelope, bighorn sheep, coyotes, mountain lions, bears, bobcats and 200-plus species of birds.

The road down is steep, with sharp turns and no guardrails, but the views of the Mission Valley, the Mission Mountains, and seemingly endless undulating grasslands studded with deep purple thistle, pale pink wild roses, frilly Queen Anne's Lace, and dark-eyed yellow daisies are spectacular. It gives us a sense of what the native peoples and early pioneers must have seen. I gear down and baby the brakes to the bottom. As we exit, a newly born fawn, all spots and fluffy tail, runs in front of our motorhome and scampers down a trail.

### Old Prison, Antique Cars and More

We drive 2½ hours south on U.S. 93 and east on Interstate 90 to Deer Lodge, the second-oldest town in Montana. It's a must-stop for history buffs, with more museums and historic collections than any other town in the Northwest. We meet Sandy Pettey, director of the Powell County Museum & Arts Foundation, and a virtual encyclopedia of information about the town's many historic exhibits.

Old Montana State Prison, built by convict labor in 1871, dominates Main Street with 24-foot-high concrete walls and castlelike turrets. We scramble up narrow circular stairs to the top of the wall. Here, guards watched over 400-600 hardened criminals until 1979, when a new prison was constructed.

Built on the Alcatraz model, the prison housed some of the toughest inmates, two of whom were hanged in its yard. For decades, the prison was run by Warden Frank Conley, an innovative administrator who implemented the first work programs for inmates in the U.S. He was also controversial because he insisted prisoners remain in their cells in total silence.

We walk through a contraband exhibit of shanks (prisoner-made knives), rope made from toilet paper and even a hollowed-out Bible for hiding drugs and cigarettes. Standing in a 6-by-8-foot cell, it's easy to see why prisoners rioted in 1959, nearly killing the warden. The thick walls, dank rooms and cells, and iron doors possess a heavy energy that paranormal TV shows have found ghostly.

Next door is the Montana Auto Museum, a dizzying collection of 180-plus classic cars, including an

“The views of the Mission Valley, the Mission Mountains, and seemingly endless undulating grasslands are spectacular.”



A cowboy and his son ride the range along the highway in Montana.



## GETAWAY

### WESTERN MONTANA

1886 Benz Motorwagen replica, a 1913 Cole Model 60 [one of only three in the world], a 1932 Franklin Airman “mob car” and a 1938 Ford Deluxe, known as the original “woody.” The Montana Auto Museum showcases Edsels, T-birds, early electric cars, muscle cars and more. Before we leave, I plunk down \$5 for a raffle ticket to win a white 1966 Mustang convertible, just like the first car I ever owned.

Across the street, we check out the Frontier Montana Museum that re-creates 1918 Montana. There’s a collection of Buffalo Bill’s guns and costumes, an exhibit of Colt handguns and family artifacts from Gen. George Armstrong Custer, including a sword and bow from the Battle of Little Bighorn. There’s also an extensive collection of small derringers, black-powder guns and Civil War memorabilia.

A few doors down is Yesterday’s Playthings, a toy museum. We’re impressed by the Raggedy Ann and Andy collection, but a little creeped out by all the dolls, including one the clerk says follows you with her eyes.

On the edge of town, we check out the Grant-Kohrs Ranch National Historic Site (free admission). Once headquarters of a 10 million-acre cattle empire, the ranch is preserved by the National Park Service as living history, where costumed staff re-create ranch life in Montana between the 1860s and 1890s, when open ranges were grazed by vast herds.



Above left: An interpreter in Nevada City shares his blacksmithing skills with visitors. Above right: Staff in period clothing at Grant-Kohrs Ranch National Historic Site serve up cowboy coffee.

Grant-Kohrs is still a working cattle ranch and all the artifacts, from blacksmith tools to the wood stove in the saltbox-style ranch house, are original. With clouds gathering and the rumble of thunder threatening, we wander through barns and sheds with thick wood floors bearing indents from cowboys’ spurs. In the blacksmith shop, artisans pound iron. At the chuck wagon, we sample real cowboy coffee brewed over a wood fire and, in a cozy ranch kitchen, taste cinnamon twists hot from the wood stove.

#### Mining History

Our next destination is Butte, a short hop down I-90. Known as “The Richest Hill on Earth,” Butte, a mile-high basin just west of the Continental Divide,

started as a gold and silver mining camp in the 1860s. By 1870, Butte had blossomed into a copper boomtown. By 1896, 5 square miles around Butte were producing 210 million pounds of copper a year and employing 8,000 men. During World War I, Butte’s population grew to 100,000. While mining today in Butte is a shadow of its former self, it’s left a colorful history.

We head to the World Museum of Mining, located at the Orphan Girl Mine, for a self-guided step back in time. The museum offers rock and mineral exhibits and fascinating mining artifacts, including a display of miners’ lamps from candles to powerful battery lanterns. Hell Roarin’ Gulch is a re-created 1890s mining town with 15 historic and 35 con-



A lone bison meanders the National Bison Range.



wooden sidewalks, big raindrops begin to fall.

The museum's crown jewel is the towering hoist house that lowered men into tunnels 2,700 feet below. The rain is coming down as we mount the stairs into the headframe to peer into rooms with huge pieces of mining equipment, including ore cars and crushers. As we climb higher and higher, lightning flashes all around us. We decide that being atop a metal mining structure probably isn't too smart and, by the time we reach ground level, the rain is a torrent. With cameras getting damp, we leave the underground mining tour for another day.

We head downtown to the Dumas Brothel Museum. Built in 1890, the 42-room Dumas was built to serve Butte's miners. It operated illegally for 92 years from 1890 to 1982, making it America's longest-running "house of ill repute."

We walk the main-floor hallway and note the tiny rooms, or "cribs," used by the working girls, each with a large window the women used to display their "wares" (supposedly where the term window shopping came from). Our guide points out a customized refrigerator, where an illegal French immigrant prostitute took refuge during police raids.

Butte boasted more than 1,000 prostitutes in the 1920s, and we are told the Dumas is the last standing brothel in the second-largest red-light

district in the West. Purchased by enterprising entrepreneurs, the Dumas is a fascinating work in progress, with peeling wallpaper and workers still rehabbing some rooms. Upstairs our guide points out where the ghost of a madam who killed herself has reportedly been seen, and another where a longtime doorman is said to haunt the place.

By the time we tuck our motorhome into a shady, level spot at the Butte KOA, we're bushed, but we appreciate the full hookups and free Wi-Fi. The next morning, we join Butte City Underground Tour for a peek beneath the city's secrets. Our guide opens locked doors and we descend to basement level, where the booming town built shops, including a barbershop with original chairs, mirrors and barber tools. In one underground speakeasy, we marvel at the one-way mirrored entry door, antique marble floors, sculptured masonry and stained glass. In the town's 1890s-era jail, we check out the crude concrete cells and an interrogation room, where police cranked up the steam heat to more than 100 degrees Fahrenheit to "sweat out" prisoner confessions.

Our final historic stops are Virginia City and Nevada City, boomtowns that grew up in Alder Gulch, site of the richest placer gold strike in the Rockies. Virginia City, a National Historic Landmark, has a year-round population of 150; in the 1860s, the

Gulch boasted more than 10,000. The town, which contains more than 300 historic buildings and was home to notables like Calamity Jane, looks like residents simply walked away. Many buildings allow visitors to step partway in to see goods used 150 years ago. While there are plenty of tourist activities like gold-panning and rail and stagecoach rides, the town oozes authenticity, and we could easily spend several days here exploring.

We hop aboard the Old Fire Truck for a tour. Our guide, Scott, points out the false-fronted 1864 Gilbert Brewery, now a theater; the Masonic Temple built in 1867 and home to vigilantes who hung 22 robbers and other bad guys; and Boot Hill, where five of those criminals were buried with their boots on.

Just a mile away is Nevada City, where the Montana Heritage Commission has set up a living history town containing 15 historic buildings in their original locations, in addition to several other relocated structures. The town was featured in the television miniseries "Return to Lonesome Dove," and interpreters adopt the identities of real historic characters who lived in the area and stay true to historical fact. We wander through the town watching the blacksmith shape horseshoes and, in a small tavern, we play an old card game with a cardsharp who made his living fleecing miners.

Curator Dan, in his 1860s felt hat and cutaway jacket, says, "There are 1.25 million historic artifacts in Virginia City and Nevada City. It's priceless."

We couldn't agree more. **M**

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

**Western Montana's Glacier Country (Glacier Country Tourism)**  
[www.glaciermt.com](http://www.glaciermt.com)

**Southeast Montana**  
[www.southeastmontana.com](http://www.southeastmontana.com)

**Butte KOA**  
[www.koa.com/campgrounds/butte](http://www.koa.com/campgrounds/butte)

**Powell County Museum and Arts Foundation**  
[www.pcmf.org](http://www.pcmf.org)

**Virginia City and Nevada City**  
[www.virginiacitymt.com](http://www.virginiacitymt.com)

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Western Montana offers RVers plenty of open road and big sky.



# FUNDY COASTAL

Visit five sites for free as part of Canada's 150th anniversary

**F**or an exciting once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, pack the motorhome and join the 2017 yearlong celebration of Canada's 150th Anniversary of Confederation. This nationwide grand occasion will feature free admission to all of Canada's national parks, historic sites and marine conservation areas operated by Parks Canada. That's more than 200 exceptional places for you to explore!

Canada, whose name evolved from the St. Lawrence Iroquoian word for village, "kanata," is the second largest country in the world. Comprised of 10 provinces and three territories, it shares the world's longest international border

with the United States. Even though these two countries are longtime allies, there was a time when the northern neighbors feared annexation by the United States.

In the 1860s, the land we now call Canada consisted of several British North American provinces and colonies. While concerns about potential United States aggression increased, Great Britain became increasingly reluctant to defend the North American colonies. The prospect of strength through unity helped encourage the colonies to consider an alliance, a confederation that benefited the new country and the "mother country." Through peaceful negotiations, Great Britain passed a law finalizing the union of three colonies — New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and the Province of Canada (today's Ontario and Quebec) — creating the Dominion of Canada at Confederation on July 1, 1867. The remaining provinces and territories joined between 1870 and 1999 to create the Canada we know today that stretches from ocean to ocean to the Arctic.

So, considering the 9,984,670-square-kilometer size of Canada (more than 3.8 million square miles), where do you begin exploring this great country? Here's one awesome suggestion: Fundy Coastal Drive. Located along the Bay of Fundy in eastern Canada's province of New Brunswick, the 286-mile Fundy Coastal Drive travels along lush Acadian forests, past farmland and rural villages with their quintessential small white churches, through larger towns and to iconic coastal vistas.

Enjoy a leisurely Canadian journey as you discover four fascinating historic sites and one unique national park along the drive. All five sites will offer free admission in

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Visitors enjoy exploring the ocean floor when the tide is out. When the tide starts coming in, the entire rocky bed will quickly be covered with water.



# DRIVE

## ary of Confederation

2017 in honor of Canada's 150th Anniversary of Confederation.

### Saint Croix Island International Historic Site

What is so noteworthy about a 6.5-acre island in the Saint Croix River that makes it an international historic site? Discover the answer when you visit this Parks Canada site and see the famous island. There's no access to it, so park the motorhome and take a stroll along a gently sloping path where you'll learn about the island's exceptional history. Like a good novel, the tale includes a dramatic adventure into the unknown.

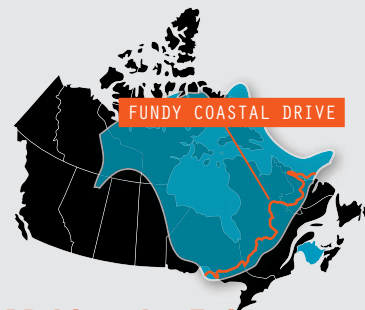
It begins in France on November 8, 1603, when King Henry IV rewarded Pierre Dugua, Sieur de Mons, with the title Lieutenant General of Acadie, a North American territory between the 40th and 46th parallels. The

French had been fishing and trading for valuable furs seasonally in this region for more than a century, but in April 1604, Dugua sailed from France along with mapmaker Samuel Champlain, artisans, priests, soldiers and noblemen intending to establish a colony.

Acadie shares the same latitude as temperate France, so the settlers expected a similar climate. They chose the island location and built a colony. The native Passamaquoddy were friendly and all was well when the ships returned to France, leaving 79 men and boys on the island. A harsh winter caught the settlers by surprise. The river froze with upheavals of ice too dangerous to cross. The colonists were cut off from the mainland. There was no fresh water, game or firewood. As the unforgiving winter continued, illness set in, men died and the colony seemed doomed. What happened next? When you visit Saint Croix, you'll learn how the determination of the survivors led to a French presence in Acadie that endures today.

### St. Andrews Blockhouse National Historic Site

This thought-provoking site represents a time period more than 200 years later than the Saint Croix colony. The



### Making the Drive

The 286-mile Fundy Coastal Drive travels between the towns of St. Stephen and Sackville, in New Brunswick, Canada. It is marked by blue signs with a white lighthouse. The signs are generally well-placed on an easy-to-follow path; however, a couple of turns have no signs. Obtain a Fundy Coastal Drive map at major entry points to the province, at visitor information centers or get one before your adventure by ordering a free New Brunswick guide at: <http://www.tourismnewbrunswick.ca/travelinfo/orderaguide.aspx>.

St. Andrews Blockhouse, a common defense structure of the time, was built due to the War of 1812. Today, visitors can walk inside the wooden two-story building where the upper floor overhangs the bottom one. Peer through the gun ports, imagining what life was like for the four men on duty. Three 18-pounder guns plus two 9-pounders were strategically placed in front of the blockhouse waiting for an enemy who never arrived.

One of the oldest surviving blockhouses in Canada, St. Andrews offers a



View Saint Croix Island from the Canadian International Historic Site alongside the Fundy Coastal Drive. The United States National Park Service also recognizes the significance of Saint Croix Island with an international historic site, complete with visitor center and interpretive trail featuring bronze statues, located near Calais, Maine. This portion of the trail leading to Dickson Falls is filled with lush, green ferns and mosses.

Photos: Karen Lee Enisley

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## FUNDY COASTAL DRIVE

ing. You'll quickly notice that cannons are pointing across the water to the U.S. state of Maine. The War of 1812 was between Great Britain and the United States, but it was fought mostly on battlefields in several U.S. states and present-day Ontario and Quebec. Afraid of American attacks during the war, the people of St. Andrews raised the funds and built the blockhouse. Interestingly, they didn't fear their closest neighbors; indeed, many Canadians were married to people from Maine. Instead, the people from St. Andrews feared raiding privateers sailing from states further south. Both American and British governments licensed private businesses and ships known as privateers who seized vessels and confiscated cargo. During the war, the people in the Atlantic region of Canada actually enjoyed economic prosperity.

Listen to the Canadian perspective about the war from on-site Parks Canada interpreters and you'll hear some interesting tales. One story says that during the war, people from New Brunswick gave gunpowder to people in Maine for them to celebrate the Fourth of July!

### Carleton Martello Tower National Historic Site

Take Fundy Coastal Drive to Saint John, the oldest incorporated city in

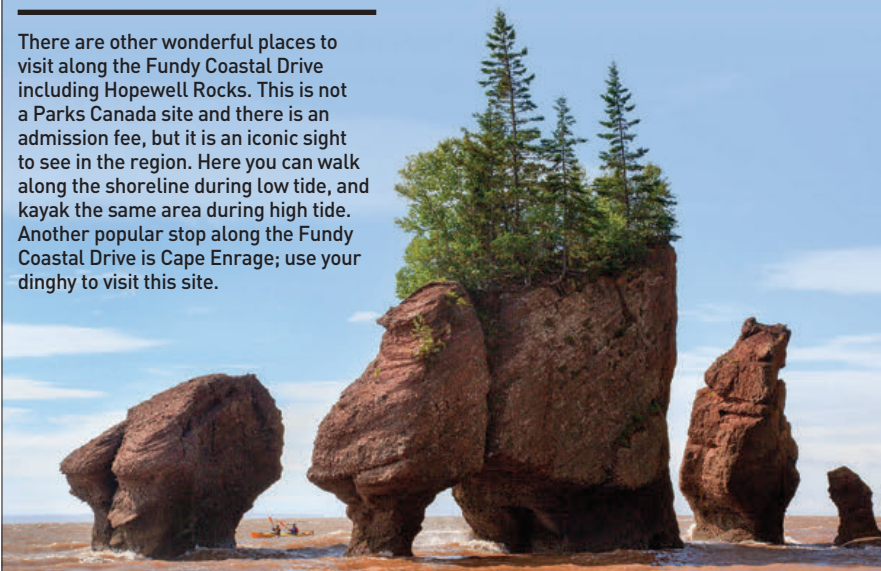
Canada, for your next free distinctive sight to see. Here you'll find a round defense tower known as a Martello tower, fittingly referred to as the Sentinel of Saint John.

The Carleton Martello Tower was built on a hill overlooking the harbor to protect the city and the overland route to Canada's interior during the War of 1812. By the time the fieldstone tower was completed in 1815, the war was over. It wasn't until 1866 that the tower was armed and used as a garrison, this time due to fear of invasion from the Fenians, a radical Irish-American group.

When a devastating fire destroyed an immense area of Saint John in 1877, the tower survived. It became such an emotional link to the city's past that when militia wanted to tear it down, there was a public uproar.

Over the years, the tower has been used for various purposes including a detention center for deserters during WWI. Named a national historic site in 1924, the tower was again utilized during WWII when the unique two-story concrete superstructure was added as a fire command post. A \$13 million restoration to the tower began in 2016, temporarily limiting interior access. The interesting exhibit gallery and the beautiful view of the harbor with the impressive tower standing as a witness to history makes this site a must-see.

There are other wonderful places to visit along the Fundy Coastal Drive including Hopewell Rocks. This is not a Parks Canada site and there is an admission fee, but it is an iconic sight to see in the region. Here you can walk along the shoreline during low tide, and kayak the same area during high tide. Another popular stop along the Fundy Coastal Drive is Cape Enrage; use your dinghy to visit this site.





The Carleton Martello Tower is situated on top of a hill providing a beautiful, panoramic view of the town of Saint John. The transformed name "Martello" is derived from a strong circular stone fortress found in Cape Mortella, Corsica. These motorhome travelers are enjoying a scenic overlook in Fundy National Park.



## Fundy National Park

Allow plenty of time to explore this exceptional park. The name "Fundy" is derived from the French word "fendu," meaning split. The Bay of Fundy's shape is one of the reasons that it has the world's highest tides. Named one of the Seven Natural Wonders of North America, the Bay of Fundy's tide can rise up to 17 meters (55 feet), the height of a four-story building. At Fundy National Park, you can walk the beach at low tide and discover the extraordinary sea life that clings to the rocks waiting for the water's return. When the tide starts coming in, you'll see dramatic changes. It's fascinating to watch the rapidly rising tide consume the beach as it once again becomes the ocean's floor.

Fundy National Park protects two diverse environmental systems; from the marine coastal region, the landscape quickly rises 300 meters (984 feet) to the Caledonia Highlands plateau. Here you'll see the Maritime Acadian Forest, a unique forest found only in the Maritimes, southern Quebec and New England states. Some of the last old-growth Acadian forest in the world is found in the park; it includes more than 30 species of trees, more



## TRAVELING IN CANADA

New Brunswick is officially bilingual; both English and French are spoken. Some locations will accept U.S. dollars but consider exchanging U.S. dollars for Canadian currency or use a credit card (international fees may apply).

than 400 species of lichen and is a haven for bird-watchers with more than 260 different types of birds.

The park offers more than 100 kilometers (62 miles) of trails from an easy half-kilometer (0.3-mile) loop to a 50-kilometer (31-mile) challenge. Be sure to see the stunning Dickson Falls by hiking the 1.5-kilometer (0.9-mile) loop trail through the forest to an oasis of waterfalls, ferns and vivid green mosses.



The Monument Lefebvre is named in memory of Father Camille Lefebvre, founder of the College Saint-Joseph in Memramcook.



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If you're looking for outdoor activities, this park has them. Check out the saltwater swimming pool, kayak on the bay or serene Bennett Lake, or get in some fishing. Also make time for tennis, lawn bowling, mountain biking or hitting a round on the nine-hole par-70 course designed by world-renowned golf course architect Stanley Thompson.

Since the park is a Dark Sky Preserve, camp at the park, relax alongside the motorhome and watch for a spectacular night sky.

**Monument Lefebvre National Historic Site**

In a dramatic deportation of the Acadians, British troops set fire to homes, separated families and

crowded many people onto ships, forcing them to endure dangerous conditions with foul drinking water, food shortages and deadly disease. Storms sank some of the ships, drowning everyone on board. The Acadians were violently deported from their land and scattered around the world.

This is a portion of the story about the Acadian people shared at this enlightening historic site. Who are these Acadian people? Between 1636 and 1650, about 50 French families settled the region known as Acadie. Within a few years, a small number of people from other nations arrived in Acadie and some French men married local First Nations women. After a few generations, these settlers of Acadie were considered a distinct people.

Acadie has a strategic location to trade routes and was caught in a conflict between France and Great Britain. Beginning in 1755, about 9,500 Acadians were deported. Some were sent to France and England, while others were discharged from Massachusetts to Georgia. They were outcasts in a foreign country, French-speaking Catholics among the English-speaking Protestant majority. Many of the unhappy exiles made their way to the former French colony, Louisiana. Here they found trees, fruits and animals in a land filled with cypress swamps. Their native French had no names for these new discoveries; thus, the Cajun language and culture were born.

Visit Monument Lefebvre to discover how the Acadians resettled their former homeland and how they were impacted by the site's namesake, Father Camille Lefebvre. At one time, Acadia was the region around eastern Maine and New Brunswick; today, Acadia is considered to be anywhere Acadians live — a nation without a border.

What discoveries will you make as you travel Fundy Coastal Drive? After enjoying this intriguing journey, when you reach the "End" sign, then what? On the same pole is another sign — "Start" Acadian Coastal Drive. **M**

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# MORE THAN OK

Oklahoma City sets the gold standard for resilience



**D**o you remember the weather events making the national news in May 2015? Oklahoma had experienced destructive tornadoes with record rainfall and flooding. Nevertheless, the lure of exploring the many attractions in this resilient city overcame our doubts. On an RV trip in June, my husband, Jim, and I spent five days falling in love with Oklahoma City under clear blue skies.

After traveling hundreds of miles to reach our destination, Jim and I felt like kids being let out for recess. We couldn't wait to get out and play. On our first day, we rode our bikes on the 9½-mile paved trail around Lake Hefner. Even with several short stops to take photographs and one longer one to watch kiteboarders defy gravity with 10-foot jumps, we finished the ride in 90 minutes. At one stop we talked to some locals who were thrilled that the lake was filled again. For the last several years, Oklahoma had experienced severe drought. Lake Hefner and nearby Stinchcomb Wildlife Refuge had nearly dried up. The upside to the recent rains was that the lakes and rivers were filled once again.

We drove a few miles to the 1,000-acre Stinchcomb Wildlife Refuge. In spite of a steady wind, kayakers and stand-up paddleboarders were taking to the water. We launched our tandem kayak. As soon as we turned the corner into a quiet, tree-lined waterway, we were protected from the wind. A handful of egrets





populated the shore, and other birds sang from their hidden perches in the forest. Again, we encountered locals praising the recent rains.

Oklahoma City's history can be revealed by experiencing its districts. During our brief stay, we explored Bricktown, Downtown and the Adventure District. We saved others for our next visit, including the Boathouse District, a hot spot for outdoor recreation, and Stockyards City, home to Western shops.

We spent our second day exploring Bricktown, a former warehouse district now filled with restaurants, shops and the mile-long Bricktown Canal. We took a tour on a water taxi to learn more about the area. The Bricktown Canal, AT&T Bricktown Ball Park and seven other

The Centennial Land Run Monument pays tribute to the settlers competing for unassigned land in Oklahoma Territory in the Land Run of 1889. The Field of Empty Chairs at the Oklahoma City National Memorial and Museum honors the 168 people killed in the bombing of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building on April 19, 1995.

sites that provide sports, recreation, entertainment, cultural and convention facilities were the result of Metropolitan Area Projects (MAPS), a temporary one-cent sales tax approved by city voters in 1993. By the time the tax expired in 1999, it had generated \$363 million in tax revenue and interest. Now locals and tourists alike can enjoy the results of this forward-thinking capital improvement program.

At the south end of the Bricktown Canal, the Centennial Land Run Monument pays tribute to the settlers competing for unassigned land in Oklahoma Territory in the Land Run of 1889. At noon on April 22, 1889, more than 50,000 people rushed off to claim their piece of 2 million acres. The Homestead Act of 1862 allowed settlers to claim up to 160 acres, provided they would live on

and improve the land. By the end of the day, some 10,000 homesteaders had laid claim to land in the area now known as Oklahoma City. Sculptor Paul Moore created one of the world's largest bronze sculptures, and when completed, will showcase 45 larger-than-life figures of Land Run participants. The first pieces, a buckboard [four-wheeled wagon] and two draft horses, were placed in 2003. It spans a distance of 365 feet in length and 36 feet in width. Sculptures include a soldier firing a cannon to start the run, 24 horses and riders, various types of wagons, a dog chasing a wagon and a rabbit watching from the sidelines. After getting a glimpse of the monument from the water taxi, we stopped by later in the day to get a closer look. We think Moore did an amazing job of capturing the determination and urgency in the faces of his subjects.

Downtown is home to two must-see attractions: the Oklahoma City National Memorial and Museum and the Oklahoma City Museum of Art. The Memorial Museum remembers "those who were killed, those who survived and those changed forever" in the April 19, 1995, bombing of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building. We took a chronological self-guided tour that starts with events of an ordinary business day and a recording of a meeting beginning at 9 a.m. and



### Getting There

Oklahoma City is located on the Interstate 35 corridor, which travels south into Texas and Mexico and north toward Kansas.

Lake Hefner is a popular destination for boaters, hikers and bikers.



The American Cowboy Gallery at the National Cowboy & Western Heritage Museum explores the origins and evolution of the ranching industry in America.

ending two minutes later when the bomb exploded, the horror and chaos that followed, and the people who ran — not away from the building in fear — but toward it to help. The Outdoor Symbolic Memorial covers the ground where the Murrah building once stood. The Field of Empty Chairs with a bronze and stone chair for each of the 168 people killed, sits beside the Reflecting Pool. The chairs that brought me to tears were the 19 smaller ones representing the children. The Survivor Wall lists the names of more than 600 people who survived the homegrown terrorist attack. The Survivor Tree, an American elm, withstood the attack and is now a living symbol of resilience. We spent time under the tree appreciating how this community banded together with a spirit of generosity that became known as the “Oklahoma Standard.” On the 20th anniversary of the bombing, Oklahomans were asked to recommit



to the Oklahoma Standard with acts of service, honor and kindness.

The Oklahoma City Museum of Art has one of the most comprehensive collections in the world of Dale Chihuly’s glass. A 55-foot tower consisting of 2,400 handblown parts fills the museum’s three-story atrium at the main entrance. Other collections include American and European art spanning five centuries, photography by 20th-century American photographers, and postwar and contemporary

paintings and sculptures. They also host traveling exhibits. We saw Warhol: The Athletes, a series of 10 portraits of famous athletes.

Since we were staying at Twin Fountains RV Resort (866-693-1469, [www.twinfountainsrvpark.com](http://www.twinfountainsrvpark.com)) in the Adventure District, we spent two days exploring nearby attractions including two museums, the zoo and a restaurant with delicious food.

I give the National Cowboy & Western Heritage Museum a five-star



Visitors can learn more about Oklahoma City by taking a tour of Bricktown in a water taxi.





The Oklahoma City Museum of Art has one of the most comprehensive collections in the world of Dale Chihuly's glass. Chihuly's 55-foot tower, consisting of 2,400 handblown parts, fills the Oklahoma City Museum of Art's three-story atrium at the main entrance.

review for the beautiful and touching way it tells the stories of American cowboys, Native Americans and the pioneers who settled the West. The museum's signature artwork, James Earle Fraser's 18-foot-tall sculpture of an exhausted Native American on horseback, *The End of the Trail*, sits in the entry hall. The museum has a collection of more than 28,000 Western and Native American art and artifacts, ranging from paintings and sculptures to saddles, barbed wire and Native American beadwork. Themed galleries include *Prosperity Junction*, a replica of a frontier cattle town; *Western Performers*, which explores the West through movies and books; and the *American Rodeo*, set in a lifelike arena with bucking chutes. Outdoor sculptures complement the trees, flowers and ponds on the beautifully landscaped, 18-acre site.

A woman I'd met a few days earlier told me her favorite restaurant, Gabriella's Italian Grill and Pizzeria, was next to the cowboy museum. She described the food in such a way we simply had to check it out for ourselves. Chef Vicki has a passion for real homemade Italian food. I ordered gluten-free chicken piccata, which was served over roasted Brussels sprouts. It was the best restaurant meal I've had all year. If



I ever make it back to Oklahoma City, I know what I'm having for dinner.

The Oklahoma City Zoological Park and Botanical Garden is one of only 14 zoos in the U.S. that is a fully accredited member of the Association of Zoos and Aquariums and the American Alliance of Museums as both a living museum and a botanical garden. Home to 1,900 animals, the entire zoo is also a botanical garden, with a large collection of hardy bamboo, a 21,000-square-foot Butterfly Garden and more than 4,000 native plants in the Oklahoma Trails exhibit. The 11 distinct life zones unique to Oklahoma are replicated in this exhibit, with more than 100 animal species native to the state and more than 800 individual animals. From the suspended boardwalk, I enjoyed watching the playful interaction between two grizzly bears cooling off

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MORE THAN OK

in the water. In the Elephant Habitat, we saw these magnificent animals blowing dirt on themselves to protect their skin from the hot sun and insects. The colorful flamingos drew a large crowd of visitors. In the Children's Zoo, two young girls hand-fed nectar to the brilliantly colored lorikeets.

While we could have spent most of the day enjoying the zoo, we left enough time to check out the attraction next door, the Science Museum Oklahoma. The museum's mission is to "enrich people's lives by revealing the wonder and relevance of science." They do this in a way that appeals to both children and adults. With patient coaching from the attendant, Jim and I both mastered driving a Segway, a two-wheeled, self-balancing, battery-powered electric vehicle. We thought about how much our grandchildren would have enjoyed the traveling exhibit, Grossology: The (Impolite) Science of the Human Body, which explains "why the human body produces mushy, oozy, crusty, scaly and stinky gunk." In the Eye on the Sky weather exhibit we watched a tornado form that, fortunately, was the only one we saw on our entire trip.

Our last night in Oklahoma City was spent at Topgolf (405-607-7154, [www.topgolf.com/us](http://www.topgolf.com/us)), a premier golf entertainment complex that had just opened. Imagine a three-story driving range, a 240-yard outfield with dart-boardlike targets in the ground, and microchipped balls that score points based on distance and accuracy. Each hitting bay accommodates up to six players, either at a table or a comfortable sofa. Our "bay host" — also known as a waiter — took our orders and brought tasty food and drinks. Topgolf uses the freshest ingredients, and most of the food is made daily from scratch. The social atmosphere makes Topgolf appealing to people who love the game as well as people who've never swung a club.

Our trip to Oklahoma City was memorable, and not just for the top-notch attractions. The people we met exemplified the Oklahoma Standard with their acts of service, honor and kindness. **M**

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# Sporty Size, Big Luxury

Longtime factory-direct builder Coach House pulls out all the stops with its Platinum II 241XL touring motorhome designed for two **By Bob Livingston**

**W**e've all seen commercials depicting how the rich and famous live on TV, the internet and in magazines. It's fun to see a fat cat in a Ferrari, but in reality most of us will never experience that level of opulence. So why the infatuation with luxury that's out of reach? People like to dream big, and when it comes to motorhomes, the focus on the luxury class is usually bus-style conversions or highline motorhomes built from the ground up. Even if price is no object, not everyone wants to tool around in a 45-foot coach just to attain top status. Coach House, a premium builder that sells only factory direct from its Nokomis, Florida, facility, has a different approach when it comes to manufacturing luxury motorhomes, and it does so in a compact package that's easy to handle, attainable and missing none of the amenities discriminating owners crave. That shiny Mercedes-Benz emblem standing point on the Sprinter chassis grille is the first indication that this

motorhome is at the higher end of the market, and when you step inside, the attention to details jumps out at you like a clown in a jack-in-the-box toy.

The Platinum II 241XL DT tested here is the company's highest-level motorhome built on the Mercedes-Benz chassis and gets its designation based on a proprietary Premier body paint and slideout addition. The floorplan is one of many and in this model, a dinette and twin beds are the main focal points. Complementing the sleeping and dining arrangements are a nice-size rear bath and a galley that's outfitted for a decent amount of prep work and cooking. While we're not going to go out on a limb and label this motorhome as "diminutive," it is definitely compact at just shy of 26 feet long, but it's long on high-quality features commonly found in its highline brethren.

Obviously, stepping up to the model with the slideout makes a huge difference in livability, and in this case there's

**ABOVE:** Tooling around Tampa, Florida, and touring are easily accomplished due to the compact size and easy handling of the Coach House.





**BELOW:** Dinette that seats two comfortably occupies the single slideout. The large window adds to the daytime ambiance. Twin beds have foam mattresses that provide good support. Overhead cabinetry, wardrobes and drawers below hold plenty of supplies and clothing. The bathroom is bigger than expected and is well-equipped with a porcelain toilet and quality fixtures.



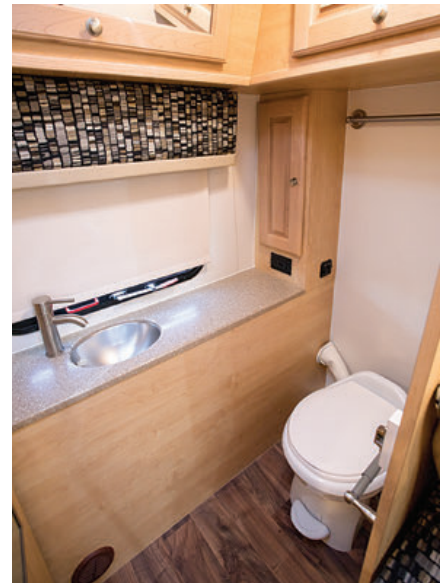
no compromise in handling and/or maneuverability. There's no difference in exterior dimensions between the non-slideout 240 version and the 241XL test motorhome; just the footprint is larger when at an RV site.

Clearly, this motorhome is designed for two people who can move about without being aisle hogs. The rear twin beds are stationary, a dinette in the slideout originating from behind the cockpit on the roadside is most comfortable for two and, of course, there are two seats in the driver's compartment. In this plan, the bathroom spans the rear and offers surprising roominess, albeit only for one at a time, which is customary and expected. And there is no way to miss the effort that has gone into building this motorhome and the array of quality components that make it worthy of a higher-end sticker price.

From the moment you enter the motorhome, the handsome, and not overstated, décor makes a statement



that designers wanted to offer a rig that makes a great place to hang out in camp but also serves as a super comfortable touring vehicle. The nimble stature makes it practical for shopping-center and tourist excursions, but the nicely painted body and modern, smooth lines also make it at home in any RV park, including upscale resorts. We didn't tow a dinghy vehicle during the test period and found tooling around city streets



and congested highways perfectly acceptable. A hitch receiver does make it possible to tow a vehicle, within the limitations of the hardware and gross combination weight rating (GCWR).

The versatility of a touring vehicle has some livability limitations, most of which have been circumvented in the Coach House by not overfurnishing the interior. Occupying about half the interior real estate is the upfront galley



## COACH HOUSE PLATINUM II 241XL

and opposing dinette. Both work well, but there is an element of acclimation needed to get into a routine. For one, it will take a few whacks on the head to figure out the low points created by overhead cabinetry, the slideout framing and the doorway. Once we made the concerted effort to prevent the head clunking, moving about went smoothly and without incident. Nevertheless, care must be taken when sliding into the dinette and leaving through the main door.

Two people will have no problem hanging out on the dinette seats, and the table is large enough for mealtimes and for working on a computer, etc. When the cockpit seats are turned around, a smallish conversation area is formed, making it possible to entertain guests, and the fold-down, forward-mounted smart TV is clearly visible from the rear dinette seat; others will need to watch from the rear twin beds or stretch their necks for viewing. Cabinets above the table and below the seats are large enough to handle a good portion of kitchen supplies and foodstuffs, and the adjacent window occupies virtually the entire length of the slideout. An upholstered valance surrounds the MCD two-piece shades, also used throughout the motorhome.

Across the way, meals that are prepared at the galley will be less elaborate, but the essential appliances and cabinetry are provided. There are covers for the two-burner cooktop and compact sink and the large counter extension can be flipped up to provide

more workspace. Open cubbyholes and drawers help control items that would otherwise clutter up the galley counter, especially one of this size. Heavy-duty cabinet hardware and soft-closing drawers are nice added touches that keep one from longing for a bigger rig. Adjacent is an extra-large (for the size motorhome) refrigerator. For on-the-road snacks and quick meals, the galley is perfect.

As mentioned earlier, entering and exiting the Coach House takes some finesse because of the limited height of the doorway. After a few head clunks, we managed to remember to duck; shorter people will have an easier learning curve. On the immediate right (behind the co-pilot's seat) is a column-style cabinet structure that is control central. Here you'll find the monitor panel for the holding tanks, the switch for the LP-gas/electric hot-water tank, the remote for the awning, switches for lighting and the battery cutoff control. There are also controls for the optional Equalizer Systems Stabi-Lite chassis stabilizers designed specifically for Class B and C motorhomes. It's not a leveling system but is configured to take some of the rocking out of the chassis when parked with the slide extended. The system is made up of two jacks in the rear that are controlled by a one-touch switch. It adds \$1,170 to the sticker price and is a worthwhile investment, as long as the user doesn't expect too much.

Occupants preferring twin beds will love this floorplan. The memory-foam mattresses are comfortable

### WHAT'S HOT

High-quality appliances, materials and fixtures; fiberglass body; exterior storage; open floorplan

### WHAT'S NOT

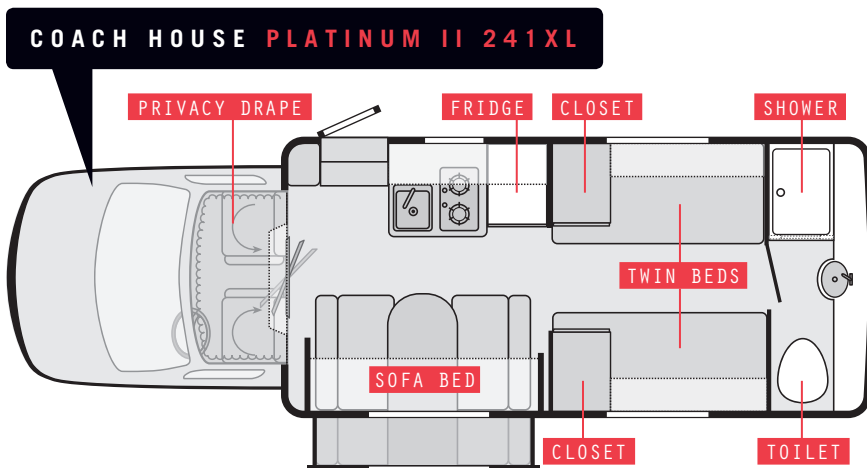
Limited cargo carrying capacity, showerhead hose, low headroom in places



and long enough for all but 6-footers. While the mattresses measure 34 by 75 inches, after allowing for a little pillow room, the effective bed size shrinks somewhat. Tucking in a comforter takes some planning, and needs to be managed during the night's sleep, but making the bed is relatively easy. Once in bed, effective LED lighting makes reading pleasant, and for those who want to watch the tube, an optional 23-inch smart TV is mounted at the foot of the streetside bed. Realistically, though, the front TV should do the job.

Above the beds are deep cabinets arranged symmetrically with additional storage capability under the streetside bed structure. Wardrobe closets at the foot of each bed will hold a good selection of clothing. Under the curbside bed are controls for the inverter and other electronic componentry. Large windows keep the area light and cheery, again covered by MCD shades, and two strategically placed Fan-Tastic Vent fans with rain sensors handle ventilation admirably.

The very rear of the motorhome is relegated to bathroom duties. On the left is a bigger-than-expected shower stall with a shelf that works great for holding body wash, shampoo and other necessities. Everyone will appreciate the utility of the shelf, but depending on how the motorhome is leveled, water may collect on the counter and need to be squeegeed off. And while the showerhead is pretty decent, the hose is way too short. When the showerhead





# Specifications

## Chassis

Model	Mercedes-Benz Sprinter 3500
Engine	3.0L V-6
SAE Hp	188 @ 3,800 rpm
Torque	325 lb-ft @ 1,400-2,400 rpm
Transmission	5-speed automatic
Axle Ratio	3.92:1
Front Tires	LT 225/85R16
Rear Tires	LT 225/85R16
Wheelbase	170"
Brakes	Disc
Suspension	Traverse leaf springs with struts/ leaf springs
Fuel Capacity	26.4 gal
Fuel Economy	18.3 mpg
Warranty	3 years, 36,000 miles; 5 years, 100,000-mile powertrain

## Coach

Exterior Length	25' 9"
Exterior Width	8' 0"
Exterior Height	10' 8" with A/C
Interior Width	7' 4"
Interior Height	6' 3.5"
Construction	1-piece fiberglass body, carbon-fiber reinforcements
Freshwater Capacity	26.4 gal
Black-Water Capacity	25 gal
Gray-Water Capacity	28 gal
Water-Heater Capacity	6 gal
LP-Gas Capacity	15 gal
Air Conditioner	15,000 Btu w/heat pump
Furnace	35,000 Btu
Refrigerator	6 cubic-foot
Inverter/Charger	1,000 watts/45 amps
Battery	(1) 12-volt chassis, (2) 6-volt house
AC Generator	3.6 kW LP-gas
MSRP	\$166,947
MSRP as tested	\$178,812
Warranty	3 years, 36,000 miles

## Wet Weight

(Water & heater, fuel, LP-gas tanks full; no supplies or passengers)

Front Axle	3,780 lbs
Rear Axle	6,880 lbs
Total	10,660 lbs

## Chassis Ratings

GAWR, F/R	4,410/7,720 lbs
GVWR/GCWR	11,030/15,250 lbs
ROCCC	370 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)



The optional 23-inch smart TV is available for those who prefer not to view the main TV, and is mounted on a swing-down bracket for comfortable viewing from the bed area.

is mounted on the hook, the hose gets in the way to move about freely. This, of course, is a very easy fix.

Physical dimensions predicate sink size, and the oval stainless-steel basin is just large enough to wash hands and brush teeth. As in the galley sink, the faucet is first-rate and not typical RV issue. Counterspace is expectedly small, but again, it gets the job done once an overall mindset is established. Cabinets above the sink are large enough for most of the essentials.

Tucked into the space created by the cabinet structure and wall of the bathroom (on the left side) is the porcelain toilet. Most people will be satisfied with this throne, but care must be taken to prevent head-banging when reaching down to flip up the toilet seat because of the protruding overhead cabinet. Also, the toilet-tissue holder should be relocated to a different wall as it restricts movement.

In true Coach House fashion, the door to the bathroom is solid and nice-looking. It can be latched open to keep from flinging about when on the road, but when in this position, it prevents access to the shower, but that's no big deal. Most people will like the fact that this bathroom is bigger than expected for the size of the motorhome.

To reiterate, all the fixtures, hardware, woodwork and décor

materials are first-rate. Everything is solid, including the Corian countertops and dining table. As a matter of fact, the dining table is almost too heavy to move, but that means it feels solid, which makes using it enjoyable. Along with these hefty items and other solid materials comes weight, and that's where Coach House, or the customer, will have to make some adjustments. Once the water, LP-gas and diesel are added to the full marks, there's only 370 pounds of payload left, most of which will be eaten up by the passengers, before loading with supplies. Some of that can be mitigated by running with only a few gallons in the water tank, but the motorhome will definitely need to be put on a diet.

While the components that make up the motorhome contribute to the weight, the construction process is responsible for most of the heavy stature. Mated to the Sprinter chassis is a one-piece hand-laid fiberglass body reinforced with carbon fiber, a material that is lightweight, incredibly strong and durable. The proprietary shell is made to offer superior longevity and keep water and rattles out — and is patented. Everything about this motorhome exudes strength and good looks, especially after being treated to full-body paint.

Surprisingly, the short length and



## COACH HOUSE PLATINUM II 241XL

The galley is small, but well-equipped with a high-quality convection microwave, a single-basin stainless sink and a two-burner cooktop. Covers for the sink and cooktop expand usable space, as do the built-in cubbyholes above the countertop.

aerodynamic body allow for a generous assortment of exterior compartments. Good-size lockers are built on the right side, and a huge compartment occupies most of the rear. The rear compartment will likely be occupied by many of the larger items needed in an RV park; available space on the left side is filled by the LP-gas tank and generator. There's also a door that leads to the small utility bay. Gracing the understated, and appreciated, graphics on the exterior is an armless electric patio awning and deep-tinted windows. A low-profile air conditioner, chrome wheel covers and cab steps round out the exterior accouterments.

Every motorhome that rolls off the assembly line receives the kind of attention only possible by a family-



owned business like Coach House. The company's latest lineup of high-end, compact motorhomes evolved beautifully from the first van conversion that rolled out of its Florida manufacturing plant in 1985. Today's Coach House models are a far cry from the original van conversions, a testament to the

family's continued adherence to quality and build-it-right mantra. Personalized factory tours can be arranged, and a Buy-n-Fly program is offered to facilitate the procurement process. **M**

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# High Marks

Eight Class B motorhomes that earn an A for livability

**C**lass B motorhomes have always been revered for their ease of driving, fuel economy and minimal learning curve to operate. What they haven't necessarily been known for is their livability, often requiring a number of concessions from the owners, with floorplans ranging from minimalist galleys to cramped (if any) bathrooms to awkward, uncomfortable sleeping arrangements. Well, the times they are a-changing. A continuing trend in the motorhome market has seen manufacturers focus on improving the amenities in the ever-popular Class B segment to make them more than simple van conversions with fold-down beds and a kitchen sink. And, while the space limitations of a traditional van chassis (no cutaways) will always dictate some compromises in space, luxury add-ons and bells and whistles, the gap between small Class C's and Class B's continues to close. Patio-type doors at

the rear and side entry help open up the living space, and innovative bed-slide systems help to lend a more inviting "living-room" feeling during the day. And though overall storage will continue to be ruled by the vehicle's gross vehicle weight rating (GVWR), manufacturers are finding additional ways to utilize every nook and cranny within the floorplan to enable owners to take along the comforts of home. Add in enhanced entertainment systems, instant hot water, solar panels and LED lighting, and you can see why the current Class B trend is here to stay. No longer for soccer moms and weekend warriors, these motorhomes offer real livability for real people — be it a couple or a small family that doesn't mind the close quarters. Following are some of the more livable floorplans we've found.

## Airstream Interstate

The Airstream Interstate has been the top-selling Class B diesel motorhome for five years, outfitted with what Airstream claims is more than 50 best-in-class features. The Interstate is available in the Grand Tour (which we tested in the June 2016 issue) and the Lounge configurations, in addition to a slick Tommy Bahama edition with a beachgoing interior theme. The Lounge EXT shown here focuses, naturally, on comfortable Ultraleather seating for up to nine people, creating a luxury lounge area worthy of most upscale celebrations. A removable table is handy for the front four seats (including the swivel captain's chairs), while the galley features a microwave, two-burner stove, sink and flip-up shelf for a bit more prep space. The mid-plan wet bath helps heed the call of nature, while two LED TVs provide the entertainment in the lounge area. Other niceties on the Interstate include an optional air suspension, sideview cameras, power roller shades and front and rear parking sensors. The rear power lounge folds down to an impressive 70-by-82-inch bed. A standard rear hidden storage compartment aids with packing.

Chassis	Mercedes-Benz Sprinter 3500 Extended	Wheelbase	170"
Engine	3.0L V-6 turbodiesel	Freshwater Cap	32 gal
Fuel Cap	24.5 gal	Black-/Gray-Water Cap	13 gal/ 27 gal
GVWR	11,030 lb	LP-Gas Cap	14.55 gal
Exterior Length	24' 1"	Base MSRP	\$156,611
Exterior Width	6' 7.7"	<b>Airstream Inc.</b>	
Exterior Height with A/C	9' 8"	<b>877-596-6111, www.airstream.com</b>	







toilet and stand-up shower, while the galley offers a good amount of counterspace for meal prep, in addition to a microwave, double-door refrigerator, sink and flush-mount stove. Options to further up the ante include a Freedom Solar Package, which includes three 100-watt solar panels, a charge controller and four 6-volt AGM batteries.

## Avion Azur

Avion Vans, a division of The RV Factory, offers a factory-direct buying process that enables owners to get exactly the amenities they'd like. And, in order to take advantage of the available space on the 24ELX's floorplan, Avion has outfitted the motorhome with some cool features that would be at home in the next Transformers movie. For instance, the rear lounge folds into a twin bed, or, you can remove the pedestal-type

table and combine the rear sofa with the surrounding seats to make a large king-size bed, for a great place to watch the LED flat-screen in the rear of the motorhome. Up front, the driver's seat can be swiveled to face a small table, which is equipped with extensions on two sides to help it morph into a nifty work area. Buyers can also opt to replace one of the three swivel seats up front with an entertainment center that can be viewed from outside. The wet bath contains a

Chassis	Mercedes-Benz Sprinter 3500 Extended
Engine	3.0L V-6 turbodiesel
Fuel Cap	26.4 gal
GVWR	11,030 lbs
Exterior Length	24' 1"
Exterior Width	6' 4"
Exterior Height with A/C	9' 11"
Wheelbase	170"
Freshwater Cap	30 gal
Black-/Gray-Water Cap	30 gal
LP-Gas Cap	5 gal
Base MSRP	\$94,995

**Avion Vans, a division of The RV Factory**  
**844-284-6678, [www.avionvans.com](http://www.avionvans.com)**



Photos courtesy of the manufacturers





## Coach House Arriva

The Arriva marks the re-entry of factory-direct Coach House RV into the Class B market. The Arriva V-24 TB offers a solid privacy door to close off the living area from the lavatory, the latter of which contains a porcelain toilet, separate shower, sink and medicine cabinet. Adjacent to the rear bath, two twin beds facing each other across the aisle can be extended for a wider twin on either side or combined into one king-size bed. The galley features Corian countertops, a two-burner stove, stainless-steel sink, a spacious 6-cubic-foot three-way refrigerator, a microwave convection oven and a pullout pantry cabinet. Up front, the driver's and passenger's seats both swivel to face a fold-down table. When mealtime is over, the tabletop can be used for a desk or folded up out of the way. Two HDTVs are standard, with one facing the beds, and another that can be positioned to enjoy TV under the stars outside. A retractable screen slides across the main sliding and rear doors, creating an open, airy feeling while keeping the critters out.

Chassis	Mercedes-Benz Sprinter 3500 Extended
Engine	3.0L V-6 turbodiesel
Fuel Cap	26.4 gal
GVWR	11,030 lbs
Exterior Length	24'
Exterior Width	6' 7"
Exterior Height with A/C	9' 8"
Wheelbase	170"
Freshwater Cap	31 gal
Black-/Gray-Water Cap	13 gal/ 20 gal
LP-Gas Cap	12 gal
Base MSRP	\$136,000

**Coach House RV**  
800-235-0984, [www.coachhouserv.com](http://www.coachhouserv.com)



## Coachmen Galleria

Coachmen's Galleria 24T offers a sizable power rear sofa plus three captain's chairs to ensure maximum livability. A removable table in the rear services the powered sofa and an additional seat, all positioned to view the 24-inch TV with smart-enabled Blu-ray player. The impressive galley offers a large refrigerator, a microwave convection oven, induction cooktop and flush-mount sink. The modern wet bath is equipped with chrome fixtures, a liquid-soap dispenser and a sealed toilet-paper dispenser to keep the tissue dry while showering. The Galleria also includes a Truma Combi furnace/water-heater system, Onan generator and handcrafted Amish maple cabinetry with radius cabinet doors, soft-close doors/drawers and custom trim. A 12-volt DC macerator waste-disposal system makes dumping the holding tanks easier than ever. An optional side and a standard rear screen help keep the interior cool and breezy, while a Carefree power awning with integrated LED lighting extends the living space into the campsite. A standard 100-watt solar panel helps keep the batteries charged. The Galleria also includes helpful features such as blind-spot monitoring, lane assist and collision avoidance.



Chassis	Mercedes-Benz 3500 Extended
Engine	3.0L V-6 turbodiesel
Fuel Cap	24.5 gal
GVWR	11,030 lbs
Exterior Length	24' 3"
Exterior Width	6' 11"
Exterior Height with A/C	9' 9"
Wheelbase	170"
Freshwater Cap	30 gal
Black-/Gray-Water Cap	12 gal / 22 gal
LP-Gas Cap	10 gal
Base MSRP	\$127,305

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## Hymer Sonne

At less than 18 feet in length, the Hymer Sonne makes the most of its diminutive size by utilizing a bright and spacious open-concept layout to allow for maximum flexibility. The Sonne features a unique expanded multifunctional kitchen galley offering extra counterspace, a single-basin sink, 3.1-cubic-foot refrigerator and induction cooktop, all adjacent to an innovative hideaway stand-up shower that doubles as storage or a workstation when not in use. Owners will also appreciate the spacious separate bathroom, fixed double bed (with storage below), sliding screen door and power awning for added convenience. The windows throughout the interior allow in enough light so owners don't feel too cramped. The captain's chairs up front can even be swiveled to create an additional sleeping position. An Alde LP-gas heating system helps keep occupants comfortable during inclement weather.

Chassis	RAM ProMaster 1500
Engine	3.6L V-6
Fuel Cap	24 gal
GVWR	8,550 lbs
Exterior Length	17' 9"
Exterior Width (excluding mirrors)	6' 11"
Exterior Height with A/C	9' 5"
Wheelbase	118"
Freshwater Cap	17 gal
Black-/Gray-Water Cap	13 gal combined
LP-Gas Cap	5.9 gal
Base MSRP	\$87,750

**Erwin Hymer Group**  
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## Pleasure-Way Industries

Pleasure-Way prides itself on top-quality construction, and the Lexor TS is a good example of the manufacturer's attention to detail. Outside, buyers can opt for fully painted exterior moldings to complement the stylish fiberglass running boards. A power lateral-arm awning comes standard, as do 100 amp-hour lithium house batteries and a 2.8-kW Onan generator.

Inside, the Lexor is outfitted with an expansive wet bath, a surprising amount of storage and a well-equipped galley that includes a flush-mount two-burner range, sink, microwave convection oven and 5-cubic-foot refrigerator. Storage below the sink is made more efficient by the inclusion of utility drawers that have been shaped to fit around the plumbing. Flush-mounted LEDs in the ceiling are standard, as is the multiplex wiring allowing you to control the lights,

awning, batteries, etc., at the push of a button. Occupants can enjoy seating for up to seven, including an electric sofa at the rear near the swing-out 24-inch LED TV and Blu-ray player. The available side and rear screens are a great addition to let in the fresh air while keeping insects at bay. When the sun goes down, the sofa converts to a comfy queen-size bed.

Chassis	RAM ProMaster 3500 Extended
Engine	3.6L V-6
Fuel Cap	24 gal
GVWR	9,350 lbs
Exterior Length	20' 11"
Exterior Width (with side mirrors extended)	8' 2.5"
Exterior Height with A/C	9' 3.5"
Wheelbase	159"
Freshwater Cap	29 gal
Black-/Gray-Water Cap	12 gal/ 20 gal
LP-Gas Cap	4.7 gal
Base MSRP	\$106,470

**Pleasure-Way Industries**  
800-364-0189, [www.pleasureway.com](http://www.pleasureway.com)





## Roadtrek Simplicity

The Simplicity SRT features big living in a package of less than 20 feet in length. A removable table near the front swivel captain's seats allows owners to enjoy a card game or a nice meal, freshly prepared in the galley with two-burner LP-gas stove, microwave, 5-cubic-foot refrigerator and sink. Storage space in the kitchen includes a pullout pantry and a deep pot/pan drawer. There's also a flip-up counter extension with a charging station for your electronics. Next to the galley, a wet bathroom with stand-up shower and corner sink take care of grooming duties. The rear fixed queen bed sleeps two and offers storage below, while an overnight visitor can slumber up front once the chairs have been converted into a sleeping area. All can enjoy the entertainment provided by the optional 24-inch LED TV in the rear, or go outside for alfresco dining beneath the standard patio awning.



Chassis	RAM ProMaster 2500
Engine	3.6L V-6
Fuel Cap	24 gal
GVWR	8,900 lbs
Exterior Length	19' 7"
Exterior Width (excluding mirrors)	6' 11"
Exterior Height with A/C	9' 5"
Wheelbase	159"
Freshwater Cap	37 gal
Black-/Gray-Water Cap	9.6 gal/ 22.8 gal
LP-Gas Cap	7 gal
Base MSRP	\$70,793

**Roadtrek Motorhomes Inc.**  
888-762-3873, [www.roadtrek.com](http://www.roadtrek.com)



## Winnebago Travato

The Travato offers two floorplans (59G and 59K) that offer exceptional flexibility and high-end features. Buyers can choose a large corner bed (59G) or go with a more versatile Flex Bed System that can function as a large double bed or two separate twin beds (59K, shown here). By day, the twin beds convert to comfortable bench seating

with a center dining table for entertaining up to six people. The comfortable cab seats swivel to become lounge chairs, incorporating pullout tables for quick meals in the 59K. There's also a 24-inch LED TV with AM/FM/CD stereo. The Travato features Corian countertops, Ultraleather furniture and recessed LED lighting with dimmable settings. The efficient Truma Combi ECO Plus heating system keeps the interior pleasant, while the galley offers all the essentials, including a two-burner range, microwave convection oven, stainless-steel sink with glass cover and even a handy sliding bamboo cutting board. The

59K also includes a dishpan, drainpan and silverware rack, plus cold-water filtration in the galley.

Chassis	RAM ProMaster 3500 Extended
Engine	3.6L V-6
Fuel Cap	24 gal
GVWR	9,350 lbs
Exterior Length	21'
Exterior Width	6' 9"
Exterior Height with A/C	9' 4"
Wheelbase	159"
Freshwater Cap	23 gal
Black-/Gray-Water Cap	13 gal/ 13 gal
LP-Gas Cap	6 gal
Base MSRP	\$90,910

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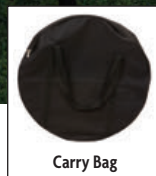
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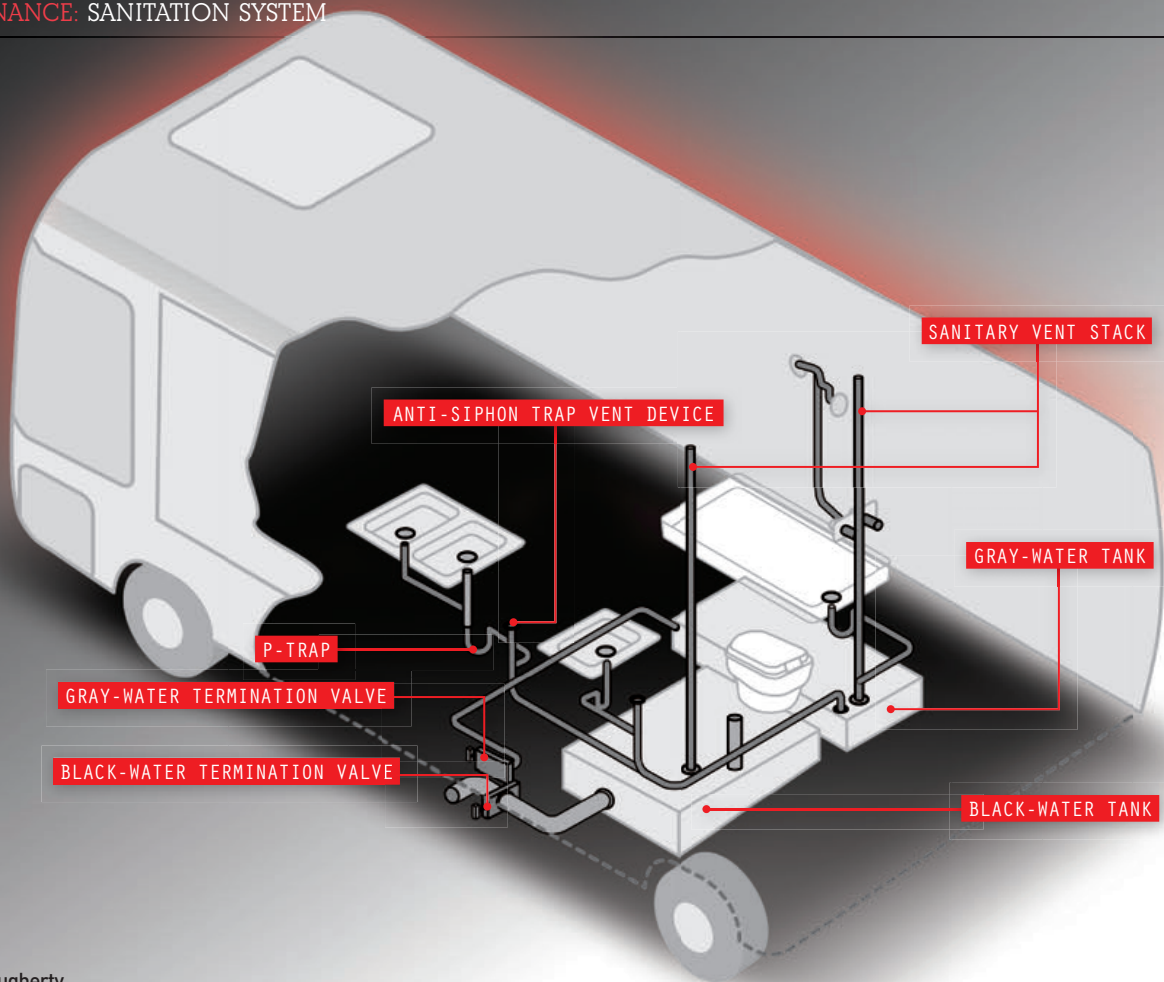


Illustration: Bill Tipton

By Chris Dougherty

# SANITATION SOLUTIONS

The right techniques and materials can make necessary chores cleaner and easier

**T**raveling in a motorhome gives us the freedom to see the world from the comfort of our living rooms. We enjoy a fully self-contained environment wherever we happen to be, but as anyone who has been an RVer for a while will tell you, probably the most unpleasant part of the experience (yet arguably one of the most important) is dealing with the sanitation system. Proper use and care will help ensure that your travels will be footloose and fancy-free. On the flip side, without the right equipment and proper knowledge of how to use the system, you can be in for very unpleasant surprises.

For the most part, motorhome sanitation systems are gravity-powered. They usually consist of two separate arrangements: the gray-water system, which collects wastewater from sinks, showers and clothes washers; and the black-water system, which handles body waste from the toilet(s). It's also possible that in some RVs, parts of these systems can be combined, like the sink and toilet in a second bathroom. Also in some cases, macerators, rather than gravity, can be used for toilets and dumping the holding tanks.

Motorhome sanitation systems share a few similari-



ties with the systems in stationary homes. These include the piping, and the requirement for the pipes to have a slope for drainage, ventilation and certain fixtures. Otherwise, they're quite different. The biggest difference is that the gray and black water in an RV are held in separate tanks, instead of being discharged into a sewer system via a common pipe.

The gray-water system consists of sinks and showers, a 1½-inch pipe, ventilation, a dedicated holding tank and a termination valve for dumping. Ventilation is the most complex part, and is rather important to understand. For the water to drain from a fixture or the holding tank, ventilation (usually through the roof) is needed to prevent a vacuum.

In some RVs, the vent stack is too far away to reach. Instead of running an additional pipe through the roof, a vent check is installed, usually right under the fixture. A vent check, called an anti-siphon trap vent device (ASTVD), is a combination of a vent and a check valve. It is installed on the 1½-inch pipe under the fixture and has a small rubber flapper inside that opens to draw air into the drain system to prevent a vacuum, or chugging, at the sink or drain. This flapper reseals itself when no vacuum is present to prevent odor or gray-water overflow from entering the motorhome.

The drain piping has a P-trap, just like at home, or a new waterless, self-sealing type of P-trap called a HepvO. By code, the drain plumbing must maintain a minimum slope to the tank



It's best to have a clear 45-degree elbow connector at the termination valve to see what is coming out of the tank, and to ensure the tank is clean. Use gloves and eye protection when flushing tanks.

or main drain of ¼ inch per foot for proper drainage.

The black-water system consists of the toilet(s), 3-inch piping to a holding tank and a termination valve for dumping. Often, there will be a built-in black-water flushing system with a separate hose connection to assist with cleaning solids from the tank. Care must be taken when using the black flush to prevent overfilling the black tank with too much water by accident, causing the RV to fill with effluent, which often results in serious damage or a total loss.

RV termination valves, historically known as full-way valves, use a knife gate that slides in a plastic housing with a rubber grommet or seal. These valves are typically 1½ inches or 3 inches in diameter, and there's usually at least one of each.

Termination valves are fairly simple devices. Held in place by four stainless-steel bolts that compress

the valve between two flanges, the valves are easy to remove and service in the event they become sticky or leak. Kits are available with replacement seals and bolts. Simply remove the valves after the tanks have been emptied and flushed, remove the seals and thoroughly clean the valve. If you prefer, you can replace the entire valve. Occasionally, the valves are buried under the motorhome and controlled by a remote cable, which requires removing basement panels for service.

Once clean, the valves can be treated with a waterproof valve lubricant such as Dow Corning Molykote 111, after which you should exercise the valve. Make sure the valve is in good shape and not deformed or missing any chunks. If it is defective, replace the valve. Make sure the new seals are installed correctly. A helper can make prying apart the pipe flanges and removing

A typical termination-valve assembly (left) has a 3-inch-diameter black-water hub with a black handle and a 1½-inch-diameter gray-water hub with a gray handle. If the termination valve sticks or leaks, it may need to be serviced. Here, a valve is disassembled (right). The two flanges will be glued to the pipe on the RV, and the gaskets seated. The valve can be cleaned and then lubricated with valve grease, such as Dow Corning Molykote 111. Once the valve is working well, the new gaskets are installed on the flanges. The pipes are manually pried apart for the valve to slide in between (a helper makes this easier), and the four bolts are installed.



and reinserting the valve easier. Once the valve is seated, reinstall the bolts, test it, and you're done. Don't over-tighten the bolts; snug plus a quarter turn is fine. Make sure the valve operates freely and smoothly.

## Using the System

There are plenty of opinions on how to use your RV's waste-water system and insufficient space here to debunk all the myths. Instead, here are the procedures specified by the professionals. The gray-water system is pretty simple and will seldom cause problems. You can occasionally use a gray-water deodorizer, if you feel the need. Enzymatic cleaners are available to help keep soap scum and grease from building up inside the tank with long-term extreme usage. The enzyme-based cleaners work best in new tanks or those that have been thoroughly cleaned and flushed. The enzyme ingredients are harmed or killed by residual formaldehyde left over from traditional holding-tank deodorants.

When it comes to the black-water system, many problems can be prevented by remembering this one phrase: Water is your friend. Take it from someone who has had to dig out and flush black-water holding tanks that were full of solids and no water. Leaving the black-tank termination valves open while at an RV park



Keep valves closed except to dump. When dumping, open the black valve first and flush the tank, then close that valve and dump the gray tank, which flushes solids out of the sewer hose.

will allow the solids to collect in the bottom of the tank and eventually fill and block the flow of contents in the tank.

Keep the termination valves closed while in camp, monitor tank levels and dump as needed. This includes the gray water, unless you're using a clothes washer, in which case it's best to leave the gray valve open while using that appliance to ensure you don't overflow the tank. If you keep the valve closed, the gray water in the tank will flush the sewer hose after emptying the black tank. Once the black tank is emptied and flushed, close its valve and open the

gray-water valve to flush the sewer hose, washing out remaining solids.

Once the dumping cycle is complete, be sure to add water and the holding-tank treatment to the black tank. Many prefer non-formaldehyde versions, which are required in some states. Add at least 2 gallons of water, and instruct everyone to use plenty of water when using the toilet. The combination of the water and chemicals will aid in breaking down solids and deodorizing the effluent, and some will also help maintain the lubricity of the termination valve. Of course, make certain not to introduce any foreign objects into the toilet and holding tanks.

RV and marine paper is formulated to break down more easily than commercially available papers. Using the wrong paper, along with too little water, will plug the system, and that's a bad thing, as plumber's snakes don't work in motorhomes. Tank cleaning has to be done by hand and is messy. Scott toilet tissue is an old standby for some RVers, but if you want to be safe use the stuff made for RV and marine use.



Don't skimp on a sewer hose. Buy a good kit with a threaded elbow fitting. Not all campgrounds offer threaded fittings, but those that do will give extra security against spillage.



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# HYMER

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Holding-tank treatments come in a variety of formulations and forms, from small single-dose bottles to drop-in bags. Most work as directed. Ask fellow RVers for recommendations and try different ones to see which you like best. Contents left in the black tank for a long time in hot weather will put the chemicals to the test, and adding extra in those conditions is recommended.

Many folks are buying four-season motorhomes these days and venturing out into cold weather. If you're braving freezing temperatures, tank heaters are a must, and a great investment. You can also use some potable antifreeze in the tanks to prevent freezing. Potable RV antifreeze is key; do not use automotive antifreeze, as it is poisonous and can sicken and kill pets and wildlife, and seep into the water table at parks with septic systems and leach fields.

## Holding-Tank Sensors

For some RVers, holding-tank sensors are the bane of their existence. Tank monitors are notoriously inaccurate. Ordinary tank sensors in most RVs consist of metal buttons attached through the side of the holding tank. These buttons connect to a resistor-pack wiring harness that allows the monitor panel to show the resistance between the sensors and illuminate the corresponding LEDs. The problem lies in introducing water contaminated with sewage, soap and fat into the tanks, and these can accumulate

on the sides of the tank. Depending on the placement of the ground wire in relation to the sensor wires, the panel can be fooled into thinking those sensors are under water, giving a false reading.

Cleaning the tanks is one way to correct this issue; holding-tank cleaners from companies like Thetford can aid in this task. Using an aforementioned black-tank flush system is a great way to clean the sides of the tank, especially if the sprayer is aimed at the side that has the sensors.

Another method for fixing a sensor problem is to upgrade the system with Horst Miracle Probes that replace the original button probes. The Horst probes use a pin that sticks out into the tank, rather than a button, so any growth inside the tank can't create an electrical connection. The black-tank version has a shroud over the top of the pin to prevent paper or other material from hanging on and creating contact.

Alternatively, the entire system can be replaced with an electronic-sensor system like Garnet's SeeLevel II monitoring system, or, for a more complete, hands-free sewage dumping experience, the SeeLevel III system. In these systems, electronic strips are adhered to the sides of the tank and detect the dielectric differences between liquid and air through the tank wall. This means accurate readings, despite growth inside the tank. An additional benefit is that the sensor

## Sanitation Resources

### Holding-Tank Sensors

Garnet Technologies [SeeLevel], [www.garnetinstruments.com](http://www.garnetinstruments.com)  
Horst Miracle Probe, [www.rvprobes.com](http://www.rvprobes.com)

### Holding-Tank Treatments

Camco (TST), [www.camco.net](http://www.camco.net)  
Century Chemical (Travel Jon), [www.centurychemical.com](http://www.centurychemical.com)  
Dometic, [www.dometic.com/usa](http://www.dometic.com/usa)  
Eco-Save, [www.eco-save.com](http://www.eco-save.com)  
Star brite (Instant Fresh), [www.starbrite.com](http://www.starbrite.com)  
Thetford (Aqua-Kem, Campa-Chem, Eco-Smart), [www.thetford.com](http://www.thetford.com)  
Valterra (Odorlos, Potty Toddy, Pure Power), [www.valterra.com](http://www.valterra.com)  
Walex (Bio-Active, Bio-Pak, Commando, Elemonate, Porta-Pak), [www.walex.com](http://www.walex.com)  
Worldwide Monochem (Dyna-Bact, T-5), [www.monochem.net](http://www.monochem.net)

### Macerators

Clean Dump, [www.cleandump.com](http://www.cleandump.com)  
Thetford (Sani-Con Turbo), [www.thetford.com](http://www.thetford.com)  
Valterra (Sewer Solution), [www.valterra.com](http://www.valterra.com)  
Xylem (Flojet), [www.xylemflowcontrol.com](http://www.xylemflowcontrol.com)

### Sewer Hoses

Camco (RhinoFLEX), [www.camco.net](http://www.camco.net)  
Lippert (Waste Master), [www.lci1.com](http://www.lci1.com)  
Prest-o-Fit (Blueline, DuraForm), [www.prestofit.com](http://www.prestofit.com)  
Thetford (Titan), [www.thetford.com](http://www.thetford.com)  
Valterra (Dominator, EZ Flush, Quick Drain, Viper), [www.valterra.com](http://www.valterra.com)

### Termination Valves and Parts

Barker Manufacturing, [www.barkermfg.com](http://www.barkermfg.com)  
Camco, [www.camco.net](http://www.camco.net)  
Drain Master, [www.drainmaster.com](http://www.drainmaster.com)  
LaSalle Bristol, [www.lasallebristol.com](http://www.lasallebristol.com)  
Valterra, [www.valterra.com](http://www.valterra.com)

strips read the entire level of the tank, unlike typical probe systems, which read the tank in thirds.

## Sewage-Handling Gear

There are many choices when it comes to purchasing waste-disposal gear, from upgraded toilets to sewer-connection rings. Two pieces of advice: Do your homework and don't go cheap.

Sewer hoses and kits come in many forms, and it is tempting, especially when on a budget, to make do with a \$7 to \$10 hose. Invest in a good-quality sewer-hose kit with solid connections. High-quality hoses that are freeze-, crack- and even crush-resistant are available. The technology has come a



### RV TOILETS

Simple plastic toilets are an old-time standard in the RV world and are functional at best. In the last decade or two, a good selection of porcelain and porcelain-plastic hybrid thrones have come to market from Dometic and Thetford to make just about anyone's derriere feel like royalty. Selections include short and long bowl, foot pedal or hand flush, rinse sprayer/bidet, and manual or electric flush with integrated maceration, which often requires installation of special plumbing.

Swapping out an ordinary RV toilet is usually a simple job. Freshwater plumbing extensions are sometimes required, and on rare occasions, the flange will need to be rotated. Always use a new foam flange seal (not wax) when installing or reinstalling an RV toilet. Also, inspect the new toilet carefully, making sure all the bolts that connect the bowl to the base are tight and that the flush mechanism moves freely.



long way from the old metal-spring, vinyl-wrapped products of yesteryear.

Start with a clear connector, as it's the only way to see what is draining out of the black tank and, while flushing the tank, to make sure that the water coming out is clean. Second, use a kit with an end that will screw into the sewer connection at the campground. Not all dump stations have threaded fittings, but those that do offer an extra bit of security against spillage. Third, have a matching extension hose with the proper connector, and if your motorhome has more than one termination connection, get the matching Y connector and lengths of hose. Now and then the sewer connection may be 25 feet or more away from the connection on your motorhome.

Some campgrounds, in some states or communities where it is legal, have gray-water pits instead of full sewer connections. This is where sewer caps with a garden-hose

## RV MACERATORS

In the past few years, macerators have become more popular. Basically a grinder and a pump for sanitary discharge, macerators have some definite benefits over regular sewer-hose systems. They connect directly to the tank discharge or are built-in, and the hose has only a 1½-inch diameter and is very flexible. Multiple hoses can be used to discharge contents longer distances, some as much as 150 feet. The business end of the hose will usually twist into any sewer connection or cleanout, even at home, and the system can pump uphill. Once done, the handle on the business end is sealed, and there's no spillage.

connection on them come into play. If a honey wagon comes around to pump your motorhome's black tank and you dispose of the gray water into the pit, leaving the gray valve open into the pit is probably fine, as the honey wagon will effectively pump off the black tank. Once that's done, follow the previously mentioned steps by adding water and chemicals back into the black tank.

Lastly, practice safe dumping. Always wear waterproof and preferably disposable gloves and some type of eye protection when handling sewage in the event of splashing. The heavyweight disposable gloves from Harbor

Freight are inexpensive and work well. It should go without saying that if you happen to get splashed with waste material, clean the area right away, and isolate and wash any affected clothing with a healthy dollop of bleach if the type of clothing fabric won't be ruined by the bleach.

By following a few simple rules, having good-quality equipment and remembering that water is your friend, you will have a more pleasant time dealing with the chore of dumping holding tanks and can get back to the real purpose of RVing — having fun and spending time with family and friends. **M**

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## A TOUCH OF DESTINY

A 2002 CHINOOK CLASS C 24-FOOTER IS A PERFECT MATCH FOR ONE HAPPY MOTORHOME OWNER

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

Imagine a little Texas cabin, snug and cozy, with warm, polished woodwork, soft furnishings and Southwestern art decorating the walls. Now picture it on wheels. In this era where tiny houses are all the rage, Jeff Deneen's Chinook is evidence of just how much home you can fit into 24 feet — and still take it wherever the road leads you.

The former automotive technician did not have a Class C in mind when he started looking for a motorhome. In fact, he didn't have anything in mind. Though he had camped all of his life, his experience had been limited to tents and pop-ups. He started by researching what was out there through the pages of magazines like *MotorHome*, and also

the internet and RV shows. He came to the conclusion that no matter how much information you have, "You don't know what you want until you've actually used it." With that in mind, Deneen set out to rent a variety of units of all classes and sizes, from a 37-foot diesel pusher to smaller Class B and C motorhomes.

"There were good and bad points to all of them," he says. "But I am a backpacker, and I love state and national parks, and some of the larger RVs just couldn't fit."

Then, in 2012, he saw a 2002 Chinook Destiny, and he fell in love. The 24-foot length made it perfect for the kind of camping he liked to do, and for parking just about anywhere, making a towed vehicle unneces-



Jeff and Roxie, travel companions, sit in the Chinook's rear entrance.

sary. But it wasn't just the size that attracted him.

"The build quality of this motorhome is phenomenal," Deneen says enthusiastically. "It has a one-piece fiberglass shell, a 1½-inch fiberglass-bonded floor, so there are no seams, no leaks."

The motorhome was also well-equipped for long-term travel. The

Above: At only 24 feet in length, the Destiny is easy to maneuver and can be parked almost anywhere.

# The Classic Ride



Above left: The interior of this diminutive RV is surprisingly open. Above middle: The original jackknife sofa was replaced by a twin memory-foam mattress with custom slipcover and matching backrests. Above right: The galley is split, with the sink on the driver's side and burners, microwave and refrigerator on the passenger side.

Chinook's 4K Onan generator, two deep-cycle batteries and a 100-watt solar system make it suitable for dry camping, while the heated holding tanks, ample insulation and Dometic Penguin 13,500-Btu air conditioner/heat pump could extend the camping season in almost any climate. Certain he had found the perfect blend of convenience and comfort, Deneen purchased the 10-year-old unit with only 59,000 miles on the odometer for a very affordable \$30,000.

While it was essentially in good condition, there were elements both inside and out that needed upgrading. Deneen started out by buying new tires and gas shock absorbers to facilitate safe travel. He also found that the driver's seat was stiff and uncomfortable after a few hours on the road, so he had both front seats stripped, replacing the padding with a firm foam before reupholstering. The carpet was worn and in need of replacing as well,

so Deneen chose a thicker padding for noise reduction and a neutral pattern that matched the muted tans and browns of the Chinook's interior.

Trade-offs are made in the design of all smaller units when it comes to space for eating, sleeping and showering. In the Chinook, bedding consisted of a jackknife sofa and a dinette that could be converted into a full bed. Deneen didn't like the thought of breaking down the table each night, nor did he find the sofa particularly comfortable. He decided to replace the sofa with a wide twin memory-foam mattress with an upholstered slipcover, and had two removable backrests custom-made with matching fabric. The result is a seating area that can be transformed into a bed quickly and easily, leaving plenty of room to walk around.

To optimize the floorplan, the Chinook's rear entry door allows for an unexpectedly spacious galley

and lots of storage space. The unit includes a 6-cubic-foot Dometic RV refrigerator as well as a three-burner LP-gas cooktop and 1,100-watt Sharp microwave. Deneen was concerned at first about the lack of an oven, but notes that there is plenty of space on the Corian countertop for his toaster oven. Should the microwave need replacing, he will upgrade to a convection microwave oven.

The other challenge in a smaller unit is having space for a full bath. We have seen some creative bathroom solutions over the years, including foldout sinks and telescoping walls, which help achieve additional space, but require conversion for use. The Chinook designers employed the traditional marine wet bath, a room with an essentially waterproof interior that uses the floor space as the shower stall. It is the one thing Deneen would change if he could, but he understands that creating a separate shower space would decrease storage or living area, so he accepts it as a minor inconvenience that is offset by the flexibility of having a small, versatile motorhome.

One trick to living in a small space

## IS IT YOUR DESTINY?

If you think a Chinook might be in your future, you are in luck. A recent search found dozens of these compact and comfortable motorhomes on the used market, though one dealer cautioned that they tend to sell quickly. Prices ranged from a low of \$14,950 for a 2002 unit with high miles to \$40,900 for the same year but with low miles and refurbished interior.

► Fuel economy on the Chinook has generally been solid, with an impressive 12.5 MPG being the norm. Deneen attains that number by keeping the throttle between 50-60 MPH.







is organization. The interior of Deneen's motorhome is sleek and devoid of clutter, something that he attributes to the unit's abundant storage areas. His choice of a few well-placed nature-themed pieces of art, including works in both metal and wood, add to the sense of depth and space. In addition to the decorative touches that have made "the Nook" feel like home, Deneen also added a new 20-inch flat-screen television, DVD player, Pioneer stereo and four-speaker sound system.

Thus far, Deneen and his miniature schnauzer, Roxie, have shared adventures across the country. In addition to trips to visit family in Buffalo, New York, Deneen and his sister have a "bucket list" plan that involves visiting all 50 states. While she prefers to fly, he and Roxie drive out to meet her in his motorhome. He has been pleased with the Chinook's power, especially over mountains.

"It has 450 pounds-feet of torque — that's quite a lot for an engine in this size motorhome," Deneen points out. "Going up and down hills, it barely downshifts." The fuel economy has also been a solid 12.5 MPG when driven between 50-60 MPH, making the unit economical to drive when compared to larger units.

Deneen has put about 46,000 miles on the motorhome since he purchased it, and has enjoyed traveling in the Chinook so much that he has placed

The rear door on the Destiny allows for a more flexible layout. The sleek design is virtually devoid of clutter.

his house on the market and plans to live in his motorhome full time. He doesn't think he will miss the traditional lifestyle.

"After our last trip of 2½ months, I pulled back in and I was unloading and, to be honest, I was almost overwhelmed by the size of everything," he says with a laugh. Instead, he has found great pleasure in having everything in a compact and comfortable space — especially since it comes with ever-changing views.

Like many converts to the RV lifestyle, Deneen is enthusiastic in encouraging others to follow their dream. "Don't rush it ... but don't wait too long!" he advises.

After all, there is a lot to see, and many roads to travel. The 2002 Chinook Destiny is proof that you don't need a big rig or a hefty bank account to find your freedom — all you need is a house on wheels to enjoy your very own classic ride. **M**



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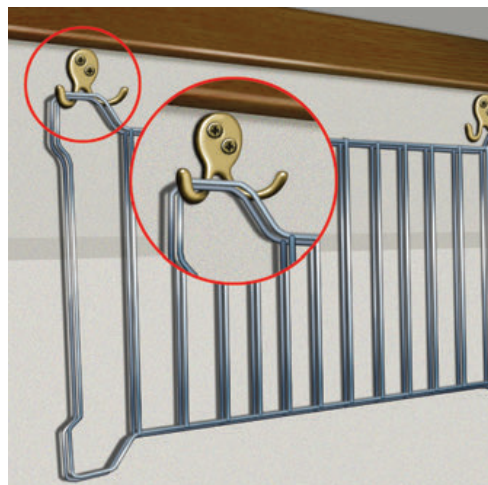
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## What a Dish

The dining table in our Class B motorhome came centered between both side couches, equally distant from the back of each seat. The small clearance space made it difficult for us to slide in behind the table from either seat, so I set out to find a way to make getting in and out easier. By moving the tabletop as far off center as possible, the top becomes more comfortable while seated and also easier to walk by. I used the support stanchions from a DirecTV satellite dish that was being discarded. Luckily the table leg is the same diameter as the stanchion, and also adjustable to the correct point of contact for the table support section. The leg of the support is clamped on tight, and the arm is easily folded down for storage. The part that supports the table bottom is made to slip into a pocket that holds it firmly in place, and slides out without any unscrewing when it's time to put away.

**Greg Pickens** | Sacramento, California



## Hook 'Em!

The oven in our RV is a microwave convection, and we found that we use the microwave far more often than the convection function. So, we needed a way to keep the large convection racks in a convenient but out-of-the-way place.

I came up with the idea of screwing two brass closet hooks to a high spot on the bedroom wall that is covered by the slide when it's retracted. The shallow area is perfectly suited for this. When the convection oven is needed, we take out the turntable and put in one of the racks. The hooks serve a double purpose. When the baking is done the hot rack can be removed right away and hung back on the hooks (be sure to use oven mitts). The second rack that was left there keeps the hot one from touching and damaging the wall before it cools. As an additional bonus, the hooks can be used to hang small items such as hooded sweatshirts or purses out of the way in the bedroom, even with the racks in place.

**Tom Becker** | Bernalillo, New Mexico



## Shower Rod

Living full time in our motorhome, I soon found out that there was little room to hang clothes that needed to air-dry after washing. After several items I put in the dryer shrunk to an unusable size, I knew I had to find a better way. I repurposed a closet tension rod that I use for refrigerator bars to hold everything on the shelves when traveling but remove when we stop. Those adjustable bars are perfect to place in the shower area to hang clothes that have been hand-washed or need to air-dry. Simply place the rod between an overhead cabinet and the shower, making sure to place the end on a solid area of the shower and twist to increase the tension so they hold well. They can remain there and do not interfere with using the shower until needed again in the refrigerator.

**Nanci Dixon** | Minnetonka, Minnesota 



### Have an Idea?

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# Refund Trouble

Upset after the company handling their service contract declined to pay for labor, a couple turned to Hot Line for help. They wrote:



“ We purchased a used 2004 diesel motorhome from Camp Rite Auto and RV in Ozark, Missouri, and the salesman encouraged us to purchase an RV Service Contract with Diamond coverage (from Dealers Alliance Corp.) for \$3,912. The motorhome only had 58,415 miles on it and was in pretty good shape.

Our motorhome developed a problem when the bedroom slideout would not slide out. We asked our local repairman to take a look at it but after three days and contact with Monaco (the manufacturer of the motorhome), we were encouraged to make an appointment with the REV Group in Decatur, Indiana.

We were assured by our dealer that we were covered for the repairs needed to fix the problem.

It took three days to find the problem and do the repairs, and the labor alone to do so amounted to \$2,592. However, the insurance company only agreed to cover \$11.98 (plus tax) for the part and \$346.50 in labor, minus our \$200 deductible, for a payout of only \$159.32. Of course we had to pay the rest.

Our problem is the \$2,592 charged mostly in labor, which was necessary to solve the problem. It took a step-by-step check and repair to locate the problem, and we feel that the repair facility did everything it could to determine that a roller on the slide was wedged between the two steel slide plates, due to a stripped screw.

Our way of thinking is that the insurance company should have paid the bulk of the bill, no matter how long it took to determine the problem and repair it.

We contacted the salesman and he said that the insurance company will not pay any more. I say they owe us at least 80 percent of the repairs. Otherwise we want our \$3,912 back, minus the \$159.32 they paid. Needless to say, we were ripped off big-time.

**Dudley and Marsha Wells | Russellville, Arkansas**

This is obviously a frustrating situation, as the repair facility needed to do some exploring to find the problem with the motorhome's slideout. And, while the insurance company agreed to pay for the direct procedure needed to fix the part, it neglected to compensate for the time spent diagnosing the problem. The company's denial was based on the fact that the screws for the slideout were not

covered, nor was any damage caused by the failure of such a noncovered component, as stated in the agreement. The \$159.32 was issued

to replace the slideout roller.

This is a great opportunity to remind owners to carefully review their service contract, and to verify (in writing, if possible) that every aspect of a repair — including any hardware, diagnosis and the time needed to perform it — will be covered by an insurance company in a situation such as this. At least then you can plan accordingly.

After more than three months and a follow-up letter sent to the insurance company, we finally heard back from the Wellses.

“ We filed a complaint with you and two Better Business Bureau branches (Missouri and Ohio), and then we filed a complaint with the Department of Insurance, Financial Institutions & Professional Registration. Finally, with the help from the insurance investigators, we were refunded the balance of our warranty money.

We paid nearly \$4,000 for that warranty, and ended up paying more than \$2,500 out of pocket for repairs that we believe should have been covered by this warranty. We also believe that these companies know that most people would not have pursued them to get their money refunded when they canceled the contract. It was a long, nerve-racking three months with many phone calls, letters and refused calls. In the end, we won out because we would not let it go.

Lesson learned!

**M. & D.W. M**

## Take Action Contact Hot Line for Help

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



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A. HOT DOG  
ITEM 69269/97080 shown

B. PANCAKE  
ITEM 95275 shown  
60637/61615



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**COMPARE \$5999**

Compare \$98.62

Customer Rating **★★★★★**

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**PREDATOR** **SCISSOR SUPER COUPON**

**6.5 HP (212 CC) OHV HORIZONTAL SHAFT GAS ENGINES**

ITEM 60363/69730

ITEM 69727 shown  
CALIFORNIA ONLY



**SAVE \$290**

Customer Rating **★★★★★**

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**COMPARE \$11999**

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ITEM 62533/68353 shown

• 16 ft. lit, 22 ft. long

Customer Rating **★★★★★**

**SAVE 66%**

**SCISSOR SUPER COUPON \$999**

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Compare \$29.97

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**CENTECH** **SCISSOR SUPER COUPON**

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42292 shown

**SAVE 85%**

Customer Rating **★★★★★**

**SCISSOR SUPER COUPON \$499**

**COMPARE \$899**

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Customer Rating **★★★★★**

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**SAVE \$453**

52082183

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**HaulMaster** **SCISSOR SUPER COUPON**

**72" x 80" MOVING BLANKET**

ITEM 69505/62418/66537 shown

Customer Rating **★★★★★**

**SAVE 66%**

**SCISSOR SUPER COUPON \$599**

**COMPARE \$899**

Compare \$17.97

52089161

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**U.S. GENERAL** **SCISSOR SUPER COUPON**

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ITEM 61609/67831 shown

• 1060 lb. capacity  
• 14,600 cu. in. of storage

Customer Rating **★★★★★**

**SAVE \$653**

**SCISSOR SUPER COUPON \$29999**

**COMPARE \$34999**

Compare \$952.99

52047398

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**HaulMaster** **SCISSOR SUPER COUPON**

**STEP STOOL/WORKING PLATFORM**

ITEM 62515/66911 shown

• 350 lb. capacity

Customer Rating **★★★★★**

**SAVE 85%**

**SCISSOR SUPER COUPON \$1999**

**COMPARE \$2999**

Compare \$57.55

52098415

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**PITTSBURGH Automotive** **SCISSOR SUPER COUPON**

**RAPID PUMP® 4 TON HEAVY DUTY STEEL FLOOR JACK**

ITEM 60706/62319/68056 shown

Customer Rating **★★★★★**

• Weighs 105 lbs.

**SAVE \$90**

**SCISSOR SUPER COUPON \$10999**

**COMPARE \$12999**

Compare \$199.99

52068432

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**HaulMaster** **SCISSOR SUPER COUPON**

**1500 LB. CAPACITY MOTORCYCLE LIFT**

ITEM 60536/61632 shown

• Lift range: 5-1/2" to 17"

Customer Rating **★★★★★**

**SAVE \$30**

**SCISSOR SUPER COUPON \$6999**

**COMPARE \$8999**

Compare \$99.99

52051131

LIMIT 3 - Original coupon only. No use on prior purchases after 30 days from original purchase or without original receipt. Valid through 9/9/17

**drill master** **SCISSOR SUPER COUPON**

**4-1/2" ANGLE GRINDER**

ITEM 69645/60625 shown

**SAVE 50%**

Customer Rating **★★★★★**

**SCISSOR SUPER COUPON \$999**

**COMPARE \$1499**

Compare \$20.13

52051004

LIMIT 6 - Original coupon only. No use on prior purchases after 30 days from original purchase or without original receipt. Valid through 9/9/17

**SCISSOR SUPER COUPON**

**FOLDABLE ALUMINUM SPORTS CHAIR**

ITEM 62314/63066/66383 shown

• 250 lb. capacity

Customer Rating **★★★★★**

**SAVE 50%**

**SCISSOR SUPER COUPON \$1999**

**COMPARE \$2799**

Compare \$39.99

52052586

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**HARDY** **SCISSOR SUPER COUPON**

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NEW

SIZE	ITEM
MED	62434/62426
LG	62433/62428
X-LG	62432/62429

Item 62429 shown

Customer Rating **★★★★★**

**SAVE 60%**

**YOUR CHOICE \$399**

**COMPARE \$599**

Compare \$9.98

52037082

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**PITTSBURGH Automotive** **SCISSOR SUPER COUPON**

**1500 LB. CAPACITY MOTORCYCLE LIFT**

ITEM 60536/61632 shown

• Lift range: 5-1/2" to 17"

Customer Rating **★★★★★**

**SAVE \$30**

**SCISSOR SUPER COUPON \$6999**

**COMPARE \$8999**

Compare \$99.99

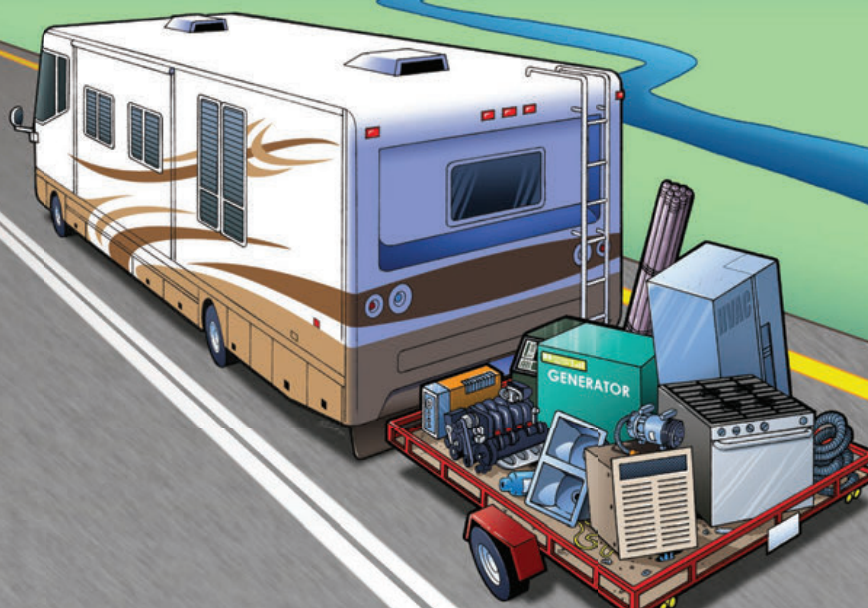
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By Ken Freund

## Dinghy Speed Limits

**Q** Nearly all manuals included with dinghy vehicles include the warning not to exceed 65 MPH. Why? Is it a matter of control, or can damage be done to the vehicle? I consistently try to put my RV on cruise control for 65 MPH; however, being human there are times when I go faster (usually when passing). Is it OK to go over the limit for short periods of time? What is the consequence of ignoring the recommended limits (besides a ticket in some locations)?

**Bill Rostron | Middle Island, New York**

**A** When vehicle manufacturers provide speed limitations along with their recommendations for towing behind a motorhome, they don't include an explanation of how they came to that decision. In general, the process is for the engineering department to say which, if any, drivetrain combinations are capable of being towed long distances on all four wheels. Then, extensive tests are performed in a variety of weather and road conditions to monitor vehicle tracking and tempera-

tures of lubricants, etc. Maneuvers such as abrupt lane changes and stability at speed tests are also performed.

Typically these must be approved (or vetoed) by a number of departments, including marketing, engineering and legal. The faster a vehicle is towed, the more difficult it is to stop the combo in an emergency and/or keep under control if swaying occurs, etc. Higher speeds lead to more serious crashes, and the manufacturer's name is on the vehicle. Some manufacturers appear to be more risk averse than others, and some of the speed limitations may be due to concerns for liability, as much as mechanical concerns affected by heat and wear.

It's best not to put your motorhome, dinghy vehicle, family, yourself and other road users at risk.



## Tire Replacement

**Q** My motorhome is a 2006 Coachmen Mirada on a Ford F-53 chassis, and the tires are Samson brand 225R70/19.5 load range F. Last year I replaced all six tires on my motorhome. I was very lucky as I had picked up a nail in a rear tire and when they pulled it off they discovered extensive cracking on the sidewalls all around the rim on the inside of all four rear wheels. That's an area I still haven't found a good way to check without pulling a rear wheel (any suggestions would be appreciated).

Now to my question: Prior to the new tires, the motorhome didn't exhibit any front-end shimmy, but after installation I started to experience a shimmy beginning around 50 MPH. I later had balance beads put in. I'm still getting shimmy on the front end, but it is puzzling as it is not always there and it varies at what speed I'm traveling. Sometimes

it shimmies at 50 MPH, other times at 55 or 60. I've thought of replacing front tires even though there are only a few thousand miles on them.

**Butch Norton | Moneta, Virginia**

**A** I have found that a mechanic's inspection mirror, which extends on a telescopic handle, works well for looking between dual tires to inspect sidewalls. If those were the original tires, they were about 10 years old, which is beyond their recommended replacement date. I have tried balancing beads to stop tire shake several times without success. The variation of speeds where it starts to shimmy may be due to different pavement surfaces. Before you replace the tires, I suggest you find a shop that can balance the tires on the motorhome. This compensates for imbalance of rotating brake parts, etc. Also look for bent rims, which often occur from curb and pothole impacts.

## Automatic Temperature Controls

**Q** Many of us own motorhomes that came from the factory equipped with sophisticated control systems for everything from holding-tank-level systems to battery-charge monitoring systems, etc. So why is it that the cab temperature control system is nothing more than a blend door or hot-water valve controlled by a knob on the dash? Fan speed is controlled with another knob that provides high, medium, low and maybe off speed controls. In short, you, the driver, must act as the thermostat. If you want it warmer, you turn the temperature knob to warmer; for colder, you turn the knob in the opposite direction. I have found that there is no such thing as a sweet spot. Whenever you set the discharge temperature with this knob, the temperature will eventually over or undershoot the so-called set point.

I wonder if anyone out there has ever attempted to automate this archaic temperature control system. There must be junkyards galore with cars that contain factory-equipped automatic temperature systems one could salvage and incorporate into a motorhome. All one would need is a shopping list of which components to strip out of the junked vehicle. This could become a great resource for

many do-it-yourselfers. At the very least, descriptions and drawings of a manual temperature control system versus an automatic temperature control system would be helpful.

**Frank Harrison** | Via email

**A** While I understand your plight, it pretty much comes down to manufacturing cost. Chassis manufacturers are under strong pressure

to keep their prices down, and many of the chassis are not only used for motorhomes, but similar configurations also find their way into commercial vehicles, where price is very competitive in large fleet purchases. Simply stated, automatic systems cost more than manual ones.

The task of trying to develop a hybrid temperature control system, which combines new components with used salvage yard parts (which may or may not work when you get them), along with trying to design circuitry and vacuum-line routing that would interconnect these systems, is not practical. Then you have to do this for every make and model motorhome out there, and you have a potentially lifelong task. When finished, only a handful of people would be likely to do it because of the cost and complexity. However, if any readers out there have done something like this, we'd like to hear from them.

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### Power Programmers

I installed a Banks Power Pack System on my 2013 Forest River Lexington Class C motorhome, and also installed a K&N intake system. The Banks system is 50-state legal. In my opinion, the only way to increase the power and torque of the Ford V-10 motor is by increasing the intake and exhaust. As we have all heard many times, the motor is just an air pump: The more air in and the more air out, the more power it can produce. Besides the horsepower and torque increases, the fuel efficiency is better (I can get consistently more than 14 MPG on the freeway at 65 MPH, without heavy wind, of course). Installing the Banks AutoMind software helped with the transmission shift points. I can now go up most hills in Utah without going below the speed limits.

We recently completed a 4,450-mile trip to Vermont pulling a 6,650-pound car and aluminum trailer, and averaged more than 10 MPG. I was not in a rush and kept the speed at 65 MPH. I am not a representative or related to anyone at Banks, but I



have used its products for all my Ford diesel trucks (four and counting). The payback for installing a Banks system on my motorhome in fuel costs would take me forever to realize, but not having the frustration of going up hills at 40 MPH is priceless.

**Kim Wardle | Taylorsville, Utah**

Thanks for sharing your experience. We have published results of testing various Banks systems over the years, and have had positive results with all of them. While we have not seen 14 MPG, we have seen fuel-economy improvements when driving in higher elevations on flat roads with fuel-injected gas engines. The results are likely a combination of having slightly less wind resistance due to lower air density, combined with the lower air density reducing the amount of air available in the engine. The fuel injection in turn (via the mass airflow sensor) reduces the amount of fuel going to the injectors, resulting in lower fuel consumption and better mileage.

One of the keys to success in getting more power is to use parts designed to work together for a balanced result. It's important to not only be able to get more air through the engine, but to have proper fuel mixtures and spark advance curves to match the conditions. The California Air Resources Board (CARB) scrutinizes products to ensure they maintain low emissions, which goes hand in hand with efficiency and durability, so an Executive Order (EO) number indicates a system has passed this battery of tests.

### Ford V-10 Power Programmer

The May 2016 issue featured an article evaluating a 5 Star Tuning programmer ("5 Star Tuning Talk"), including installation and road testing. I was sufficiently impressed by the evaluation of the programmer for the Ford Triton V-10 (gas) engine to purchase and install one on my 2010 Class C motorhome. It is the only modification in our powertrain, so the vast improvements in performance can be attributed to it. Thus I was surprised by your reply

in the February 2017 issue to Mac Vaughn ("Power Programmers"), who inquired about such a programmer for his V-10, that your magazine's own article/evaluation was not mentioned as a good reference, especially considering that the Triton V-10 powers so many motorhomes today. True that vast increases in the horsepower with programmer modification on a gas engine are not equal to what can be achieved on a diesel, and that the tuner should be CARB compliant, but 5 Star Tuning's is 49-state CARB compliant.

A horsepower gain with the tuner installation of more than 10 percent is significant in my book, and the increase in torque is important in pulling weight and is realized at maximum around 3,300 RPM on the V-10, which is fourth gear (not overdrive) at 60 MPH. As impressive as that is, the tuner's transmission reprogramming results are even more impressive in my book. Due to peripheral neuropathy pain in my feet, I drive as much as possible in cruise

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control. Before the tuner install, the transmission had an annoying habit of kicking down a couple of gears at a time upon encountering even a slight rise, so one minute it was at 2,300 RPM at 60 MPH and then suddenly more than 5,000 RPM before you even realized that there was a rise in the road! That had to hurt fuel economy. So between the increased power of the engine and the transmission ECM retuning by the 5 Star unit, that overreacting downshifting is gone. A win-win programmer in my book.

**Alan Jacobs | Bouse, Arizona**

I'm glad to hear you are very pleased with the 5 Star tuner. I try to avoid overhyping of products and their results because I don't want disappointed readers if products don't meet their expectations. So I tend to be conservative regarding claims. Typically, if the gas-engine tuner is installed without a performance exhaust and intake system, the results are not as dramatic as you report. Also, only products which have a CARB EO number are California compliant; there is no such thing as 49-state CARB compliant. They are either CARB compliant, or not.

## Rumbling Noise Solution

I wanted to offer the following suggestion for the "Rumbling Noise" letter in the March issue. We purchased a 2010 Class A Damon Daybreak in Connecticut (with about 10,000 miles on the odometer). With my husband driving the motorhome and me driving the chase car, off we went on our six-hour sojourn home to Pennsylvania. While making the drive, we were in constant communication by cellphone and I couldn't help but hear the loud rumbling coming from the Damon, mostly when the engine was put under load (acceleration). While we expected some engine noise (not a diesel pusher), we weren't prepared for this. Once we concluded that the noise wasn't a mechanical problem, we continued on our way. When we got to Pennsylvania, we were able to take the unit for a ride with both of us in the cab. The rumbling was deafening.



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We were able to determine that the noise was coming from the engine compartment and I could feel the rumbling under my feet when I rested them on the access panel. We opened the lid, put the engine under load, and listened. Oddly enough, the noise went away but returned once we replaced the access panel and listened some more. It seemed as though the rumbling only occurred when the engine door was in place. It turned out the latch was vibrating against the bottom of the access door. We noticed that when we took the lid off, the top bracket of the engine was no longer in contact with the latch mechanism and did not rattle. As there is more than one latch on the lid and it fits very tightly, we removed the offending latch, relocked the compartment and plugged the hole in the lid. No more rumbling. Without this quick fix, we would not have been able to carry on a simple conversation. We've put an additional 10,000 miles on the motorhome in the last three-plus years, and are able to travel in blissful quiet.

**Pene' Gelenberg | Via email**

Thanks for sharing your solution. That's an unusual one, specific to motorhomes with that type of engine cover. Make sure to check the integrity of the seals because you don't want any exposure to leaking carbon monoxide.

**Won't Crank After Sitting**

**Q** I own a National RV 2000 Sea View. I've had it parked for a while, not plugged into power, but nothing has been on inside. I tried to start the engine and it won't turn over, and now the two 6-volt batteries are dead. I'm not sure why it won't start. I need to move it soon.

**Chris Artted | Via email**

**A** This is one of the most common problems with stored motorhomes, and can be costly if the batteries become sulfated. Batteries naturally self-discharge, and motorhomes also have parasitic loads which further discharge batteries

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when they sit idle. Check out the article "Power Source" in the February issue, which covers this situation.

### Out of Round Tires

In your "Tire Cupping" response in the March 2017 issue, there is an additional solution about wheel shimmy due to balance issues. A while back I purchased a new set of tires for my 27-foot Class C motorhome on the 2010 Ford E-450 chassis. There was a wheel shimmy above 66 MPH, which no amount of balancing would eliminate. All the other parameters listed in your reply as possible shimmy causes were eliminated. It was finally determined that the tires were somewhat out of round from the beginning. Sometimes this is due to a steel wheel being slightly out of round, or the tire itself. I was fortunate to find Bobo's Tires in Haines City, Florida (in business since the early 1950s), which had the expertise to true the tires (on the motorhome) with rubber-shaving machines. They removed just enough rubber on the high spots for truing. They explained that the true tires will wear better. The shimmy disappeared at all speeds, and after 20,000 miles since, it appears to still be so.

**Mike Coachman | Brooksville, Florida**

Trying to find something like this can be vexing. Typically, balancing the tires gets rid of shake and shimmy. All tires have a slight amount of runout, which means they aren't perfectly true as they turn. Fortunately, modern manufacturing methods and quality control have reduced the number of tires that exceed acceptable limits and are problematic in this area. You are very lucky to find an "old-school" tire shop that has the equipment to check and correct this. This problem is rare enough that I didn't include it in my short list of things to look for, but when you've gone through all the usual culprits, it's time to check tire concentricity.

### Brighter Headlights

A couple of notes about your response to Udo Koch ("Brighter Lights," March

issue). Increasing brightness by using replacement bulbs of higher wattage could lead to issues with the headlamps. The headlight circuit is protected by a circuit breaker, which can trip and turn off the lamps — not a good thing when driving on a dark road at night. Driving lights and fog lamps are two different things. Driving lights are designed to have a narrow beam, aimed to illuminate the distance straight ahead of the vehicle and to be used when high beams are acceptable. Fog lamps spread a very wide beam and are designed to aim low on the road, with the top of the beam pattern 4 inches below the vertical centerline of the lamp at 25 feet; they are used with low beams. Fog lamps, properly installed, will have the vertical center of the lamp between 8 and 12 inches above the roadway. Many folks have the incorrect impression that fog lamps are designed to penetrate the fog, but they are actually designed to illuminate the roadway under the fog.

**Glenn Rasmussen | Via email**

Thank you for your comments and sharing the recommended dimensions for light location and aiming, along with the caution about higher wattage and circuit protection. Without examining the bulbs that are mounted in Koch's motorhome, I can't be sure if the auxiliary lights are actually pencil-beam driving lamps or wide-angle fog lights. I did warn readers about using bulbs that draw too much current, and that is why I suggested HID conversion lamps, which reduce current draw rather than increase it. Another relatively new alternative is to switch to LED lights, which draw far less current and can be quite bright. **M**

### Have a Tech Question?

#### Contact our experts:

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



## Dark Times Ahead

Be prepared to witness a rare spectacle when Mother Nature turns out the lights this August

By Alan Rider

**D**on't say you haven't been warned: There are dark times ahead. Now that we've gotten your attention with that ominous prediction, allow us to add that we're speaking quite literally, and that this development is a very good thing, indeed.

You see, we're talking about the upcoming total solar eclipse that will be making its way across the breadth of the Lower 48 on Monday, August 21. If ever there was an excuse to load up the motorhome and head out for parts unknown, it seems to me this would be it.

That's because of the fact that, though these events happen roughly twice a year somewhere in the world, this is the first total solar eclipse to travel across the continental United States (from Oregon to South Carolina, in this case) since June 8, 1918. Miss this opportunity and you'll be waiting decades for a repeat performance, with the next one scheduled to follow a similar nationwide path in August 2045.

To grasp what makes these events so special, it may help to understand what's actually taking place during a total solar eclipse. They only occur when the shadow of a new moon comes into perfect alignment with the sun, gradually blotting out those golden rays until a state of twilight falls over the landscape and bright stars and planets begin to become visible. If you've never witnessed it,

it can be an eerie but wonder-filled experience.

Though this full dimming of the earth's houselights is expected to last less than three minutes, it will be an action-packed time at any location along the 70-mile-wide path of totality. As the moon's shadow fully covers the sun, all that will be left is the faint corona, literally a crownlike circle of light around the outside of the dark orb. Which just happens to be the only part of this whole spectacle that's safe to look at with the naked eye.

This brings us to perhaps the most important advice on this entire page: Do NOT look at even a partially obscured sun without benefit of proper eye protection. Sunglasses will not cut it — you need dedicated eclipse glasses with their super-dark

lenses (you'll find a primer on the subject here: <https://eclipse2017.nasa.gov/safety>). Fortunately this short-term eyewear is both inexpensive and readily available online.

As far as where to go to see the eclipse, you have plenty of choices. It will first become visible around 10 a.m. PDT on the Oregon coast and disappear back out over the Atlantic off the South Carolina shore at about 3 p.m. EDT. To study the route of this astronomical anomaly as it moves across the U.S. in more detail (you'll want to get as close to the centerline as possible for the longest and best views), we suggest logging on to [www.greatamericaneclipse.com](http://www.greatamericaneclipse.com).

As important as being in the right place at the right time, there are two other equally important qualities you'll want to embrace here: flexibility and mobility. Specifically, the flexibility to find a new campground if the advanced weather forecast is calling for overcast skies at your original destination, and the mobility to enable you to dodge any errant last-minute clouds.

As I'm fond of pointing out in this space, ultimately it matters less where you end up than that you just decide to go. After all, the arrival of "dark times" is just one example of the many strange but wonderful things awaiting us all out there on The Road Ahead. **M**

**“ If ever there was an excuse to load up the motorhome and head out for parts unknown, it seems to me this would be it. ”**

### Total Eclipse ☉

A total solar eclipse occurs when the shadow of a new moon comes into perfect alignment with the sun, blocking its rays. The August event is expected to last less than three minutes.





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