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Exploring Alaska leads RVers to scenic vistas such as this one of Creek Street, once known as the red-light district in Ketchikan (see page 28).



A full report of all the motorized new-model unveilings from the floor of the annual National RV Trade Show in Louisville, Kentucky. **Pg. 63**

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The Dynamax Isata 5 30FW is built on the RAM 5500 HD truck chassis with available 4WD and is a pleasure to drive. Inside, numerous enhancements ensure maximum livability (see test on page 52). Photo by Chris Hemer.





Photo: Mercedes Morgan Photography

By Kristopher Bunker

# Mind Your Manners

**E**very issue, we include a “Question of the Month” in our P.O. Box department. We generally receive a decent amount of responses from our readers, but whenever the topic of campground etiquette arises, we receive a veritable avalanche of emails (and some paper letters as well). This month’s question (see page 6) is about decorative awning lights, and whether they can be a nuisance during late-night hours. The responses vary from overall enjoyment to mild displeasure to downright misery, but the sentiment remains the same: Try to enjoy your RV amenities without disturbing others. So, I think it’s a good time to go over some of the “unwritten rules” of campground etiquette. And, while many of these ideas may seem like no-brainers, we can all agree that playing nicely with others is a concept we can’t hear about too often. This is by no means a list of finger-pointing and shaming; rather, these are just some basic guidelines we all could consider.

First, and perhaps most obvious, don’t be a nuisance. Whether it’s leaving your awning lights pointed at a neighbor’s windshield all night, blaring the exterior TV/radio for all to hear or running your generator beyond quiet hours, don’t be that person. Adhere to the posted quiet hours and be courteous to others; if your lights appear to be shining into your neighbor’s motorhome, minimize their usage, while keeping safety in mind. Letting children (or overly adventurous adults) run through other campsites, or allowing your dogs to bark all day fall under this category as well.

Be respectful. This includes keeping conversations to a reasonable level, but also applies to the

campground itself. It’s never a good idea to tear through the narrow roads in a motorized vehicle, whether it’s a dinghy vehicle, ATV or even an electric scooter. Please also be considerate of the environment. Be sure to pack in (or discard) all of your trash; and, no, the campfire is not the place to toss paper and plastic refuse.

Speaking of campfires, it appears there are two sides: either it’s a vital component of the RV lifestyle, or there’s no reason at all for it. There doesn’t seem to be much in-between. So, if you find yourself as someone who relishes the campfire experience

(as I do), be mindful of where the smoke is drifting. If conditions are windy and the smoke is covering a neighbor’s campsite, it’s time to properly douse the flames and try again when the weather improves.

Diesel engines need time to warm up; it’s a fact of life. However, leaving the engine running for 30 minutes during the wee hours of the morning while you pack your campsite might not be the best practice when camping among sleeping neighbors. Please keep the noise to a minimum by planning to leave when the morning quiet hours are past (whenever possible, of course).

These are just a few of the comments we consistently receive from readers, and are situations we have encountered ourselves. We may even be guilty of one or two infractions, but it’s how we learn from our past mistakes that helps make us better campground neighbors. We are all passionate about life in a motorhome, so building from this common ground to ensure a positive experience for everybody involved allows us to make the most of the wonderful RVing lifestyle. **M**

**“It’s how we learn from our past mistakes that helps make us better campground neighbors.”**

## Contributors | March



**Rhonda Ostertag** is a freelance writer of guidebooks and articles and frequent contributor to *MotorHome*. She travels and collaborates with her husband, photographer George Ostertag.



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



**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)).

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

**Consulting Editors** Ken Freund, Jeff Johnston

**Contributors** Morey Edelman, Ann and Eric Eichenmuller, Bobbie Hasselbring, Chris Hemer, Rhonda and George Ostertag, James Richardson, Alan Rider, E. Don Smith, Shawn Spence, Mary and Jim Zalmanek

**Vice President National Sales** Terry Thompson

**RV Classifieds** Katey Purgatorio  
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@cdsfulfillment.com

**Website** www.motorhome.com

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

**GS MEDIA & EVENTS**

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

**Alliance for Audited Media**  
The New Authority on Circulation

*MotorHome* (ISSN 0744-074X) is published monthly by GS Media & Events (a division of Good Sam Enterprises, LLC), 2750 Park View Ct., Ste. 240, Oxnard, CA 93036. Periodicals postage paid at Oxnard, CA 93036 and additional mailing offices. The annual subscription rate is \$19.97 per year in the U.S. For Canadian and International subscriptions, add \$12 per year. U.S. funds only.


**Postmaster** Send address changes to *MotorHome*, P.O. Box 5860, Harlan, IA 51593-1360.

**Canadian Return Address** GS Media & Events, 4960-2 Walker Road, Windsor, Ontario N9A 6J3. Publication Sales Agreement #40012332.

Printed in the United States.

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**What are your thoughts on decorative awning lights at RV parks and campgrounds? Are they whimsical conversation starters, or light-polluting nuisances? Have you ever had to ask a campground neighbor to turn theirs off? And do you agree that a “dark hours” rule is a fitting compromise?**

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

**A Not-So-Dark Sky Park**

I'd like to add a voice to the suggestion that RV campgrounds institute and enforce “dark hours” along with quiet hour restrictions. Two summers ago, my family's maiden RV voyage specifically targeted a “dark sky” area of Kentucky, with the hope of viewing a Taurid meteor shower. Granted, not the most likely time to catch a shooting star, but there was still a chance to see meteors, and we were anxious to test out our first RV. The Ohio state park we drove to should have been a prime location for viewing stars. Unfortunately, our neighbors lit their RVs and sites like Las Vegas, with colorful and very bright awning lights. The lights were left on long after the campers had retired inside to their RV, contributing significantly to the campground's light pollution. Other areas of the park

offered little improvement, as many other RV awnings visually asserted themselves. The net effect of awning and park lighting was a diminished opportunity for stargazing.

Dark-hour restrictions could easily be adopted without risk to safety or recreation. How pleasant it would be to count on each evening's dimming being a quieter and darker experience!

For additional perspective on dark-sky benefits, including maps of designated dark-sky parks, visit the International Dark-Sky Association at [www.darksky.org/light-pollution](http://www.darksky.org/light-pollution).

**Karen Dalton | Via email**

**Be Courteous**

Our new motorhome has bright white LED lights across the awning. When we camp in close proximity to RVers with small children we always turn the LEDs off and use a lantern, or the amber porch light, to avoid the bright

lights being a nuisance to the group trying to get a child to bed. We have noticed that not all coach owners are that thoughtful. In an effort to make everyone's camping experience superb, we agree with a “dark hours” period when bright lights are required to be turned off, although campgrounds would struggle to enforce it and some lighting is required for safety.

**Brian and Debbie Beaudrie  
Saint Johns, Florida**

**Dollars and Sense**

My wife and I do enjoy the different lights at campgrounds but agree that there should be “dark hours” after 11 p.m. We feel that leaving lights on all night may increase the electricity bills for campgrounds and may explain camping rate price increases around the country. We've not suggested others turn theirs off, but sometimes we wish we had. We have even seen

**Featured Letter**

**A Griswald Family Campsite?**

My feeling is that decorative awning lights are dark-sky polluting nuisances in the ultimate sense. I cannot believe how many people light up their campsite like a Chevy Chase Christmas house and then sit inside while other campers are left to live with their light pollution. Also, porch lights when left on are next in line to be considered obnoxious. I would like to say that the decorative lights should be banned, but short of that, there should be limits on how many LED lights can be displayed and also a time frame for use, such as what we have for generator use.

While in Zion National Park, I did go up to a site and ask a group of travelers to turn off their porch light that was polluting our nighttime viewing of the wonderful sky, but really that should not be my job. I encourage this magazine to help lobby the campground world to support limits on the use and overuse of LED lights in campgrounds. Thank you for opening this topic for discussion and action.

**Ed Gemkow | Clinton, Washington**

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some campers keep their decorative lights on all day and night.

**Ken and Judy Orchard | Via email**

**Fido Lights**

My wife and I have been RVers for 50 years. Now we stay mostly in state parks. Our motorhome has a row of LED lights under the awning and we leave the lights on so we can take our little Bichon out for her night call. I guess we could turn them on and off, but we like having them on and we have never been asked to turn them off, nor have we ever asked a neighbor to turn theirs off.

**Hubert and Patty Hurst  
Hernando Beach, Florida**

**Nature's Lights**

We recently spent time in New Mexico and camped at a number of places. Some were very dark (Ghost Ranch in particular) and I spent time outside in the wee hours. It was incredible. I am from New Zealand and I remember

as a child marveling at the Milky Way. I saw that night sky (minus the Southern Cross) again. We have had the same experience at Capitol Reef National Park. We don't need lighting, decorative or other, left on all night.

**Ian Cameron | Fruita, Colorado**

**Look Up, Not Around**

Many people use those lights, as well as ground string lights, for protection, or to guide them when returning to their site. We have spent many nights in Florida and the lights never stopped us from viewing the gorgeous sky.

**David J. Prohaska | Larksville, Pennsylvania**

**Searching for Dark Rules**

I have no problem with decorative awning lighting for a reasonable time in the evening if the RV occupants are outside enjoying them. However, I have a big problem with them if left on unattended and into the night or all night. The same goes for RV porch lights. Not only is it light pollution that

impairs my ability to enjoy the stars in the sky, which has always been one of the reasons to camp, but in many campgrounds RVs are quite close together and lights left on all night will illuminate my bedroom even with the shades drawn. Yes, I have asked neighboring campers to turn off their outside lights and I would encourage campgrounds to institute policies restricting them. I will seek out such places if I'm aware of them.

**Kevin Cole | Via email**

**Views from the Final Frontier**

I find the different styles and designs of LED lights fascinating, and wish I had them on the awning and underneath the chassis of my motorhome. Having said that, some RVers go overboard to the point that the astronauts on the International Space Station can see their motorhome. It all comes down to respecting your neighbors. There is no need to leave these lights on all night.

**John Rossi | Whittier, California**

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**Big Bend Leads the Way**

Not only decorative lights but also the outside lights have become a nuisance, especially since they shine in our windows when we're trying to sleep. It's a shame that some campers are so inconsiderate that we have to make another rule, but I agree that we should make that rule and hopefully it would be enforced. There has only been one campground where we encountered that rule and that was in Big Bend National Park, and it was wonderful.

**Betty Boucher | Rindge, New Hampshire**

**The Circus is in Town**

After many years of not camping, I recently purchased a Class B and began seeing the country. Many things have changed since my former camping days. I have found there is not much difference between parking in a lighted Walmart lot and some campgrounds. I find I must drive around the area and spot the mercury vapor

street lights and try to position the rig as much away from them as possible. However, the most annoying thing is when I do find some dark and then along comes the guy with a rig lit up like a circus wagon. This has happened to us in such a remote location as the overflow campgrounds in Badlands National Park in South Dakota. I agree "dark hours" should be a rule, especially in public campgrounds.


**Thomas Bohling | Calumet City, Illinois**

**Welcome to the Dark Side**

Yes, I firmly believe there should be "dark hours" in RV parks. I have been stuck beside people who have so many outside lights on that it was like trying to sleep on the Vegas strip. Why would anyone think a neon palm tree outside their neighbor's bedroom is "fun and friendly?" I have often had to tape cardboard over my windows to get the bedroom dark enough to sleep. A nice campfire and the stars are all you need. Too many lights just run up the

electric bill for the campground, and they have to charge more for the sites.  
**Tumbleweed Ron | Onalaska, Texas**

**Senior Years**

After reading your enticing August 2017 article, "Long-term Thinking," regarding coaches for full-time living, I got to wondering about the age of the "senior" RVer. At what point does one decide that they're "too old" for cruising the U.S. in a large, luxury RV?  
**Steve Bloch | Carmel Valley, California** 

**Question of the Month**

Have you, or somebody you know, traded in a large, luxury motorhome for a more Spartan model that's easier to drive? If so, what factors led to that decision?

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

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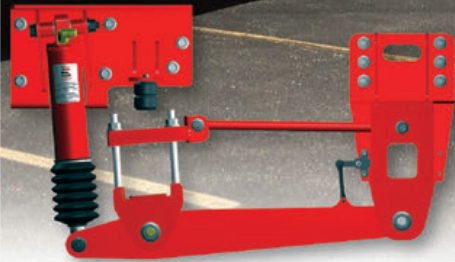


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## Get Snake Bit!

The Twin Falls, Idaho, area around Snake River Canyon offers massive bridges, roaring waterfalls and a history of daredevil feats

By Mary Zalmanek

**F**or those in search of adventure — or at least a bird's-eye view of some adrenaline-pumping action — Twin Falls, Idaho, is the place to be. The city is perched on the edge of Snake River Canyon, which is 50 miles long, 500 feet deep and a half-mile wide, and can be viewed from scenic overlooks at Shoshone Falls or the Perrine Bridge. Shoshone Falls, also known as the Niagara of the West, is 212 feet high — 45 feet higher than Niagara Falls — and flows over a rim nearly 1,000 feet wide. The flow is heaviest in the spring, but no matter the season, it's always impressive. The area includes hiking trails, picnic areas, a boat ramp and a swimming area.

The view from the Perrine Bridge in Twin Falls is



breathtaking, even if you don't jump — BASE jump, that is. Spanning the dramatic cliffs 486 feet above the Snake River, the 1,500-foot-long bridge is popular with BASE jumpers who parachute to the canyon floor below.

Daredevil Evel Knievel made an unsuccessful attempt to jump across the canyon in a steam-powered rocket in 1974. He landed safely after an equipment malfunction. Stuntman Eddie Braun succeeded in a similar attempt 42 years later.

Visitors who would like to see more of the canyon without jumping off or across it can hike or bike the 10-mile paved path along the south rim of the canyon.

For more information on Shoshone Falls, visit [www.tfid.org/index.aspx?NID=309](http://www.tfid.org/index.aspx?NID=309); for Perrine Bridge, go to <https://visitidaho.org/things-to-do/roadside-attractions/perrine-bridge>

Above: The view from the Perrine Bridge in Twin Falls is breathtaking. From far left: The flow over Shoshone Falls, also known as the Niagara of the West, is heaviest in the spring. The Perrine Bridge spans the dramatic cliffs 486 feet above the Snake River and is popular with BASE jumpers, who parachute safely to the canyon floor below.

By Bobbie Hasselbring

# Lake Superior Chowder

For many of us, March can be a cold, blustery month and there's no better way to warm up than a rich, thick chowder like the Lake Superior Chowder from the Landmark Restaurant at Old Rittenhouse Inn in Bayfield, Wisconsin. Add a salad and some crusty bread, and invite campground neighbors over for an end-of-winter get-together.

We met Mark and Wendy Phillips, owners of the Old Rittenhouse Inn, on our 1,300-mile motorhome journey around Lake Superior. The town of Bayfield is a gem that instantly captures the heart. Perched on the lake's shore, this picturesque burg features a marina and a walkable downtown filled with quaint shops, cafés and bookstores. The town's streets are dotted with historic homes and old mansions like the Old Rittenhouse Inn, a 20-room Queen Anne Victorian that features a restaurant and spectacular views of the lake from its wraparound porches.

Visitors to Bayfield can spend time exploring the area's Apostle Islands' colorful limestone-carved caves and rock



From top: The Apostle Islands feature multicolored limestone-carved caves and rock formations. Bayfield is well-known for its easy access to Apostle Islands National Lakeshore on Lake Superior.

formations. In the surrounding hills, the Fruit Loop is a wonderful way to while away the afternoon tasting wines at several area wineries and buying fruit and produce from local farms.

**Have a favorite chowder recipe you'd like to share?**

Email [bjhasselbring@gmail.com](mailto:bjhasselbring@gmail.com) with "Chowder" in the subject line.

## LAKE SUPERIOR CHOWDER

This signature dish comes from the Landmark Restaurant at Old Rittenhouse Inn ([www.rittenhouseinn.com](http://www.rittenhouseinn.com)). It's featured in the wonderful cookbook/memoir, *The Old Rittenhouse Inn Cookbook: Meals & Memories from the Historic Bayfield B&B*.

The chowder utilizes two area favorites — whitefish and trout from Lake Superior. (Of course, you can use any fish available.) The clam stock gives it a lovely, briny flavor, and the cream and Yukon gold potatoes make this hearty enough for a meal-in-a-bowl.

Serves 6-8

- 1 small onion, diced
- 4 stalks celery, diced
- 1 carrot, diced
- 1 teaspoon salt and pepper
- 1 tablespoon fresh garlic, minced
- 3 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 cup white wine
- 4 cups vegetable stock
- 1 can clams in juice (16 ounces)
- 8 ounces fresh lake trout, boneless filets
- 8 ounces fresh whitefish, boneless filets
- 2 cups Yukon gold potatoes, diced to 1/2-inch cubes, skins on
- 3 sprigs basil
- 2 bay leaves
- 2 sprigs thyme
- 4 tablespoons melted butter
- 1/3 cup flour
- 1 cup heavy cream

► In a 4-quart, heavy-bottomed pan, sauté onion, celery, carrot, salt and pepper, garlic and oil for about 5 minutes. Add wine and reduce by half. Add vegetable stock, clams and their juice. Bring to a boil, then add fish filets and potatoes. Simmer on medium-low for about 10 minutes. Add herbs and bay leaves and simmer for another 10 minutes. In a separate pan, mix butter and flour to make a roux, adding to chowder to thicken. Finish with heavy cream. Sliced green onions, soaked in cold water to curl them, make a nice garnish.



Photo: Anne Weaver

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## Shed Some Light

Sometimes you really need some extra light, especially when you're working at the campsite at night, or if the existing basement storage lighting is inadequate — or, worse yet, nonexistent. TecNiq's new compact D30 Surface Mounted Load Light provides 2,000 lumens of bright white LED light, illuminating up to 150 square feet (from a height of 10 feet), according to the company. The D30's 64-by-51-degree beam angle can really brighten up the night, without impeding on your neighbor's campsite. The D30 is dust- and waterproof, and its rugged aluminum heat sink housing is powder-coated black for years of service. The LED light includes a form-fitting TPE gasket that's UV- and chemical-resistant, and has a maximum draw of 1.9 amps. The unit measures 7.4 inches long by 1.62 inches wide by 1.76 inches tall and mounts easily with two screws, plus it's guaranteed for life, according to TechNiq. MSRP: \$115

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## Sleeping on Air

Class B motorhomes continue to gain in popularity, but one common complaint is the lack of available sleeping positions due to the motorhomes' compact sizes. Motorhome manufacturer Pleasure-Way Industries has the answer by converting the driver and passenger seats into a sleeping area with its new Inflatable Air Bed. Designed for Mercedes-Benz Sprinter vans (years 2007-2017), the Air Bed is an inflatable air mattress perched atop a support cushion, enabling RVers to get a good night's rest in the cab area. The bed itself is made from durable PVC material and measures 61 inches long and up to 27 inches wide. It has a maximum weight rating of 200 pounds, perfect for a smaller adult or one or two children. The Air Bed includes a carrying case and 12-volt DC pump and repair kit, and is covered by a one-year replacement warranty. MSRP: \$169

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



## Silky Smooth

When waking up a motorhome from its long winter's nap, one of the things that should be on your checklist is lubricating the window and slide tracks to ensure smooth operation.



3-IN-ONE, a division of WD-40, has introduced two new products that help these components open and close freely. 3-IN-ONE RVcare Slide-Out Silicone Lube makes deploying (and retracting) slideouts easy by lubricating, waterproofing and safeguarding against rust and corrosion. Quick-drying 3-IN-ONE RVcare Window & Track Dry Lube reduces friction and wear, while protecting against corrosion, according to the manufacturer. Both products have been formulated so as to not attract harmful dirt and debris. They are also storage-friendly; 3-IN-ONE RVcare Slide-out Silicone Lube comes in an 11-ounce can, while Window & Track Dry Lube comes in a 10-ounce can. The products are available online and in stores like Walmart. MSRP: \$5.84 each

**3-IN-ONE | 888-324-7596, [www.3inone.com](http://www.3inone.com)**

## UV for the RV

There are many different methods of purifying the drinking water in a motorhome, from filters to chemicals to even buying bottled water. Acuva has developed a portable water-purification system designed to be effective against bacteria, is easy to use and maintain, and doesn't harm the environment. Acuva's Eco Water Purifier uses ultraviolet (UV) LED technology to disinfect water. Acuva maintains that UV disinfection utilizes strong short-wavelength radiation to inactivate microorganisms by destroying nucleic acids and disrupting DNA. After being installed under the sink (and plugged in to power) like a traditional filter unit, the Eco Water Purifier disinfects with a two-part process involving a composite filter and a UVC LED chamber. The composite filter removes sediment and activated carbon enhances the taste, odor and color, while the UV LED chamber sterilizes harmful bacteria and viruses by disrupting them on a cellular level. UVC LEDs are compact, energy efficient and can last between five and 10 years, and there is no limit to the number of times they can be turned on and off, according to the company. MSRP: Starts at \$649



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## ESCAPES CROSSROADS

**Naples, Florida**

### A Tropical Delight

While touring the area of Naples, Florida, we took time out from enjoying the beaches, the shopping and the ice cream to explore the Naples Botanical Garden, which offers 170 acres of gardens, trails and exhibits. The grounds were sculpted to create a garden that immerses visitors' senses with color, fragrance, texture and sound, and it does not disappoint.

The garden represents seven distinct natural habitats, with an emphasis on the ecosystems between the 26th parallel north and the 26th parallel south. One of our favorites was the LaGrippe Orchid Garden, which features hundreds of varieties of orchids and bromeliads, as well as epiphytes growing in the canopies of silver trumpet trees. The Chabraja Visitor Center has a wealth of information and a well-merchandised store, where plants are also available for purchase.

The Garden is only 4 miles from downtown Naples on Bayshore Drive. Ample parking for motorhomes, including large rigs, is available.

**For more information**, call 877-433-1874 or visit [www.naplesgarden.org](http://www.naplesgarden.org)  
— Morey Edelman



Photo: Morey Edelman

**Llano, Texas**

### Bluebonnets and a Big Rock

Situated in the heart of Texas Hill Country, Llano County has numerous attractions for visitors. The town of Llano, the county seat, has 280 acres that have been designated a National Historic District. It sits on both sides of the Llano River, which flows into Lake LBJ, one of the Highland Lakes.

The park at Enchanted Rock, which is just south of the town of Llano and abounds in Native American lore, boasts a huge granite dome that is visible for miles. From its summit, visitors get a breathtaking

view of Texas Hill Country.

Llano County hosts thousands of wildflower wanderers annually to admire the spring landscape adorned with bluebonnets and Indian paintbrush. Badu Park in Llano is located on the banks of the Llano River and has 11 RV hookup sites.

**For more information** about Llano, visit [www.cityofllano.com](http://www.cityofllano.com); for Enchanted Rock State Natural Area, go to <http://tpwd.texas.gov/state-parks/enchanted-rock>

— James Richardson 

Photo: James Richardson



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# Pages From the Past

Retracing *MotorHome's* March issues over the years

**Y**ou may already know that March is National Reading Awareness month in the United States, but did you know that it's also National Nutrition Month, National Celery Month and National Kidney Month, among others? It's also the month that many of us who live in colder climates uncover our RVs and prepare for the spring travel season. And, in the case of *MotorHome Life*, the spring issue of 1969 saw publisher Art Rouse declare the magazine would begin publishing four times each year.

The 1970s would prove to be a rather successful decade for the magazine and RVing in general. In March 1972, the Equal Rights Amendment to the Constitution prohibiting discrimination on the basis of gender was passed by the senate. The March '75 issue of *MotorHome Life & Camper Coachmen* (as it was called then) featured a story on the Good Sam International Travel Club, detailing RV Caraventures to the Swiss Alps, the British Isles and Europe. That same issue also included "What's Ahead for RVs," a gathering of motorhome owners

and consumer advocates. Discussions included aesthetics, aerodynamics and the trend toward rounded corners, with one attendee noting, "I've wondered for years why they made RVs so square; to me, they look like cigar boxes going down the street." Some things never change.

The March '79 issue suggested readers "Plunge into an adventure spree," with a beautiful hot air balloon scene on the cover. That same month, the Three Mile Island nuclear plant incident near Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, called the practice of nuclear power

into question, and the Philips company publicly demonstrated the use of a compact disc (CD) for the first time.

The 1980s saw *MotorHome Life* take on a number of social issues, and March 1981 featured President Ronald Reagan chiming in on RV issues, from highways to gun control to government regulation. "I have always believed that the government is here to protect us from each other," said President Reagan. The March '84 issue questioned the usage of oil and the possibility of a national shortage, featuring a Q and A with Chevron President Kenneth T. Derr.

The March '95 issue included a test on the Serro Scotty Prospector, a coach with 4WD, an option that can be found today on this month's test vehicle Dynamax Isata 5 30FW.

The turn of the century brought technology to the forefront; the March 2000 issue included a review of PocketMail and Sharp's TM-20 email device. Who knew that email would become such an important part of everyday life to people in general, let alone to RVers?

March 2004 featured a review of the Sprinter Westfalia Class B, built atop the (then) Dodge Sprinter chassis that is so common today (though it now bears the Mercedes-Benz marque).

In keeping with its lean toward the latest in RV technology, *MotorHome* touted the brand-new Truma AquaGo instant-hot-water heater in the March 2015 issue. "Having endless hot water was heavenly," noted author/VP/Group Publisher Bob Livingston. This technology has become quite popular in today's motorhomes, which is yet another feather in the cap of *MotorHome* magazine's forward-thinking mentality. **M**



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Dramatic, multihued sunsets are a common occurrence in Mount Dora.

# Detour to Mount Dora

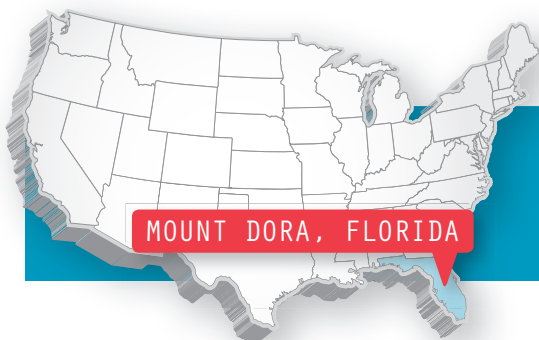
An unexpected taste of New England among the white-sand beaches of the Sunshine State

By Ann Eichenmuller

As soon as we heard its name, we suspected that the town of Mount Dora was going to be something out of the ordinary. After all, with the exception of the Walt Disney World Resort's Space Mountain, higher elevations are in short supply in central Florida. It was a change of plans and a 65-mile detour "off the beaten path" on our drive from the Florida Keys to Daytona, but isn't spontaneity what the RV lifestyle is all about?

In the interest of truthfulness, Mount Dora isn't exactly perched on a mountainside. It is located on a plateau 184 feet above sea level, just above Lake Dora, a 4,500-acre lake that is connected to Lake Eustis and Lake Apopkain, part of the Harris Chain of Lakes. While its altitude might not sound impressive, this beautiful destination certainly is. In a state known primarily for its beaches and theme parks, Mount Dora is an unexpected surprise.

Local legend suggests that both lake and town got their names from Ms. Dora Ann Drawdy, a homesteader here in the mid-1800s. Home today to about 13,000 residents, Mount Dora has been dubbed "Little New England" for its Victorian architecture and its narrow, hilly streets reminiscent of Bar Harbor, Maine. Because of its location 45 minutes from Orlando and just over an hour from either coast, campers staying



## Getting There

From Orlando, take Florida State Road 408 West (toll road) to Florida State Road 429 North for about 11 miles. Merge onto U.S. Route 441 North/West Orange Blossom Trail for another 10 miles, and follow the signs to Mount Dora.

## GETAWAY

MOUNT DORA, FLORIDA

in these more “touristy” areas can easily make Mount Dora a day trip. Should you choose to stay a few nights as we did, there are full-service camping resorts in nearby Tavares, Eustis, Apopka and Leesberg, or you can vie for one of the 15 electric and water sites at nearby Trimble Park. Located on a peninsula between Lake Beauclair and Lake Carlton, and less than 4 miles from historic Mount Dora, this park has plenty of shade, and many sites are right on the lake. RVers who bring kayaks and paddleboards with them can launch right from their sites, and rumor has it that the fishing here is good for crappie, walleye and largemouth bass. The campground itself is peaceful and quiet, and we found the area provided a nice contrast to the time we had spent in the Keys and along the coast.

While we had read online reviews that suggested Trimble was a short bike ride from town, isn't one we recommend. While much of the route is on shady, flat, low-speed roads, there is a section of 55-mph two-lane highway without a bike lane that we felt could be hazardous. We opted



Top: Visitors can spend a day browsing the quaint shops downtown. Above: The famous Orange Blossom Cannonball steams through town.



The lighthouse at Port Dora is reminiscent of the New England coast.





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## GETAWAY

MOUNT DORA, FLORIDA

to take our dinghy vehicle instead. There is plenty of free public parking in Mount Dora, but none of it is suitable for motorhomes that cannot fit in a standard parking space. Even though it was a busy Saturday, we found a spot by the lake, only a block off of the shopping district and just across the tracks of the Tavares, Eustis & Gulf Railroad. We parked just in time to hear a train whistle and see the Orange Blossom Cannonball steam by. Famous for its role in Hollywood films like "O Brother, Where Art Thou?" and "True Grit," the wood-burning locomotive was running a two-hour lunchtime tour between Mount Dora and the nearby town of Tavares.

Afterward we walked out to a nearby gazebo to get a better look at the Port Dora Lighthouse, a 35-foot brick-and-stucco structure that serves as a navigation aide for boaters transiting the lake after dusk. Then it was up the hill to the historic district, where we browsed through the many specialty stores, antique shops and art galleries the town offers. It was in one of these shops that a local filled us in on Mount Dora's brush with fame — in 1981, "Honky Tonk Freeway" (starring Howard Hesseman, Beau Bridges and Teri Garr, among others) was filmed in Mount Dora,

---

Right, from top: The historic Donnelly House is one example of the Victorian architecture that gives Mount Dora its charm. Trimble Park offers 15 water and electric sites, some of which are located by the lake.



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and many of the buildings along the main street were temporarily painted pink to serve as the set. Perhaps fortunately, no trace of that color change remains today!

If you want to learn about the Studio Art Movement, Mount Dora's Modernism Museum is worth a visit. The collection explores the questions "Is it art ... or is it furniture?" and challenges visitors to look at the beauty and functionality of everyday items like floor lamps and tables. We caught the museum's temporary exhibit "Esherick to Nakashima" (the museum's current exhibit, "Space Oddities," features objects from the estate of the late David Bowie). Afterward, we searched out lunch among the many local restaurants, notable for creative names like The Frog and Monkey Restaurant and Pub, Copacabana Cuban Café and Pisces Rising. The menu choices were equally creative and prices were reasonable, another plus in Mount Dora's favor.

While we loved the downtown, the most amazing sight in Mount Dora was out on U.S. Highway 441. Purely by accident (or at least that's what I told my husband), our visit to Mount Dora coincided with Renninger's Extravaganza. Named by USA Today as one of the "10 Best Flea Markets for Finding Vintage Treasures" it is a true picker's paradise that takes place on the third weekends in November, January and February. Picture more than 900 vendors all trucking vintage, primitive and rustic treasures

from around the country, setting up a veritable tent city of antiques, and you have an idea of what we experienced. It is billed as the largest event of its kind in the country, and it doesn't disappoint. Be prepared to walk — there is plenty of parking, but it can be quite a hike from the Extravaganza itself. Even if you don't make one of these three weekends, Renninger's Twin Markets are also home to other special events, including their Cars and Guitars shows, swap meets and vintage garden shows.

On the day we left Mount Dora we spotted a sailing regatta of more than a dozen boats racing on the lake, their full sails reflecting the sunlight. It was a sight that reminded me of Connecticut and Massachusetts, and our own home along the Chesapeake Bay — that is, until I remembered that they were all buried under a foot of snow. Still, it was nice to have that little taste of home, and Mount Dora, with its Florida warmth and New England charm, was well worth the detour. **M**

### IF YOU GO

Mount Dora hosts a number of special events, including a Christmas Walk and Lighted Boat Parade in December; a juried arts festival in February and a music festival, Taste of Mount Dora, in March; and the oldest sailboat regatta in Florida, held every April. For more information, go to [ci.mount-dora.fl.us](http://ci.mount-dora.fl.us). If you would like to know more about exhibits at the Modernism Museum, go [www.modernismmuseum.org/visit](http://www.modernismmuseum.org/visit).

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# NORTH TO ALASKA!

From motorhome to cruise ship to railcar, exploring the picturesque 49th state by land and sea

**A**laska had held the top spot on my bucket list for years. When our granddaughter took a temporary job in Anchorage, we knew the time had come. The only question was how. As avid RVers, a motorhome trip was appealing, but would likely be too long. We'd heard wonderful reports from friends who had taken Alaskan cruises. We decided to do both.

Upon our arrival in Anchorage (see Getting There for the details), ABC Motorhome Rentals picked us up at the airport. Austin, the man who handled our paperwork and showed us our 2017 22-foot Class C Forest River Sunseeker motorhome, was friendly and efficient. As we were doing the walkthrough, we noticed a problem with a drawer latch. A technician did the repair, and we were on our way within 30 minutes. The

motorhome was equipped with dishes, cookware, kitchen utensils, linens and towels. This was our first time renting an RV or using a Class C. I'm happy to report we enjoyed the entire experience. There was enough room for our granddaughter, Brynn, and her boyfriend, Jared, to join us for a few days. I liked driving this motorhome; I'm embarrassed to admit what a wimp I am about driving our own Class A.

After buying food and essentials, we checked into Anchorage Ship Creek RV Park (a Good Sam Park) for two days. The busyness of travel left us longing to relax on our first full day in Anchorage. We played golf at Moose Run Golf Course. Our rented clubs worked fine, which meant about the same ratio of good shots to regrettable ones as with our own clubs. We bought eight "experienced" balls, and at the rate we were losing balls on the front nine, I was hoping we'd have enough. Recent bear sightings and bear scat on the golf path kept us from going too far into the woods in search of lost balls. We finished the round with a few balls to spare.





Creek Street in Ketchikan is the historic red-light district where “both men and salmon came upstream to spawn.”



## Getting There

We drove our Class A motorhome from Colorado to Blaine, Washington, just south of Vancouver, British Columbia, and left it in Pantec Mini Storage, a fenced, secure storage unit. We left our dinghy vehicle at the Vancouver airport and flew to Anchorage, where we rented a motorhome for six days. Then we took a 10-day land and sea Princess Cruisetour, which disembarked in Vancouver. We then took a leisurely seven weeks to get back to Colorado in our motorhome, enjoying sights in the Lower 48 along the way.

Brynn and Jared followed us down the Kenai Peninsula to Seward, where we checked in at the Stoney Creek RV Park. On the first afternoon, we drove to Kenai Fjords National Park. The park, which is more than 1,000 square miles, is extensively glaciated, with more than half of it covered by ice. At least 38 glaciers originate from the massive Harding Icefield. The Exit

Glacier is the only one accessible by road. We walked along the Edge of the Glacier Trail. Markers show how the glacier has receded over the past 120 years. Also known as the Lower Trail, it's less than a 20-minute walk along a flat path from the parking lot.

The next day we rented bikes from the Seward Bike Shop to explore the town. After owner Ron Shurman

outfitted us with bikes, he recommended biking trails. We started on the Two Lakes Trail. It's at the base of Mount Marathon, where the city borders the wilderness. We rode through spruce and hemlock rainforests, then followed the Iditarod National Historic Trail, a paved trail

Photos: Mary and Jim Zalmanek



Ⓞ Our seats in the GoldStar Dome car allowed for a panoramic 360-degree view. Throughout the trip, the narrator on the train told us some history while pointing out wildlife and scenery as we traveled from the Denali Depot to Whittier.



Clockwise, from above: In Glacier Bay, park rangers provided commentary through speakers regarding Margerie Glacier, an advancing tidewater glacier that calves frequently. TEMSCO Helicopters takes tourists to Mendenhall Glacier near Juneau. Our tour guide showed us how to drink the refreshing glacial water.



that runs along Resurrection Bay. Originally known as the Seward-to-Nome Trail, the 2,300-mile network of trails was used in the winter by dog mushers carrying more than 1,000 pounds on large sleighs. We rode though Seward past a dock with fishermen posing beside their impressive catches, which made me wish we'd included fishing on our itinerary. North of Seward, we

stopped to examine berries growing in a thicket. A woman who lived nearby asked us if we'd seen the bear that had recently been spotted. She explained that bears love the salmonberries we were examining. While we were hoping to see some of Alaska's famous bears, we didn't want them to catch us eating their food. We made it back to Seward without seeing a single bear.

For our last day in Seward, we booked a zip line tour with Stoney Creek Canopy Adventures. A van picked us up at the RV park and took us to the Welcome Center. We successfully completed a "ground school," where we learned proper zip line riding and braking techniques. The tour was an exciting way to experience the Pacific temperate rainforest: traversing eight zip lines, crossing three suspension bridges and dropping to the ground on two rappels. The longest zip line was 1,100 feet, giving us time to admire the reflecting pond below and search the sky above for bald eagles. Time flies when we are having fun; our three-hour tour felt like it only lasted 30 minutes.

Since we needed to return the RV



The Coral Princess stopped for about an hour near the Lamplugh Glacier, allowing plenty of time to take in the stunning views from our stateroom balcony.

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to ABC Motorhomes by 10 a.m., we spent one more night at Ship Creek RV Park. Returning the motorhome was even easier than getting it. As soon as it was checked for damages, the cleaning crew began preparing it for its next occupants. We were off to the Hotel Captain Cook for the first night of our land tour with Princess Cruises. We explored downtown Anchorage and walked the Tony Knowles Coastal Trail, a beautiful 11-mile path that winds

Above, from left: This impressive catch at a dock in Seward shows why fishing is such a popular activity in Alaska. At the lumberjack show in Ketchikan, champion athletes compete in sawing, logrolling and a 50-foot tree climb.

along the Knik Arm and the Cook Inlet. The next morning, we boarded our assigned bus, one of several taking excited travelers on a three-hour drive to the Mt. McKinley Princess Wilderness Lodge. After settling in, we hiked some of the trails on the property, stopping to look at the

cloudbank that hid Denali, the famous mountain all visitors hope to see. We boarded a bus to Talkeetna, a small town big on Alaskan charm. The TV show Northern Exposure was said to be patterned after Talkeetna. Sadly, the town's mayor, a cat named Stubbs that held the honorary office since

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1997, died a mere week before we arrived. Popular tourist activities include salmon fishing, jet boating and “flightseeing” tours. We ended our day back at the Lodge, eating s’mores around a campfire and making new friends.

The following day we were bused to the beautiful Denali Princess Lodge two hours away. Our package included a five-hour Natural History Tour, but I couldn’t do another 5 hours on a bus. We opted to take a short bus ride into Denali National Park to see the 30-minute sled dog demonstration. When we arrived, more than 30 Alaskan huskies were sleeping in their kennels or relaxing on their doghouses. Four dogs were selected to pull a park ranger in a wheeled cart around a short track. A ranger explained the role the sled dogs play in protecting and preserving the park by providing a reliable form of transportation in the extreme conditions of a subarctic winter.

After following a scenic hiking trail back to the Lodge, we enjoyed the Music of Denali Dinner Theater. Servers brought our family-style meal of Alaskan salmon and smokehouse barbecue to our tables. Then this talented crew took to the stage to entertain us with a musical performance telling the story of the first brave men to reach the top of Denali, North America’s tallest peak at 20,310 feet.

Right: As part of the sled dog demo in Denali National Park, four dogs pulled a park ranger in a wheeled cart around a short track.



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## NORTH TO ALASKA!

We rose early the next morning to catch the bus to the Denali Depot. Our assigned seats were in the GoldStar Dome car; the large curved windows allowed a 360-degree view. As the train pulled away from the station, a moose munched on leaves a short distance away. The route took us through spectacular scenery: rivers, mountains, forests and the Turnagain Arm of the Cook Inlet. Passengers were excited to get another glimpse of Denali, although it was still partially obscured by cloud cover. My two favorite places to take photographs were from the GoldStar's second-floor viewing platform and the observation deck at the rear of the train. I had just returned to my seat when a bear was spotted running away from the tracks. I'd missed my only opportunity to photograph a bear.

When we arrived at the Whittier Cruise Port Terminal around 5:30 p.m., we were among the 2,000 passengers settling into our rooms and exploring the Coral Princess. The ship has two main dining rooms, a buffet restaurant, several specialty restaurants, a theater, numerous shops, a spa and fitness center, a casino, several lounges and two pools and hot tubs. It would be absolutely impossible to be bored on this ship.

The first two days consisted



Photo: Stoney Creek Canopy Adventures



From top: Participants and crew at the Stoney Creek Canopy Adventures pause for a photo during our experience, which included eight zip lines, three suspension bridges and two rappels. The Two Lakes Trail leads hikers and bikers through spruce and hemlock rainforests. Waterfront Park on Resurrection Bay offers RV sites with water and electric hookups as well as dry camping.



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## NORTH TO ALASKA!



On a raft trip through the 48,000-acre Chilkat Bald Eagle Preserve, we saw about 15 eagles.

of scenic cruising to see Hubbard Glacier and Glacier Bay National Park. The Hubbard Glacier is 6 miles wide with a 400-foot-tall face. The ship didn't get very close to the glacier, but it was impressive even at a distance. Binoculars or a camera with a telephoto lens allowed a closer view. In Glacier Bay, park rangers boarded the ship to give presentations and answer questions. The National Park and Preserve consists of 3.3 million acres of mountain, glaciers, forests and waterways. The ship spent about an hour in front of the Margerie Glacier, an advancing tidewater glacier that calves frequently. We listened to commentary from park rangers through speakers on the open deck. When the ship stopped near the Lamplugh Glacier, we had a perfect view from our stateroom balcony where we could hear the commentary on our TV.

In Skagway, our first port, we went on a rafting trip through the Chilkat Bald Eagle Preserve. The 48,000-acre preserve consists of river-bottom land of the Chilkat, Kleheni and Tsirku rivers. It's the year-round home for 200 to 400 eagles. In the fall and winter, more than 3,500 eagles flock to the Chilkat River to feast on the late run of chum salmon. As we floated silently down the river aboard inflatable rafts, we saw about 15 eagles.

On August 2, our 42nd wedding anniversary, we boarded a helicopter — another bucket list item — and flew to the Mendenhall Glacier. While en route to Juneau's star attraction, we saw dense rainforests and snow-covered mountains. As we landed, we got a bird's-eye view of different textures of the glacier: icy spires, deep crevasses, moraine (rocks and sediment) fields and meltwater pools. What surprised me most was how blue the ice was. Our guide invited us to drink the clear water flowing down the glacier. He also offered us "glacial facials" with mineral-rich glacial mud.

After we returned to the heliport, we were bused to the Gold Creek Salmon Bake, where we enjoyed wild salmon grilled over an open, alder wood fire. We walked to Salmon Creek Waterfall, which was crowded with salmon spawning. In the nearby historic Wagner Mine, gold was discovered in 1880, sparking the Juneau gold rush.

Our last port was Ketchikan, the southeastern-most city in Alaska. Since it's also known as the "Rain Capital of Alaska," locals were thrilled with the cloudless blue skies. We boarded a bus to Totem Bight State Historical Park. The hemlock forest contains a colorful collection of native Tlingit and Haida Indian totem poles. Our tour guide entertained us with fas-

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## NORTH TO ALASKA!

cinating tales about each totem pole. Our tour concluded at a lumberjack show in Ketchikan, where champion athletes competed in sawing, log rolling and a 50-foot tree climb.

While the shore excursions were a highlight of the cruise, time spent aboard the ship in the evenings and days when we were at sea were wonderful, too. We enjoyed the entertainment, classes and lectures. A lecture by Libby Riddles, the first woman to win the Iditarod Sled Dog Race in 1985, inspired me to buy her book, *Race Across Alaska*.

After we returned home, friends asked two questions: How was the trip, and, if you were to do it again, what would you do differently? Our Alaska adventure was fabulous, the trip of a lifetime. The cruise exceeded my expectations. If I could change anything, I'd spend more time on land. Alaska is a big state; six days in a motorhome and three days for the Princess land tour wasn't enough. I would visit Fairbanks, Sitka, Valdez and Homer. I'd go fishing, look for wildlife on the Tundra Wilderness Tour in Denali, take a flightseeing tour to Denali, watch bears eating salmon in Katmai National Park and Preserve, and ride a riverboat in Fairbanks.

It's too soon to take Alaska off my bucket list. **M**

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# FLIGHT OF THE CONDOR

Exploring west-central California in the path of North America's largest birds



**T**he range of the California condor fashions a favorable travel itinerary. Granted, they are mercurial hosts — not unlike rainbows — but when travel routes cross, the outcome is magical. The gigantic birds are both emblems of the past and symbols of survival. They are keepers of the planet and hopes for the future. The arguably ugly bird has risen to a modern-day romantic hero, attracting fanciers from across the United States and around the globe.

During a recent California trip, we were treated to sight of three black spots gracing the sky over Pinnacles National Park. Because condors can soar up to 15,000 feet, even distant sightings are telling of the bird's size. When next we met, it was at closer range on the Big Sur coast. Clearly, condors have great taste in travel destinations.

Thanks to the success of the captive-

breeding program, the California condor has returned to the open skies, sailing free, albeit radio-monitored. Both the Pinnacles National Park and Big Sur populations boast nesting pairs. The birds fly unrestricted between the two locations.

Our happenstance encounters brought us full circle. Our first-ever article assignment was on condor viewing in the wild in the 1980s at

the Condor Watch Site in Southern California. But, before the article reached print, the remaining 22 condors were captured and sent to captive-breeding programs. In retrospect, the condor might not have been the best talisman for a budding career, but we were forever linked. Again finding ourselves together in the wild was a happy reunion.

Condors or no, these premier Central California locations treat with trails, camping, rocky heights and sights, flora and fauna, missions, history, redwoods and one of the world's most remarkable meetings of land and sea.

## Pinnacles National Park

Protected since 1908, this ancient volcanic field only achieved national park status in 2013. Its namesake spire-and-monolith skyline divides the park into road-distant east-west halves. The eastern half sits southeast of Hollister off State Route 25; the western day-use site sits northeast of Soledad. Visitation is high, especially on weekends, holidays and in the spring.

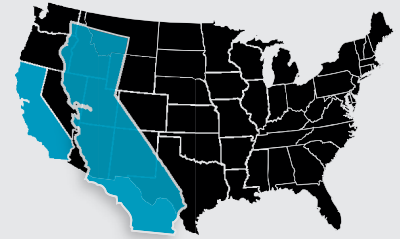
Locals tell me that park interest

---

This California condor (*Gymnogyps californianus*) was photographed at the San Diego Zoo Safari Park in California.







## Know Before You Go

- Winter 2017 storms caused mudslides that closed a portion of the Big Sur Coast Highway Scenic Byway. As of presstime, the portion of road from 4.6 miles north of Ragged Point to 10.3 miles north of Ragged Point at Mud Creek is estimated to reopen September 30, 2018.
- To reach the prime condor-watching locations, take U.S. Highway 101 to Route 68 at Salinas to Highway 1. From Carmel, the stretch of Highway 1 through Big Sur is open, but once you reach Gorda, approximately 60 miles south, you'll have to turn around.
- For the latest information, call the Caltrans Highway Information Network (800-427-7623) or visit [www.dot.ca.gov/cgi-bin/roads.cgi](http://www.dot.ca.gov/cgi-bin/roads.cgi)

The coast is a dramatic sight from Garrapata State Park along Big Sur Coast Highway Scenic Byway.

skyrocketed with the status upgrade and condors' arrival. Binoculars, spotting scopes, birders' guides and phone apps serve serious and casual seekers. A common conversation starter on trail or in camp is "Have you

seen the condors?"

While waiting for the celebrities, 160 other feathered species may draw note. Miles of trail unfurl the park's character, beauty and vistas. Some stretch flat, many climb.

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Clockwise, from top: Many campgrounds in the eastern section of Pinnacles National Park offer electric hookups. A waterfall among the coastal redwoods along Sobaranes Canyon Trail in Garrapata State Park. This statue of Padre Junipero Serra, one of the mission's founders, stands in front of Mission San Antonio de Padua, at Fort Hunter Liggett Military Reservation in Monterey County.

## Pinnacles, East

Overnighters should point their rigs here and plan on reserving sites. Most RV sites have electric hookups, with water in camp. When temperatures climb, a seasonal swimming pool, coin-operated showers and the shade of the visitor center porch bring relief. During peak-season weekends and holidays, a free shuttle runs between the East Pinnacles Visitor Center and Bear Gulch, which has limited parking (cars only).

Although a strenuous climb to High Peaks offers the best chance for condor sightings, the birds can be seen from camp. Campers point binoculars at the ridges, with the south ridge generally a good bet. Vultures roost nightly in nearby gray pines.

Bear Gulch, with trail access to the popular Talus Caves, cries for an early start. We hiked to Lower Cave (Upper Cave was closed for the Townsend's big-eared bats). Stairs and railings aid hikers through the rock openings. Trickling water, wet floors,



low ceilings, squeezed passages and blackness necessitate flashlights.

Moses Spring, with lovely ferns, suggested a loop return. Hummingbirds fed at bush monkeyflowers, and blooms of the elegant clarkia, chokecherry and succulents held glances. Buckeye, oak, gray pine, sugarbush and toyon interspersed the chunky

rock cliffs, balconies, overhangs and bowls.

Condor Gulch Overlook seemed a logical hike destination. For a 1-mile ascent, we attained a fine overlook of the oak-rock canyon and ridge skyline. Large lizards with muscular tails and leopard spots lowered glances. Hikers who mustered on toward High Peaks

## MEET THE CONDORS

If you are fortunate enough to read the condors' tags, note the color and number and go to [www.condorspotter.com](http://www.condorspotter.com) to learn more about that condor. We spotted female 22, Cosmo, of the Big Sur population, born April 17, 2000, raised at the San Diego Zoo. With her was male 51, Crush, also of the Big Sur population, raised in the Los Angeles Zoo.





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## FLIGHT OF THE CONDOR

met up with a biologist and two radio-tracked condors — not an altogether uncommon occurrence.

Tracing Old Pinnacles Trail up a canyon bottom toward Balconies Cave (beyond our late-afternoon intent), we admired quail, butterflies and a king snake. We walked out with a researcher, ending his day, tracking wand in hand. He pointed out three tiny circling birds, more than a mile high. "Condors," he said.

### ► While in the Area

Make a stop at San Benito County Historical Park and Historical Society Village. Separately operated, this duo to the north offers a shady rest and a look at pioneer history: historical farm and ranch equipment, homespun interpretations and rescued structures. View tools for tomato, potato and bean planting, and take a guided look at the Cottage, Saloon and Sullivan House.

### Pinnacles, West

An electronic gate controls access, opening at 7:30 a.m. Visitor station hours depend on staffing. Because the access road is single-lane and winding (15-foot-length maximum), plan to arrive by dinghy vehicle.

We followed Juniper Canyon Trail toward the High Peaks area, passing among juniper, oak, buckeye,



Above: With wet floors and low ceilings, the Lower Cave at Bear Gulch at Pinnacles National Park can be a tight squeeze, but is well worth the effort.

madrone, chemise and mid-April wildflowers. Bulky rock towers, boxy boulders, overhangs and ledges kept eyes moving. At the rocky top, lowered clouds and wind-animated mist gave a ghostly aura to the intricately layered temples and pinnacles. Perched on the cross-canyon cliff, we spied a living gargoyle — a condor.

### ► While in the Area

Mission Soledad (free) invites with calming flowers, statuary, crosses, a cemetery and the covered original



The challenging hike to High Peaks at Pinnacles NP results in a good chance for condor sightings.



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ruins. Inside the 1954-restored mission, a museum takes visitors through four periods of mission life: Indian, Spanish, Mexican and Rancho. Artifacts represented each period, and write-ups discuss the changing faith, food, fun and lifestyle.

At Mission San Antonio de Padua, (fee site) southwest of King City, pastel borders and a starry vault house the faithful. Artifacts complete the Padre's bedroom, kitchen and music room. A tanned hide wears the brands of the 21 California missions. Compound ruins reveal daily life: living quarters; threshing floor; olive and gristmills; fields, reservoirs, aqueducts and wells; a tannery; and a Native American cemetery.

### Big Sur Coast

Separated from Pinnacles by the forest-and-canyon expanse of the Santa Lucia Mountains/Los Padres National Forest-Ventana Wilderness, the Big Sur coast hosts a second population

of California condors. Highway 1, an American National Scenic Byway, strings its narrow, winding 90-mile length — best for small RVs. Make use of turnouts, the views are great!

McWay Canyon–Julia Pfeiffer Burns State Park called us aside with its stunning 80-foot seaward waterfall, rugged sculptural shoreline and steep redwood canyons and, as it happened, condors. For us, Partington Cove and Tan Bark Trailhead hosted the meeting. Condor watch sources recommend the flagpole area. For RV parking, use turnouts alongside Highway 1.

After exploring the redwood canyons of McWay and Partington creeks, we descended the old service road to rocky Partington Cove. It extended a wonderful window to the sea and a wild collision of wave and rock. Stacked hoodoos populated its shore.

On the return hike, six vultures circled overhead, followed by a single

condor. The latter returned, circling low, revealing a bright orange head, white underwing triangles, fanned tail and level flight. The vultures served as ready comparisons. While in high-five mode, three more condors glided over us, apparently unfazed by squeals and wild pointing.

Back at the turnout, a juvenile condor with a blackish head landed above Highway 1. Then two adults claimed ledges where Partington Creek meets the highway, winning our spotting scope's focus for the next hour. The scope, in turn, attracted an entourage of the curious. A businessman motoring up the coast hurried to a stop and ran, suit and tie, down the highway, yelling, "Are they condors? Really? Great!"

Oceanside pullouts between Julia Pfeiffer Burns State Park (Milepost 36) and longtime Big Sur landmark, Nepenthe Restaurant (Milepost 44, to the north), are reportedly good condor-watch stops. An area sea lion haulout

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FLIGHT OF THE **CONDOR**

attracts the condors with stillborn pups, afterbirth and carcasses. On our visit a whale carcass reportedly raised activity. The east ridge and Discovery Center (with condor interpretation, open summer weekends) at Andrew Molera State Park (Milepost 51), too, may bid stopping. Again, RV parking is alongside Highway 1.

For camping, Pfeiffer Big Sur State Park (Milepost 47) on the Big Sur River served our needs (RVs up to 32 feet). Private campgrounds expanded opportunity. Reserve early.

When condors are absent, consider the Ventana Wildlife Society (VWS) condor cams ([www.ventanaws.org/condor\\_cam](http://www.ventanaws.org/condor_cam)). For serious seekers, the Society offers two-hour condor tours on the Big Sur coast for a fee and preregistration. Their use of radio telemetry improves the odds.

► **While in the Area**

Big Sur Station (Milepost 46) is information central for touring the coast whether camping, hiking or sightseeing. Here, you can find print materials and videos, including one on Point Sur Light Station. Ask about tours at the 19th-century light station. But know, there is no parking for large motorhomes at the meeting site.

Garrapata State Park, (Mileposts 63-67), a more primitive park, has numbered accesses for coastal and inland trails (beware of poison oak) and is suitably wild for condors. Otters, harbor seals and seabirds may also be spied. **M**

**For More Information**

**Big Sur Chamber of Commerce**  
831-667-2100, [www.bigsurcalifornia.org](http://www.bigsurcalifornia.org)

**California Parks**  
800-777-0369, [www.parks.ca.gov](http://www.parks.ca.gov). For campground reservations, contact Reserve America, 800-444-7275 or go online at [www.parks.ca.gov](http://www.parks.ca.gov)

**Pinnacles National Park**  
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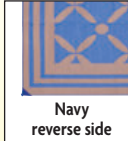
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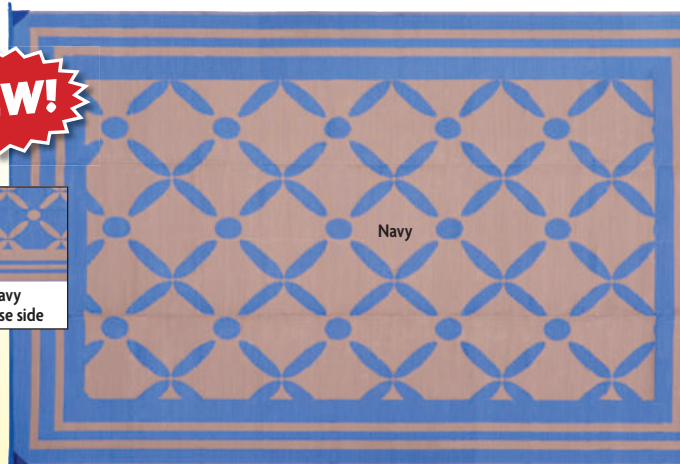
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# Driving Force

With diesel power, available 4WD and a commercial truck chassis, Dynamax's new Isata 5 30FW is a long-haul looker By Chris Hemer

**A**merica has always had a love affair with trucks. Whether pickup, semi or something in between, trucks represent the values that our country was built on: hard work, family and the American dream. They're reliable friends that stand at the ready to help us move, haul a trailer or deliver goods to a waiting customer. And yet, very few motorhomes are built on a truck chassis. Quite frankly, we've always wondered why. Trucks are typically better equipped to carry loads than their popular van counterparts, with heavier frames, more powerful engines and bigger brakes. Comparing apples to apples, trucks usually have roomier cabs, more legroom and bigger seats as well. We've heard some RV manufacturers claim that truck chassis aren't/haven't been popular with consumers because they ride rough and are noisy, particularly diesel models.

But that was yesteryear. Today's trucks, even heavy-duty diesel models, are well-equipped, comfortable and very quiet. Fortunately, Dynamax, a division of Forest River,

shares our point of view. The company has made a name for itself building what it calls luxury "Super C" motorhomes atop commercial truck chassis, and recently introduced a new line: the Isata 5 Series, built on the venerable RAM 5500 heavy-duty cutaway chassis. And last year, Dynamax expanded the two-floorplan 5 Series family with the 32-foot 30FW. Equipped with a single full-wall slide and large cabover bunk, the 30FW strikes a much-needed balance between diesel power, high-end features, family-friendliness and affordability (relatively speaking, of course). The test rig was also equipped with the available factory 4WD, a benefit that could come in handy on lesser traveled roads or during inclement weather, both of which are possible in the foothills of California's Sierra Nevada. So, that's where we headed last November to test the new Isata 5.

Cruising on scenic U.S. highway 395, we were impressed with the Isata 5's smooth ride, predictable handling and relatively quiet interior — only the pockmarked pavement on the outskirts of Los Angeles caused minor squeaks or rattles. Power from the high-output Cummins 6.7-liter diesel was also more than adequate; 325 hp and 750 lb-ft of torque may not sound like much for a diesel coach these days, but we had no trouble cresting highway grades at 65

**ABOVE:** Full-body paint with graphics, tinted privacy glass and lots of brightwork make the Isata 5 stand out. Power awning and exterior TV provide comfortable outdoor entertaining.



mph. The power-adjustable Leatherette cab seats with white stitching were comfortable and supportive, but we did notice something missing the moment we climbed into the cab: a center console. At first it seemed strange that Dynamax would overlook such a common feature, but when we thought about it, we understood why. As it is, the transmission tunnel is almost level with the living room floor, so removing yourself from the cab and walking back to the living area already requires some flexibility. With a console in the way, it would be practically impossible. If we owned this coach, we'd probably purchase an aftermarket console that could be moved when needed.

Obviously, the cab's rearview mirror is rendered useless by the presence of the living area just behind it, but Dynamax remedies this problem to some degree with a combination digital rearview mirror and backup camera. Push a button, and you can see what's behind you at any speed, and it also comes on automatically when backing, which is great. Less

Above, from left: The memory foam mattress is bisected so it can be folded into the slideout during travel. Fixed booth dinette has room for four, turns into a bed and has storage underneath each bench. The roomy overhead bunk with ladder will be a favorite sleeping spot. The TV bracket swings away from the wall for viewing from the living area.

effective in our opinion is the integration of sideview camera views in the display. The large sideview mirrors provide great visibility on their own, and we found that the camera image wasn't shown until the lane change was nearly complete anyway.

We arrived in the shadow of Mount Whitney just before sundown and began setting up for the evening. Illuminated multiplex switches for the awning, as well as the exterior, cargo and entry lights, are located just inside the door, along with a master light switch. Located just above and behind the driver's seat is the command center, which in the test unit consisted of controls for the slideout, digital solar controller (part of the \$1,033.50 solar package) Magnum inverter/charger, Equalizer Systems Auto-Level jacks and the air conditioning/furnace. On the rear wall above the dinette is also a Precision Circuits touch panel

that has intuitive icons for the lights, tank/battery levels and more.

It's customary to level any coach before deploying the slideouts, which was when we discovered another curiosity; the Equalizer four-point automatic leveling jacks require you to turn OFF the ignition to operate them, while the engine must remain ON to deploy the slideout. That means turning the engine off, then on again each time you arrive at your destination; vice-versa when you break camp. Not a big deal, but it is something to keep in mind.

Hooking up the power and plumbing connections at the RV park was fairly uneventful, except we found that the motorhome's utility bay was a little cramped; there wasn't much room for the large 50-amp power cord, and we had to exercise caution when unraveling it to avoid accidentally pulling a gray- or black-tank dump handle. We temporarily rectified the situation by placing the power cord and freshwater hose in an adjacent storage compartment, but a larger utility bay would be nice.

The designers of the Isata 5 definitely had entertainment in mind when they planned this coach. Not only is there a large, armless awning with LED lighting and wind detection, but also a 32-inch exterior TV located in a lockable compartment on the curbside. An automotive-style head unit in the compartment below provides sound to the dual exterior speakers, and the test



Left: A large sink with covers and generous counterspace (with extension) make meal prep easy. Stainless-steel Sharp convection/microwave oven and a residential refrigerator are good looking and functional.

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TEST

DYNAMAX ISATA 5 30FW

motorhome was also equipped with a feature that Dynamax is considering offering in future models: under-chassis LED lighting. The system offers a variety of colors to choose from, and is controlled by an app downloaded to a smartphone. It's a festive feature that can help others find your campsite, or just let fellow RVers know you're the party people.

Come morning light, we were struck by how good looking this motorhome is. Resplendent in the full-body Cosmic Blue exterior paint scheme complemented by silver/gray tones and tinted privacy windows, the long and low Isata 5 drew small crowds wherever we stopped. It's also as functional as it is handsome, with exterior storage that is both generous and expansive. The gray Rotocast plastic compartments are lighted, and the main compartment on the passenger side features a narrow section that is almost pass-through. We found this an ideal spot to stow folding chairs, while the rest of the compartment easily accommodated an ice chest and a large hard case for our photo equipment. The side opening doors feature hydraulic struts, and securely slam shut. Overall, there seems to be more than enough exterior storage space in this motorhome, especially considering its comparatively modest dimensions.

In travel mode, the living space feels narrow due to the above-floor slideout that encroaches on the walkway between the cockpit and the rear of the motorhome. Some caution must

### WHAT'S HOT

Good looking, great driving, well equipped, large overhead sleeping area.

### WHAT'S NOT

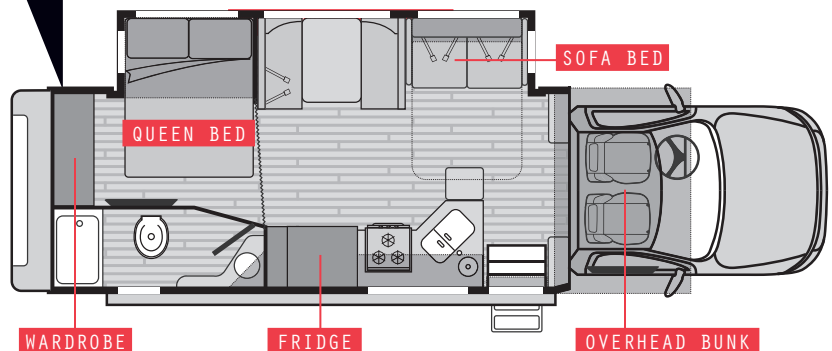
Above floor slideout encroaches on living area, front axle potentially overloaded.



be exercised here to avoid tripping, especially when the motorhome is underway. However, once you're at your destination, this small sacrifice seems well worth the effort; the living area practically grows twofold when the slideout is deployed, forming a welcome space for entertaining. The fixed dinette easily accommodates four adults, and sliding drawers beneath the bench seats, a new feature for 2018, have plenty of room to stow extra blankets, pillows or other items. Behind the driver's seat are a pair of theater seats that are comfortable, but don't recline — and we found that the footrests were on the short side for longer legs. They were also a challenge to stow, but the mechanism will likely loosen up over time.

We love motorhomes with overhead bunks. Perhaps they recall the bunkbeds we slept in as kids, or

## DYNAMAX ISATA 5 30FW





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TEST

DYNAMAX ISATA 5 30FW



A fiberglass shower enclosure with skylight offers a light and bright space for bathing. Nice-sized vanity with stainless-steel sink has plenty of countertop area, and there is enough cabinet room to store bathroom essentials.

maybe it's just because they feel cozy, but the one in the Isata 5 is particularly inviting. First of all, it's big at 54-by-80-inches, so even two adults (or adult-sized kids) will be comfortable here. The 39-inch flat-screen TV is located at the foot of the bed, and is located on a swingout bracket so everyone in the living area can enjoy it. There are also windows at both ends, cup holders, a small ladder to climb up on and a privacy curtain when you're ready to turn in for the night. The dinette also converts into a bed, but you should be prepared for fights over the bunk area.

The galley is smallish with only one full-size overhead cabinet, but is otherwise nicely equipped. The solid-surface countertop with extension and sink covers offers plenty of room for meal prep, and the double-bowl sink features an industrial-looking spring gooseneck faucet with integrated sprayer. We also really appreciated the garbage port just behind the sink that drops refuse into a full-size kitchen trash can in the cabinet below.

Underneath the Suburban three-burner cooktop are three large drawers, but no oven. You won't miss it, though, as above the cooktop is a Sharp residential convection/microwave oven

finished in stainless steel. Next to it is a 16-cubic-foot residential stainless-steel refrigerator, which operates on two deep-cycle house batteries and an inverter system when not plugged in. The aforementioned solar package, with its dual 100-watt panels, should make it possible to operate the refrigerator consistently when dry camping. Finally, a narrow but tall pantry houses three pull-out drawers and offers more than enough space for dry and canned goods.

The large full-wall street slideout also incorporates the queen-size bed, located across from the rear bathroom. Because the mattress would make contact with the bathroom wall when the slideout is in the stowed position, the mattress is bisected so it can be folded during travel. Getting ready to sleep in the evening requires simply that the bed be folded down, and the iCool gel-infused memory foam mattress was very comfortable. The bathroom is also unusually large, featuring a porcelain toilet and fiberglass shower enclosure with brushed-nickel fixtures to the right, and a good size sink vanity behind the door. There's plenty of room for essentials on the sink countertop,



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TEST

DYNAMAX ISATA 5 30FW

storage underneath and a medicine cabinet with mirror. There is also a magazine rack at ground level in front of the toilet, but we would probably give up this feature in favor of more foot/legroom when perched on the throne.

At the rearmost part of the interior is a wardrobe with a mirror and six drawers. Some level of compromise will be required here, as the closet is on the small side and access to it is a bit tight, even when the slideout is deployed. If you want access to clothes and other items during travel, it's best to do what we did and keep your essentials in a duffle bag on the bed platform. Drawer space is really only adequate for two or three people, but we did appreciate the fact that closet and drawers were cedar-lined and well-finished.

We would be remiss if we didn't mention that the test coach had a weight issue, namely a front axle that was at its gross axle weight rating (GAWR) limit of 7,000 pounds with no passengers up front or cargo. We contacted Dynamax about this, and the company spokesperson explained that the test motorhome was an early prototype that had not been fitted with the heavier front springs that increase the chassis' front GAWR to 7,250 pounds. While loading heavier items in the rear will help, potential buyers should keep this weight issue in mind when considering this model — or other floorplans in the product line — to prevent overloading.

Before we knew it, it was time to break camp and head back to Los Angeles. But unlike the usual grind through the concrete arteries of the inner city, we knew this would be a drive to enjoy. The Dynamax Isata 5 30FW is a well-equipped rig that should tick most of the boxes a midsize motorhome buyer is looking for, weight and payload considerations notwithstanding. And perhaps best of all (for some buyers) it's got the soul of a truck. **M**

Dynamax, A Division of Forest River Inc.  
888-295-7859, www.dynamaxcorp.com

## Specifications

### Chassis

Model	RAM 5500 4WD
Engine	6.7-liter High Output Cummins turbodiesel
SAE Hp	325 @ 2,400 rpm
Torque	750 lb-ft @ 1,500 rpm
Transmission	6-speed automatic
Axle Ratio	4.88:1
Front Tires	225/70R19.5
Rear Tires	225/70R19.5
Wheelbase	237.5"
Brakes	Disc
Suspension F/R	Five link/leaf spring with solid axle
Fuel Capacity	52 gal
Fuel Economy	9.3 mpg
Warranty	3-year/36,000-mile bumper-to-bumper, 5-year/100,000-mile powertrain

### Coach

Exterior Length	32'
Exterior Width	8'
Exterior Height	12' 4"
Interior Width	7' 8"
Interior Height	6' 10"
Construction	Two-inch aluminum framed laminated side walls with block foam insulation; gel-coat fiberglass walls with Azdel backing; aluminum-framed floor; aluminum-framed roof trusses; crowned one-piece fiberglass roof; fiberglass front/rear caps
Freshwater Capacity	78 gal
Black-Water Capacity	42 gal
Gray-Water Capacity	42 gal
Water-Heater Capacity	N/A (on-demand)
LP-Gas Capacity	20.3 gal
Air Conditioner	(1) 15,000 Btu
Furnace	42,000 Btu
Refrigerator	16 cu-ft
Inverter/Charger	2,000-watt Pure Sine Wave
Battery	(2) Group 27 AGM deep cycle
AC Generator	6 kW diesel
MSRP	\$181,566
MSRP as tested	\$188,158
Warranty	2 years

### Wet Weight

(Water and water heater, fuel and LP-gas tanks full, no supplies or passengers)

Front Axle	7,000 lbs
Rear Axle	10,885 lbs
Total	17,885 lbs

### Chassis Ratings

GAWR F/R	7,000 lbs/13,500 lbs
GVWR/GCWR	19,500 lbs/38,500 lbs
ROCCC	1,615 lbs
GAWR	Gross Axle Weight Rating
GVWR	Gross Vehicle Weight Rating
GCWR	Gross Combination Weight Rating
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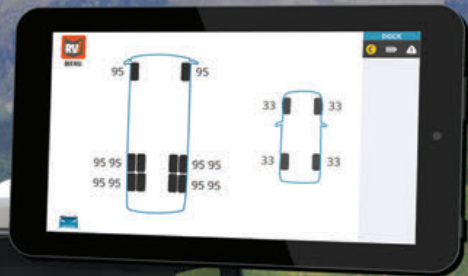


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# WINNEBAGO A LEGACY OF MORE FOR THE MONEY

Founded in 1958, Winnebago Industries turns 60 this year. Our “Then and Now” series retraces six decades that gave America some of its most beloved motorhomes and towables — and looks at what one of the top names in the industry is doing today.

## 1968-1977

In 1970, Richard Nixon was in the White House, the first jumbo jet flew to London, video games and microprocessors hit the market, and Simon and Garfunkel won a Grammy with “Bridge over Troubled Water.”

The RV industry was just over 10 years old, and Americans loved their new past-time. In fact, Winnebago went public on the New York Stock Exchange in 1970, and in one year, its stock soared 462 percent.

Then in 1973, an oil embargo hit and quickly weakened the economy. Young RV companies would face

their first big test. But at Winnebago, optimistic president John K. Hanson said, “You can’t take weekends away from the American public.”

The challenge to lure budget-conscious consumers back into RVing brought out the best in Winnebago’s creativity for design and marketing. At the 1974 World’s Fair in Spokane,

Washington, the company set up 300 special Expo motorhomes in “Winnebago Village.” Via overnight housing, millions of visitors were exposed to RV living.

Winnebago listened to these consumers and developed efficient models that delivered more for the money:

- Winnie Wagon, a new category of RV that could fit into a garage — a forerunner of today’s Class B and C motorhomes
- Minnie Winnie, a Class C motorhome with a smaller footprint
- Chieftain, a Class A diesel that made luxury features standard



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EXTERIOR WIDTH:	8'5"
EXTERIOR HEIGHT:	12'
INTERIOR HEIGHT:	7'
AWNING LENGTH:	19' - 24'
GVWR:	16,000 LBS. - 18,000 LBS.
MSRP STARTING AT:	\$115,517

“With the Intent, we started with a clean sheet of paper,” says Niles Whitehouse, project manager for Winnebago Class A gas motorhomes. “To offer the best user experience possible, we spent hours listening to input.”

The result is a sleek coach that brings completely new amenities to the Class A category:

- Up to 4 removable 5-gallon LP tanks that can be refilled without driving to a filling station
- Tailgate package for outdoor entertaining: TV, refrigerator, countertop sink and pull-out extension table under a large awning
- Front windshield with a wider view
- Residential-size refrigerator and abundant storage

Advanced materials, a modular approach to floorplans and a dedicated SuperStructure manufacturing process bring this Class A in at a budget-friendly price.

“We pinpointed things we would *not* compromise on, and safety was one of them,” says Whitehouse. “We found other ways to save costs.”

The Winnebago Intent comes in four floorplans from 26 feet to 31 feet, and includes a bunk model. Find a video introduction to the Intent on Winnebago’s YouTube channel. For details, go to the Intent page on [WinnebagoInd.com](http://WinnebagoInd.com).



## ROAD-TESTED BY “THE RV ENTREPRENEUR”

Popular RV podcasters Heath and Alyssa Padgett tried out the Intent for a week—and Heath had this to say:

“There are a couple things I really love about the new Intent. One is the replaceable LP units. It sounds like a small thing, but driving our rig to refill empty tanks has been a huge issue. Second, the outdoor kitchen is not an extremely common feature I’ve seen on motorhomes (but it should be). These new features, combined with the overall layout and aesthetics, make the Intent an ideal choice for anyone searching for an entry-level Class A gas motorhome.”

By the end of the decade, Winnebago offered a lineup of 23 motorhomes at a range of price-points. But the company never compromised on quality. Instead, Winnebago used the ‘70s to perfect the stringent manufacturing standards it’s legendary for, including a standalone steel cab, interlocking roof and side wall joints, furnishings bolted into solid steel and a punishing test track that still runs 100-plus checks for performance and safety.

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# IT'S SHOWTIME!

THE LATEST NATIONAL RV TRADE SHOW REVEALS THE NEWEST MOTORHOME TRENDS AND MANUFACTURING TECHNOLOGY

**W**hile manufacturers of towable RVs might take exception, the fact remains that designing, engineering and constructing a motorhome is among the most involved processes known to any vehicle industry. Whether it's having to craft a comfortable environment within the confines of a van body (as in the case of Class B motorhomes), utilizing a cutaway chassis for a Class C or any of the multitude of rolling chassis available to the Class A segment, the systems, electronics and moving parts involved make the act of bringing a new motorhome to market an intensive, expensive and time-consuming exercise.

But, don't get the impression that anyone is complaining. With the RV industry entering into uncharted territory — it was expected to ship more than a half-million units to dealers by the end of 2017, a number never before seen

since the Recreation Vehicle Industry Association (RVIA) began tabulating shipments in 1978 — a growing audience of outdoor enthusiasts continues to provide motorhome manufacturers with incentive to push the design envelope.

While it's not uncommon for a manufacturer to introduce mid-year model changes, most of these new-model-year concepts debut at one of the RV industry's two premier trade events: the Elkhart County RV Open House in September and the late-fall National RV Trade Show in Louisville, Kentucky. We published the first look at the 2018 models from Elkhart in the February issue. The Louisville show — presented by RVIA and now in its 55th year — continued the vehicle rollouts among nearly 1 million square feet of space inside the Kentucky Exposition Center. Following are some of the highlights, direct from the show floor.

## IT'S SHOWTIME!

### Coachmen Pursuit 31BH

Bunkhouse floorplans are generally hot sellers, but the Coachmen Pursuit 31BH “ups the ante” by including a bunk space that can double as a wardrobe when not in use. “If you are taking a longer trip and you don’t want to use that area for sleeping, the bunks convert to a full wardrobe, making it a great floorplan for families and for extended stays,” said Zach Eppers, Coachmen’s Class A gas sales manager.

The master bedroom suite, which includes a king bed as well as an impressive amount of storage, also has been revamped. “We have been able to design the bedroom in this motorhome where you can fully walk around the bed. There are end tables on both sides of the bed for plugging in cellphones or the like,” he said. The bedroom wardrobe, by the way, is located in the full-wall streetside slide, a decision Eppers said was made to maximize the campground experience “so the camping area is not impeded by a slide.”

As he noted, that also allowed Coachmen designers to increase



exterior storage where it is most needed — on the patio side of the motorhome. The \$117,000 MSRP 31BH also offers an optional 50-inch external TV (larger than the typical 32-inchers most offer, said Eppers). All that adds up to a versatile floorplan, which Eppers says is

unmatched in this segment.

“The fact that we can do a king bed, plus the end tables with storage, plus the fact that the bunkbeds convert to a wardrobe, makes our floorplan more multidimensional than others — and having that 50-inch TV on the exterior really pumps up the ‘wow’ factor.”

### Entegra Emblem

Entegra Coach, a division of Thor Industries’ subsidiary, Jayco Inc., introduced the all-new Emblem, a gasoline-powered Class A motorhome, to grow the company’s family of products beyond its diesel-pusher offerings. Slated for early 2018 delivery, the 38-foot Emblem debuts with two bath-and-a-half floorplans built on the Ford F-53 chassis.

While both models feature a rear bath and king bed slide as part of a large master suite and a curbside galley, the two-slide 35T features an L-shaped expandable sofa, while the triple-slide 36T offers bunk beds and either a sofa bed or optional theater seats.

Featuring one-piece fiberglass front and rear caps and a seamless crowned fiberglass roof, the exterior also offers



lockable pass-through storage compartments with slam latches, electric-powered entrance step and an entrance door with the industry’s largest travel view window.

The Emblem’s interior luxuries include 7-foot interior ceiling height with padded vinyl ceiling and high-intensity recessed LED ceiling lights. The kitchen features a 21-cubic-foot residential refrigerator, convention microwave oven, LP-gas cooktop and a water filtration system. MSRP: N/A at presstime.







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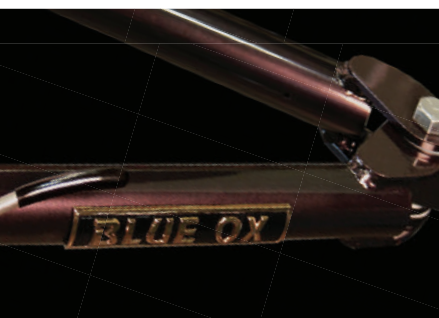
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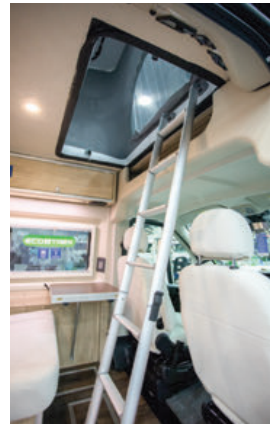
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## IT'S SHOWTIME!

### Erwin Hymer Group North America Aktiv 2.0 Loft Edition

Erwin Hymer Group North America (EHGNA) made waves at the Open House by debuting the Aktiv 2.0 Loft edition, and we spent some extended time with it at the Louisville show.

"The Loft is basically a pop-top on an Aktiv that has a built-in bed," said Mike Snell, vice president of sales and service for EHGNA. "A Class B has never been capable of comfortably sleeping four; now we have the capability of sleeping five, or even six in some cases. That opens up the market to families. We see it being a huge boost to the segment because it opens up a whole new client base that would never before have considered a Class B," said Snell. Like the standard Aktiv 2.0, the Loft edition is built on



an extended 3500 RAM ProMaster chassis, and is available with a power sofa option. Snell did say that EHGNA has discussed including the Loft feature on other vehicles, but nothing concrete is in place. The Aktiv 2.0 Loft edition retains some of the newer

technology that EHGNA has adopted across its platforms. "We remain very excited about our Volt Start and lithium battery technology, which allow us to run the roof air without a generator or being plugged in," said Snell. MSRP: \$119,000.



Speaking of technology, EHGNA proved it is at the head of the class by displaying a fully autonomous Roadtrek RS Class B motorhome. And, while the prototype is not available for sale — nor approved for operation in the U.S. — Snell says it is the result of some forward thinking between EHGNA and the University of Waterloo in Ontario, Canada. "We wanted to have the technology here on the shelf, and when the U.S. roads are capable and can support an autonomous vehicle, we'll be ready," he said. The vehicle features a sensor on the front bumper to help avoid collisions. Dual monitors (plans to reduce the setup to one computer are already underway) in the cab allow the user to plug the destination coordinates into the computer, give the address and hit 'Start.' "This particular vehicle has been certified fully autonomous in Ontario," said Snell, who added, "It's been driven about 1,500 miles with nobody in the front seat."



### Fleetwood IROK

After introducing REV Recreation Group's first Class B, the Patriot, in its American Coach lineup last June, REV debuted the Fleetwood IROK at Louisville. From its near-monochromatic black appearance — which carries over to the interior — to rear bike racks, the Class B is, noted Lenny Razo, REV vice president of sales and marketing, "going more after that outdoorsy, Millennial look."

"It comes in one floorplan — what you see is what you get. We wanted to make it very simple, but we try to give you everything that you need to go on a nice four or five day trip," Razo added. "We don't have any options, but we really loaded it up with a continuous water heater, 15,000-Btu air conditioner, really just everything we could." Other standard features of the RAM ProMaster-based IROK include high-end wood cabinets, solid-surface countertops, large electric sofa, 32-inch flat-screen TV and a spacious bath area behind double doors. With an MSRP of "right around \$100,000," Razo said the IROK would go into production in April 2018 as a 2019 model-year motorhome.



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## IT'S SHOWTIME!

### Gulf Stream Conquest 6220

Gulf Stream has added a new floorplan to its popular lineup of Conquest Class C motorhomes. The Conquest 6220 is just under 25 feet long and is easy to operate, said Paul Campbell, Gulf Stream's director of marketing. "If you're looking for an economical purchase price, a real livable floorplan, the kind of motorhome you'd be comfortable in driving all day long in terms of stability, handling and drivability, this is an ideal one to consider," he said. Built on the Ford E-350 SD chassis, the 6220 is an abbreviated floorplan that offers sleeping for up to six and a single slide in the bedroom that houses the 60-by-74-inch bed. And like other Conquest motorhomes, Campbell says it comes with an impressive list of standard features. "We have a base build like



just about everybody else, but then we automatically add the things that most people charge extra for as options, like stainless-steel appliances, under-lit counters, upgrades like awning toppers on our slideouts and even a 4-kW generator. All the things that you're going to know you want once you've been in a motorhome for a while, and perhaps wish that you

had." That includes stout construction, which Campbell explained: "We always build a special chassis underneath the floor. We call it 'The cradle of strength.' It adds a lot of steel bracing and fore-and-aft support to the chassis to keep it as stable as possible and to keep the weight low so it handles particularly well," he said. MSRP: around \$79,000.



### Thor Motor Coach Tuscany 40RT

Thor Motor Coach (TMC) revamped its Tuscany line of diesel pushers for 2018, including the introduction of a new floorplan, the 40RT. The \$399,999 (MSRP) 40RT is a new single-rear-axle diesel pusher with triple slideouts, extensive kitchen workspace and two large-screen TVs.

"This is a brand-new 40-footer for us," said Jon Krider, TMC's vice president of product development and marketing, noting that the lack of a tag axle on this unit makes it attractive to a sizeable group of RVers. "A lot of people like bigger motorhomes, but some just don't want the second tag axle back there."

Mounted on a Freightliner XCR raised rail chassis, the 40RT has a side radiator, 450-hp Cummins ISL 8.9-liter engine and, as Krider said, "all the electronics and all the goodies."

Other highlights include theater seating, mid-coach half bath and large rear bath, drop-down bunk over the cockpit and a Tilt-A-View inclining king bed in the master suite.

### Thor Motor Coach Vegas 25.6

Among a host of new models in its several motorized lines, TMC also unveiled the Vegas 25.6, which Krider described as offering a tremendous amount of storage in its 26-foot, 6 inch-long single-slide configuration.

"We continue to get a lot of great feedback on our RUV products — Recreation Utility Vehicles — and so one of the things we wanted is a small coach that has a lot of wardrobe space because we're finding people who are downsizing from bigger coaches. They like everything about the small coach except they're just not willing to give up a few things, like some wardrobe space and some living space. They may not be using this as much as they were as a full-timer, but this 25.6 gives you a nice full-wall slide and two different wardrobes — so you've also got his-and-hers closets," Krider said of the \$115,000 MSRP motorhome.



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# IT'S SHOWTIME!

## Tiffin Wayfarer 24FW

Tiffin began its second year of manufacturing the luxury Class C Wayfarer by introducing the 24FW, a full-wall-slide floorplan built on the Mercedes-Benz Sprinter chassis with a gross vehicle weight rating (GVWR) of 11,030 pounds. "A lot of the features on our Class C models are carried over from our Class A's," said Stan Posey, Tiffin's national sales manager, highlighting a water-filtration system, black-tank flush, LED lighting throughout and the one-piece seamless slideout (which "opens up a ton of room at the campsite," said Posey).

Interior appointments are likewise what you'd want — and expect — in a luxury motorhome. "The interior is contemporary modern," said Posey. "That's a direction a lot of manufacturers are headed, but we're really happy being ahead [of the curve] with our interior design."

"All cabinets are solid wood, hand-made and hand-crafted," he added, "but the thing I really like about this unit is the amount of storage available. There's a wardrobe in the living area, along with a wardrobe in the bathroom. There's also 32 square feet of storage in the exterior bays." With a 60-by-74-inch queen-size Murphy bed as the main sleeper — with the bed folded when not in use, there's plenty of room for a desk/workstation — the easily maneuverable 24FW is less than 26 feet long. MSRP: around \$136,000.





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### Tiffin Zephyr 45PZ

Built on Tiffin's proprietary PowerGlide chassis and featuring the optional Tru-Track passive steering tag axle, the new 2018 Zephyr 45PZ is, said Posey, "a real head-turner."

"The Zephyr is our top-of-the-line product," said Posey. "We went with this floorplan because everything seems to flow really smoothly." That free-flowing interior features new-

for-2018 upgrades like a tiled wall in the master bath, a layered backsplash with integrated LED lighting, attractive decorative flourishes and JBL premium audio.

"This also has our contemporary ceiling, which is new to us. We put upgraded LED accent lighting in the soffit," he pointed out, adding the flooring is all tile, with a heated subfloor. Also new for 2018 is the

usage of a high-definition digital dash panel with larger monitors in the cockpit. Additional electronics includes Mobileye Driver Assistance, a passenger-side GPS screen and a Pressure-Pro tire-pressure monitoring system. The Zephyr has a 51,000-pound GVWR and features full-body, clear-coated paint; new front and rear caps; and stainless-steel trim at the bottom of the cargo doors. MSRP: \$650,000. **M**

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# SPRING FEVER

GETTING YOUR MOTORHOME READY TO ROLL AFTER WINTER STORAGE MAKES FOR A SUCCESSFUL TRAVEL SEASON

**E**ach year as winter thaws, the first thing most of us think about is getting the motorhome ready and planning the first trip. But before you start packing, there are a lot of things that need to be done to ensure a successful travel season. A motorhome is a very complex machine with lots of systems and opportunities for problems. All of these systems require some maintenance — some more than others. Getting a rig ready could take a day or two if done correctly, so allow yourself time before your first trip to go through our list of spring-cleaning tips. A little time spent now will go a long way toward ensuring a full season of fun.

After uncovering a motorhome or retrieving it from storage, one of the first things we suggest is to open up all the windows and turn on the roof exhaust vents and let it air out for several hours (or overnight, if possible). This will not only help remove the stale air inside the coach, it will also provide fresh air for you

while you're inside performing some of the other tasks that lie ahead.

While the motorhome is airing out, open every cabinet and drawer and inspect the contents. An even better plan is to empty each cabinet and drawer while cleaning the interior. This gives you time to make a mental note if you are running out of

certain items. This remove-and-clean step may seem like overkill, but there is a reason for it. While everything is out of the cabinets, you can look for other potential problems, such as rodent or insect infestation, as well as leaks or water damage from the roof, walls or internal waterlines in the motorhome. If any form of rodent or bug bait stations were used inside or in basement storage areas, now is the time to change them out as well. Performing this inspection with everything in the cabinets would not be nearly as complete, so take the extra time to do it right.

The interior is also prone to collecting mold, mildew, viruses and germs. No one wants to live with



that. As we travel throughout the country and step in and out of our rigs, we, as well as our pets, bring in lots of undesirable things with every footstep and touch of our hands. So after you vacuum everything, make sure to disinfect all of the surfaces that come in contact with feet, hands, clothes and food. Areas such as the steering wheel, dash and other chassis controls, window tracks and locks, doorknobs and handles, HVAC controls, floors, sinks, toilet, shower, shower door, bathtub, furniture and water fixtures, as well as the interior of the refrigerator/freezer (and icemaker), should all be completely disinfected. Treat these areas just as you would inside your house and use clean microfiber or disposable paper towels and the correct disinfectant spray for each surface. The leather driver's seat will need a different product than a toilet bowl, counter or a window track. In addition to the disinfecting of all the critical areas, the inside is likely in need of a good dusting of the cabinet faces, countertops, etc. Most of this is very similar to cleaning a home and many of the same products can be used here for general cleaning. If you still have a musty smell, a good air deodorizer made for RV use can help as well.

The HVAC system is another source

## THE CLEAN TEAM

**[A]** If the black tank is not rinsed and cleaned properly, the sensors can yield incorrect data due to residual waste buildup on the walls. A good way to really clean the tank is to nearly fill it with water and toss in a Walex Commando Black Holding Tank cleaning packet. Allow it to sit for 12-24 hours, then dump. It uses natural enzymes to clean and deodorize the tank and remove debris.

**[B]** After cleaning the galley area, fill the gray-water tank and add a product such as Walex Elemonate water tank deodorizer. Elomonate is designed to clean and freshen drain lines and the gray-water tank. It also helps dissolve grease and food particles in the tank to ensure it stays smelling fresh and flows freely.

**[C]** Microfiber towels are a staple for cleaning any motorhome and they are great for interior and exterior use. They work well on glass, rubber and vinyl, as well as painted surfaces and glass.

**[D]** Sometimes the entire motorhome has an odor after being stored all winter. A good product to handle this problem is Walex Assure, which can be sprayed on all fabric surfaces and in the air to help rid the interior of stale, musty odors. It even works on smoke, mold and mildew smells and leaves a fresh scent.

**[E]** Maintaining the rubber slideout seal is another important part of maintenance. Inspect several times a year and treat the slide seals and gaskets with a product like Protect-All Slide-Out Rubber Seal Treatment. Simply spray on the rubber treatment and wipe away the excess. Make sure to wipe it on both sides of the slide room seals for maximum benefit.

**[F]** Camco TastePURE Drinking Water Freshener is a must if you regularly use the freshwater tanks. Simply add 1 ounce per 20 gallons of water when filling the tank. It helps prevent algae and slime, and also helps stored water stay odor free and tasting good.

**[G]** A motorhome toilet needs proper care. It has a rubber seal at the bottom to prevent sewer gases from entering the interior, and to keep water in the bowl. Dometic Toilet Bowl and Seal Cleaner, for example, is made specifically for motorhome toilets. Simply turn the bottle upside down and spray the cleaner inside the bowl. Then use a toilet brush to scrub the inside and rinse.

**[H]** If left without any maintenance the slideout rails are subject to corrosion and sticking. To help prevent problems with the slideout mechanism, spray the rails, gears or other metal parts with Camco Slide-Out Lube and Protectant, if recommended by the manufacturer. When used regularly, it can help prevent rust and repel water and dirt.

**[I]** Thetford Aqua-Clean is a good general-purpose cleaner for use in areas like the kitchen and bath. It has a foaming action that helps lift dirt and soap scum off the surface of counters and fixtures without scratching them.



of germs and mold; removing and cleaning the filters inside of the air return(s) should be part of the process. Usually there is a washable foam filter that can be cleaned and disinfected and reinstalled. After cleaning the filters, check the proper operation of the HVAC systems by running the furnace and air conditioner(s) at the various fan settings, etc.

Before draining and flushing the water system, make sure the water heater is turned off and completely drained. Then remove the water-heater anode rod, if your water heater has one, and check its condition. This is much easier to do now with the tank empty than after refilling. The anode rod should be replaced when there's about 25 percent of the material remaining. Proper anode maintenance ensures water-heater tank longevity.

If winterization included the use of antifreeze in the water system, you will need to remove it and completely flush the water system. When there is no longer a chance of freezing weather, drain the tanks and lines by opening them up and allow as much of the antifreeze to drain as possible. Then, using a drinking-water-safe hose, add some fresh water to the water tank. Start turning on each water faucet and allow it to run until the water is clear (not pink).



Clockwise, from top left: After taking your motorhome out of storage, plan on at least one day of spring cleaning before hitting the road. The generator should be run at 50 percent load (air conditioner, for example) for two hours. This should be done monthly while in storage, according to Cummins Onan. After getting the motorhome out of storage, check the oil levels as well as the coolant — and service as needed before the first trip. Open and inspect all the cargo bays for signs of water leaks, rodent damage, etc. This is also a good time to make sure you actually need everything you are carrying. Unused items should be removed to reduce weight. Look over the battery bay and make sure there are no signs of corrosion. If you have not already treated the terminals, spray each one with CRC Battery Terminal Protector. It will help protect them from future damage and keep them looking like new. These batteries are more than 5 years old and still look great. Check the battery voltage and make sure the electrolyte levels are good (if the motorhome is equipped with wet-cell batteries).

Repeat this procedure until all the antifreeze is gone. This needs to be done using both the water tank and the city water connection to ensure the water tank and the city water lines are cleaned out. Return the water heater bypass valve to the "normal

flow" setting. This will allow fresh water to re-enter the water heater. Allow it to fill while running hot water through one or more water fixtures; when the air is replaced by water, you're good to go. Make sure the de-winterization process includes

Below, from left: While the water heater is empty, remove the anode rod (if so equipped), and make sure enough material still remains. If not, replace it with a new one. Use PTFE thread sealant tape to keep the anode rod threads from leaking and corroding to the tank. Many motorhomes are equipped with an in-line water filter, which should be replaced annually, or sooner if flow becomes restricted. This filter protects waterlines and fixtures from sediment, and provides cleaner drinking water (depending on the filter type).



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the dishwasher, washer lines and icemaker as well. It's always a good idea to make several trays of ice and dispose of them until you know the RV antifreeze is completely removed from the water lines.

Next, add a mixture of bleach and water to the freshwater tank to sanitize the system. To make the hypochlorite solution, mix ¼ cup of plain household bleach with 1 gallon of water for each 15 gallons of tank capacity. So, if you have a 30-gallon tank, use 2 gallons of solution. This makes the chlorine residual in the system 50 parts per million (PPM). Add the solution, then fill the tank completely. After the tank is full, open each faucet, shower, etc., and run water until you smell the bleach. After you have drawn the chlorine bleach into each water source, allow the system to sit for a minimum of four hours before draining the solution from the water system and repeating the rinsing process to remove the chlorine smell.

Other systems that need a complete inspection include the oven, stove or LP-gas cooktop as well as the furnace, water heater and LP-gas refrigerator. If you are going to light the water heater, make sure it is filled with water first and also inspect the outside exhaust. Often insects will build a nest in the LP-gas appliances, so remove the outside covers (if installed) to make sure they

are not restricted; plugged covers can result in a fire and/or operational problems. Wasps like to build nests in and around the exhaust, while small spiders are attracted to the smell of the odorant in the LP-gas, and can make webs in the burner tubes, especially in water heaters. Since the LP-gas has been turned off all winter it may take several attempts to purge those lines and get everything working, so be patient if it doesn't work right away. We find the best thing is to light the gas burners on the stovetop first, then move on to the refrigerator, furnace and/or water heater.

Most modern motorhomes utilize many battery-powered devices that should be inspected. Hopefully, before storing the motorhome, the batteries from the various remote controls were removed to prevent leaking and damage. This includes the TV and surround-sound devices as well as any weather-station remote temperature sensors and battery-powered clocks. Smoke detectors should be tested, and the batteries replaced, annually. Most smoke alarms are rated for eight to 10 years of life, while carbon monoxide and LP-gas detectors last only five to seven years. Many will have a date stamp indicating when they should be replaced.

While checking safety items, don't forget to look at the fire



Protect-All is a great general-purpose product that can be used on many surfaces. It's formulated to clean and protect painted surfaces, wood, plastic, chrome, aluminum, stainless steel, headlights, mirrors and even glass. Simply spray it on (allow it to set a bit for removing bug splatter) and then wipe off with a clean microfiber towel.

extinguisher(s). Make sure it's mounted properly and charged. If you don't have at least one fire extinguisher inside (and preferably a second one easily accessible in a cargo bay), now is a good time to get that taken care of.

The chassis should be targeted next. If the motorhome has been plugged in to shorepower all winter and you have observed proper battery maintenance and storage practices suitable for the climate zone, the

Below, from left: Check the fire extinguisher — there was recently a huge recall involving 134 models of Kidde fire extinguishers manufactured between January 1, 1973, and August 15, 2017. Check online for applicability; the manufacturer will replace it with a new one. The major cause of damage to battery-powered devices such as flashlights, smoke alarms, remote controllers, clocks, weather stations, etc., is acid leaking from a discharged battery. To prevent this type of damage, remove the batteries when the device is not in use and replace batteries that are out of date. An inspection of the plumbing bay should include the freshwater and sewer hoses. We found the sewer hose on our motorhome was cracked. One choice for replacement is Camco's Rhino Extreme, which is a very durable hose that should last for many years.





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<sup>\*</sup>Information obtained from AAA of Colorado Plus RV plan at Colorado.aaa.com on 11/16/2017.

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batteries should be charged — but it's always a good idea to check condition and charge levels of the chassis and house batteries. If there is corrosion on the terminals, address that now.

If the motorhome has flooded (wet) cell batteries, the electrolyte levels must be inspected. Each cell must be filled to ensure all the plates are covered with distilled water, and then completely charge the batteries. Use a voltmeter and/or a battery condition tester to check each one and make sure they are charged before hitting the road. If a single battery needs replacement, it's usually best to replace the entire bank. So, if one of the house batteries is bad (most motorhomes have between two to eight house batteries), replace them all. The same procedure holds true for chassis batteries.

Many owners like to perform an equalization charge on wet-cell house batteries once a year; follow the instructions for the inverter/charger and make sure the battery bay is vented during this procedure, and turn off all 12-volt DC devices.

While filling and checking the batteries, inspect the terminals and cables. Clean corrosion with CRC Battery Cleaner or baking soda and then protect them with CRC Battery Terminal Protector. CRC is specifically designed to prevent corrosion from forming on cable ends and battery terminals.

Also check all of the battery cables and connections to make sure they are all tight.

Now is also a good time to test the generator. Check the oil/coolant levels and disconnect shorepower before starting; run under a 50 percent



Above: Make sure to remove and clean (or replace) the HVAC return air filters before the season starts. These things can collect a shocking amount of dirt and dust, so clean and dry them completely (if cleanable), or replace with new ones, if necessary. Tire pressure should be checked before every trip. After sitting all winter, the tires should be inspected for damage, bulges and cracking, and should be inflated properly.

load (air conditioner, for example) for two hours. This should be done monthly while in storage, according to Cummins Onan. While the generator is running, check the air pressure in the tires and inspect them for bulges, dry rot and road hazard damage, etc. Also check the DOT date codes on the tires and make sure they are still within the manufacturers' limits of age. Even if the tires are not damaged or dry rotted, they typically time out in seven years, unless the motorhome was stored indoors, in which case, they may be good for 10 years (check tire manufacturer's recommendations) as long as there's proper tread depth and they are free from sidewall cracks.

The motorhome's engine should also be checked for basic items such as oil level, transmission fluid level, antifreeze/coolant, etc. Check the suggested service intervals in the owner's manual and make sure everything has been serviced properly. This includes the engine, generator and chassis. Most fluids and filters need to be changed based on time or mileage. This means even if there aren't many miles on the odometer, the motorhome may need servicing based on the time.

Slideouts and basement doors

are other areas that need attention after storage. Extend the slides and inspect the rubber wiper seals that fill the gap around the structure and side walls when open. Without a properly working outer seal there is nothing preventing rain, bugs, dirt, etc., from entering the motorhome. Look carefully for tears, dirt/debris or places where the seal has pulled away from the slideout walls and around the perimeter of the slideout where the rubber gasket seals the slide against the side wall when closed. To ensure the seals last as long as possible, treat them with a slideout seal treatment, like Thetford's Slide-Out Rubber Seal Conditioner, or Protect-All's Slide-Out Rubber Seal Treatment.

It is also recommended to inspect the slide rails and gear mechanism. Usually these are located on the side and/or the bottom of the slide, and they also need cleaning and lubricating (if required by the manufacturer). After inspecting each track or mechanism, wipe to remove all dirt and debris and lubricate with a product like Camco Slide-Out Lube and Protectant or 3-IN-ONE RVcare Slide-Out Silicone Lube.

Clearly this is a long list of maintenance procedures, and not every one of them applies to every situation. As always, the most important thing is to get out on the road and have a safe summer of fun with your loved ones while seeing our great country. **M**



303 Aerospace Protectant is a good product for protecting vinyl and rubber against fading and cracking. Simply spray it on and then wipe it off with a clean microfiber towel. It leaves no greasy or oily residue behind, unlike petroleum-based products, which are harmful to rubber.

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Leisure Travel Vans, Circle 143 on Reader Service Card

By Bob Livingston

# BRAKING PROWESS

BrakeBuddy's newly redesigned portable Select II provides the confidence needed to safely decelerate while towing a dinghy vehicle

**T**owing a dinghy vehicle charges motorhome owners with the responsibility of using the proper equipment to ensure safety on the road. Contemplating the use of an auxiliary braking device should result in a quick decision: Most states and Canada require the use of a supplemental braking system, so compliance drives any conclusion. Finding the right system should be predicated on its track record for reliability and capability of doing a good — and safe — job slowing down the combo during stopping events. Portability is popular for obvious reasons and BrakeBuddy fits the bill as a strong contender in this segment of the auxiliary braking field. The BrakeBuddy has been around for a long time and is highly respected as a well-engineered product that is relatively easy to install initially, set up in the dinghy vehicle and operate. Parent company, Hopkins Manufacturing Corp., has recently released a new version, the Select II, that incorporates key design and function elements that enhance performance, shorten installation time and make the housing easier to maneuver.

The most obvious change is the body contour. Formerly sporting a more bulky profile, the new housing is dramatically slimmer, with pleasing

lines, and features a built-in handle that unlocks from the body for carrying to and from storage and the dinghy vehicle. Other notable changes include an Easy-Pull Power Cord that plugs into the housing and a specially designed connector that mounts on or under the dash. Since all the wiring terminates at the connector, plugging

the unit in to 12-volt DC power and the breakaway switch is a fast one-step process, and simple — and very secure.

One issue many owners of portable braking units have to deal with is battery discharging while on the road. Since the BrakeBuddy is powered by the dinghy vehicle starting battery, a small 15-amp battery charger is provided for integration during the initial installation process. This charger is designed to offset the power draw of the braking device mounted in the dinghy vehicle. Everything necessary for the installation is packaged in the kit and just a few tools are needed to complete the job; most do-it-yourselfers with a fair amount of mechanical aptitude can get it down in less than two hours.

The hardest part of the installation is mounting the breakaway switch and routing the wiring. A four-door Jeep Wrangler was recruited for the test and to begin the install a logical spot for the switch was located and then bolted in place. The wiring was routed to the pigtail that terminates at the connector, which was mounted on a low point on the dash. With the breakaway switch secured, the small-size battery charger was mounted to the firewall inside the Wrangler's engine compartment and the wires routed to the dinghy battery and connector wiring harness; power for the charger is provided by the motorhome, tapping into an auxiliary 12-volt DC line in the seven-way connector and routed through the umbilical cord between the motorhome and dinghy vehicle.

With the under-hood work completed, the next step was to position the braking device on the floor, in front of the driver's seat. The aforementioned redesigned housing fit nicely, other than the necessity to move it off-center a bit to locate the activation arm on the brake pedal. Here, a well-designed clevis (clamp) is attached to the brake pedal, which needed to be flipped around for our particular installation to fit properly.



[1] BrakeBuddy kit includes everything needed to install the components on a dinghy vehicle — even additional wire.



[2] Redesigned housing is much smaller than its bulky predecessor, and folding handle, which serves double duty as the support against the seat, makes the unit easy to transport. [3] Flat, well-designed connector is mounted in a convenient location on or under the dash in the dinghy vehicle. [4] Routing the wiring from the dash to the engine compartment in the Jeep Wrangler was simplified by using an opening in the cowling. [5] The breakaway switch, which applies the dinghy brakes in the event of a disconnection on the road, was bolted to the baseplate bracket [6].

The instructions (with image) call for a different mounting position, but the clamp would not stay on the Wrangler's pedal. A quick call to the Hopkins tech desk validated our attachment change; Hopkins should consider updating the instructions with this additional information to eliminate confusion.

Setting up the BrakeBuddy for the road is effortless. The handle is extended from the locked position, the housing placed on the floor with the seat less than a ¼-inch from the handle and the unit is plugged in. At this point the pedal must not be depressed and the engine is off. The red Auto Start button on the top of the housing is then pushed and the arm will automatically cycle five times



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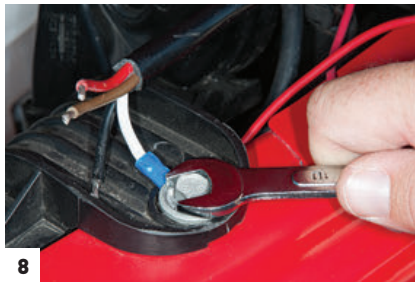
to remove vacuum from the brake reservoir in the dinghy vehicle. At the same time the system will diagnose any errors in the setup. Air pressure is set using the provided chart that cross references the proper value with dinghy vehicle weight. The user can also set braking preference, with

a choice of employing full braking when the motorhome brakes are activated or proportional braking that matches the deceleration of the motorhome.

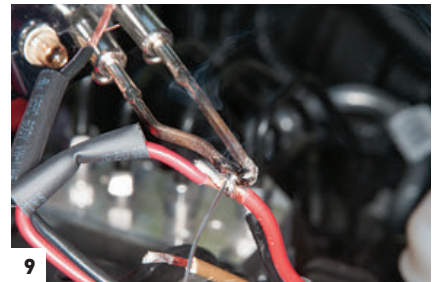
Braking preference, as well as sensitivity can also be regulated on-the-fly from the wireless remote.



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[7] Kit includes a 15-amp battery charger that is mounted in the engine compartment and wired to the motorhome through the umbilical cord that had unused positions in the plugs and receptacles. [8] Ground wire was connected to an existing bolt in the engine compartment. [9] Rather than use crimp-style terminals, we elected to solder the wire connections and seal with shrink tubing [10] to ensure better protection against moisture and corrosion. [11] Brake pedal clevis (clamp) is threaded on to the activation arm in the housing before placing in the dinghy vehicle. [12] Easy-Pull Power Cord is connected to the main unit; big finger pulls on both ends provide a good grip.



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[13] Diminutive wireless remote unit is placed on the dash using a “sticky” pad [14] that requires no tools, magnets or tape. It fit neatly on the left side of the dash [15] in the test motorhome. Monitor informs the driver of dinghy vehicle brake activation and can be used to adjust air pressure and sensitivity. [16] To position the BrakeBuddy, the folding handle is unlocked and rotated up before the unit is placed on the floor in front of the seat. The seat is then slid forward to within ¼-inch of the handle. [17] Clevis (clamp) is adjusted to fit over brake pedal without applying pressure. Brakelights can be checked to confirm proper attachment.

This is a small communication tool (monitor) that can be temporarily placed on the dash in clear view of the driver. A “sticky” pad secures the remote to any flat location and can be moved at will without modifications. The monitor must be synced to the main unit and this is done by simply powering-up both devices and following a button-holding procedure, which is clearly described in the instructions. Once linked, the pressure and braking sensitivity should be the same on the main unit readouts and remote monitor panel.

While the main function of the monitor is to inform the driver of braking sensitivity — and provide a visual confirmation that the dinghy vehicle brakes are being activated — it also reports on a low battery in the remote and if there is trouble with the breakaway switch. A 12-volt

DC power cord is included and should be plugged into an outlet in the motorhome dash when using the system. It’s also recommended to disconnect the main unit when stopping for the night or when the dinghy is not being towed.

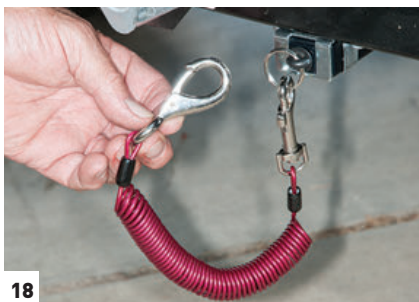
To test the operation of the system, we set the controls for proportional braking and ran a predetermined course that provided a good sampling of normal driving. At one point, we placed an observer in the dinghy vehicle (on a little-used street) to check brake activation. The objective was to test how well the dinghy vehicle responded to braking events during light and heavy deceleration — and to make sure the brake pedal was disengaged properly when accelerating. Sensitivity was adjusted to ensure adequate dinghy vehicle pressure, and the system worked exactly as designed.

Since using an observer in the dinghy vehicle is not safe or practical under normal driving conditions, owners can easily confirm that the system is not applying the brakes prematurely by checking the brakelights after a stop or asking someone to watch as he/she drives away.

Throughout the testing procedure, the dinghy vehicle brakes were applied as instructed by the remote-panel settings and we experienced no harsh braking that can lead to premature dinghy vehicle disc/rotor wear. Knowing that the system technology employed by company engineers was smart enough to ensure proportional braking was a confidence builder for safe towing. And BrakeBuddy’s departure from the bulky housing is a welcome improvement, making it easier to handle and store in real-life conditions.

Hopkins stands behind its BrakeBuddy Select II with a five-year limited warranty and a 30-day satisfaction guarantee. The warranty can be extended optionally by another two years (part No. 39307). The Select II carries an MSRP of \$1,499 and can also be used on vehicles with electric power-assist brakes (hybrid). **M**

[18] Coiled cable attaches to the breakaway switch on the dinghy vehicle and loop on the motorhome hitch receiver [19], in this case via the safety cable hook.



18



19

**Hopkins Manufacturing Corp.,**  
800-470-2287, [www.brakebuddy.com](http://www.brakebuddy.com)

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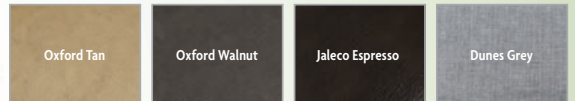
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# INSTANT GRATIFICATION

With an unlimited supply of hot water, on-demand water heaters are becoming a popular option for today's motorhome owner

**“Tick, Tick, Tick ... WOOMP!”**  
For motorhome owners, the sound of a water heater firing up is a satisfying one. It means that one of the crucial systems is up and running, soon to provide a steaming supply of hot water for

everything from washing dishes to bathing children and everything in between. It's tough to imagine life in a motorhome without the humble water heater, but we may be witnessing the end of it. At least the tank part.

A hot-water supply is part of what makes living in an RV comfortable, but with limited space compared to a brick-and-mortar residence, some level of compromise is required to make everything fit. Depending on the home, most of us are accustomed to a 50-gallon (or larger) water heater, and barring 20-minute showers from each member of the family on the same morning, that's usually more than enough to satisfy everyone's needs. The overwhelming majority of RVs, however, have only 6 gallons to work with, which can pose a challenge at bathing time. It's not easy to explain to kids,



The Girard GSHW-2 tankless water heater features an on-board microprocessor that monitors the incoming water temperature, the incoming water flow rate and the outlet hot-water temperature. A digital User Control Panel (UCP) allows the user to set the hot-water temperature to the desired temperature from 95 degrees to 124 degrees Fahrenheit (preset to 115 degrees Fahrenheit). The UCP also features visual diagnostic codes in the event of a component failure.

or perhaps your significant other, that they need to get the job done in five minutes or less. Indeed, it's safe to say that RVers have more experience with water conservation than a Los Angeles, California, native. But as all other aspects of RV living continue to evolve and improve, the concept of a "Navy shower" is still a difficult one to sell.

Tankless or "on-demand" water heaters are becoming a viable solution to this age-old problem. By heating the water as it passes through a heat exchanger, these units can provide a limitless supply of hot water with no waiting required, and very few tradeoffs compared to a traditional water heater. They're about the same weight (when empty, that is; a full 6-gallon water heater adds about 50 pounds), typically occupy less space, are more efficient and can even be retrofitted to an older motorhome. And though it seems unlikely that they'll completely replace traditional tank-storage water heaters in the near future (especially in entry-level motorhomes), their use in the RV industry is bound to become more widespread.

In principle, all tankless systems operate similarly. When a hot water tap is opened, water enters the unit and a sensor detects the amount of water flow, while another sensor or microprocessor automatically lights the burner and adjusts the Btu/hour input rate. Water circulates through the heat exchanger to the predeter-

PrecisionTemp has been building tankless units like its RV550s since 1996. The company prides itself on the fact that its units are manufactured in Cincinnati, Ohio, and every one of them is fully tested before it leaves the facility. The company's NSP model is the only tankless heater in the industry that requires no side-wall penetration, according to the company, which could be useful when retrofitting an older motorhome.



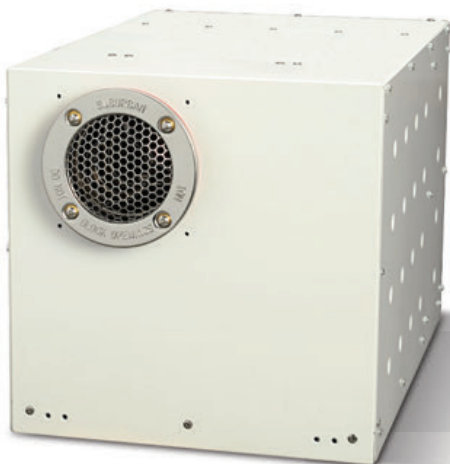
mined temperature, and when the tap is turned off, the burner goes out and the unit shuts down. Those are the basics — but each manufacturer offers its own engineering details that reveal how complex these systems really are. For example, Suburban's Nautilus system monitors the output temperature of the water six times per second to ensure the proper amount of LP-gas is supplied to the burner. If there are any changes in water flow, the unit adjusts the amount of LP-gas into the burner so the output temperature of the water remains within 2 degrees Fahrenheit of the set point. Truma's AquaGo system can maintain hot water flow down to 0.4 gallons per minute (GPM), and the company maintains it has tested to a trickle of 0.25 GPM.

There are some downsides of this latest crop of tankless systems for RV applications, however. The biggest one is that they only operate on LP-gas, so users can't take advantage of an RV park's power grid to run a tankless system like they might with a traditional tank-storage unit. A typical all-electric residential tankless system requires up to 100 amps of electric service to operate — hardly practical for most RV park connections. Think about the power required to make an electric stove red hot in a second or less, and you're starting to get the picture.

Another inherent problem with tankless systems, and one that makes some consumers shy away from them, is what is called "cold water sandwiching." Because there is no stored hot water, every time the unit starts, it allows a certain amount of cold water to pass through before the flame ignites. In reality, however, the same is true when showering with a tank-storage system — we've all turned on the hot-water tap only to be greeted by cold water for the first few seconds.

"This is not a water-heater issue, but the plumbing configuration of the RV," explained Jerry Rennert, general manager of Girard Products. "You must evacuate the existing water in the line before you receive hot water."

Mark Howlett, senior vice president of business development for Truma Corp., agrees. "Like a tank-storage water heater, there is a time delay from opening the faucet until hot water reaches the tap. The Truma AquaGo reduces this time through the incorporation of our patented 'Temperature Stabilizer,' which buffers the supply of hot water." To put it in simple terms, the Temperature Stabilizer is a mixing vessel that provides the constant hot-water benefits of a tank-storage water heater and the on-demand features of a heat exchanger to form what the company claims is the industry's only



The Suburban Nautilus is sized to replace any 6-, 10-, 12- or 16-gallon tank model or any 6- or 10-gallon aluminum tank model, and retrofit doors are available to complete the installation.

The Truma AquaGo is what the company refers to as a “hybrid” on-demand water heater, combining the constant temperature output of a tank-storage water heater with the endless supply of a tankless system. An advanced microprocessor allows for precise control of LP-gas regulation, according to the company, with an infinitely variable output from 20,000 to 60,000 Btu.



“hybrid” system. Because there is a supply of hot water in the system, Truma more accurately refers to its system as “on-demand.”

As mentioned earlier, tankless/on-demand systems are designed to be retrofitted, and typically require no more effort to install than a traditional tank-storage system. Regardless of their respective configurations, the fact is that they require water, 12-volt DC electrical and LP-gas connections to operate — and each company offers its own components to make

Nautilus system can be installed with or without an exterior door; only a small stainless-steel vent cap is required. The company also offers a 90-degree vent transition kit designed to allow for more flexibility in the location of the appliance. The PrecisionTemp RV-550 NSP, meanwhile, is reported to be the only tankless heater in the industry that can be installed with no side-wall penetration while fluing through a 2-inch exhaust pipe in the floor. These latter benefits are likely only meaningful to the RV manu-

maintenance. Flushing the tank annually, inspecting/replacing the anode rod (if equipped) and perhaps cleaning the ignitor assembly/burner tube is usually all that is required. For the most part, the manufacturers we spoke with say the process isn't any more difficult for a tankless/

## “ TANKLESS/ON-DEMAND SYSTEMS ARE DESIGNED TO BE RETROFITTED, AND TYPICALLY REQUIRE NO MORE EFFORT TO INSTALL THAN A TRADITIONAL TANK-STORAGE SYSTEM. ”

the upgrade as easy as possible. For example, Girard offers three door kits for easy replacement of any brand or size of tank-storage water heater, while Truma offers doors to allow for 6-16 gallon openings. Suburban's

factorer, but could also be helpful to those who are renovating, restoring or updating an older motorhome.

One of the most desirable aspects of a traditional tank-storage system is its simplicity, and this includes

on-demand system, though it is obviously different. Winterizing, for example, is much easier; a tankless system typically holds a quart or less of water, so it's simply a matter of draining the system and introducing the same amount of antifreeze to protect the heat exchanger in freezing weather (all the systems featured here incorporate electric/LP-gas freeze protection when the unit is in operation as well). Antifreeze is important to protect small pockets in the system, such as around the impeller, that can hold water. A bypass is recommended in some circumstances where compressed air will be used to blow out the system, as water-flow sensors in these units can be damaged by the high air pressure.

The Truma AquaGo's Easy Drain Lever is a brightly colored yellow for easy end-user identification. Combined with the company's decalcification tablets, the AquaGo allows for easy maintenance.



As mentioned, Truma's AquaGo incorporates a small tank, but it is easily and quickly drained via the unit's "Easy Drain Lever," according to the company.

Calcification, or the build-up of harmful deposits inside the heat exchanger, is a known problem in standard RV water heaters with tanks, but for the most part isn't a concern for RV tankless/on-demand systems, according to Gerry Wolter, president of PrecisionTemp. "Any chemical reaction is accelerated by heat — so if your water supply is hard or acidic, it becomes more aggressive as the temperature increases," he explains. "For every 10 degrees above 140 Fahrenheit, the aggressiveness of the water doubles. In other words, at 180 degrees, the water is 16 times more aggressive than it is at 140 degrees."

Since RV tankless/on-demand systems don't go above 130 degrees Fahrenheit (and most residential

water heaters don't recommend going above 120 degrees in order to prevent scalding) deposits aren't typically a concern, except in some campgrounds that use well water, which can cause calcium deposits. Even so, PrecisionTemp's system incorporates a turbulator to prevent mineral deposits from forming in the first place, and the Truma AquaGo has a decalcification feature built right in. The control panel indicates when decalcification is recommended, then the company's decalcification tablets are inserted into the filter cartridge by opening the yellow Easy Drain Lever. The control panel then guides the user through the decalcification process with LED signals.

"If a customer wants to clean their unit, we suggest they use white vinegar," explains Girard's Rennert. "Take a 1-gallon jug of white vinegar to the feed line of the on-board water pump. Leave the water heater on and open a hot water faucet, and

the water heater will fire up. Turn the faucet off when the gallon jug of vinegar is nearly empty and let it sit in the system for 30 minutes. Then, flush the system out with fresh water for a couple minutes or until there is no more vinegar smell. It is basically the same de-scaling procedure as you use on a coffeemaker."

With easy installation, simple maintenance and an endless supply of hot water, tankless/on-demand water heaters are another advancement that can make living in an RV more comfortable for the whole family. **M**

### Sources

**Airxcel/Suburban Manufacturing**  
423-775-2131, [www.airxcel.com](http://www.airxcel.com)

**Girard Products LLC**  
866-559-1221, <https://greenrvproducts.com>

**Precision Temp**  
800-934-9690, [www.precisiontemp.com](http://www.precisiontemp.com)

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# 2018 RV SHOW LINEUP

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**GS** | MEDIA &  
EVENTS

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

\*Good Sam Club members save 50% on up to two (2) adult admission tickets. \*\*Dates subject to change.

^Retail value Buyers Guide \$7.99, MotorHome Magazine \$4.99, Trailer Life Magazine \$4.99. GS058263-0917

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

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<sup>2</sup> Each merchant is assigned a code by a third party that indicates the merchant's area of business. Gas stations and private campground points will only be awarded if the merchant code for the purchase matches a category eligible for the offer. Comenity Capital Bank does not have the ability to control assignment of merchant codes.

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# MAINTENANCE RULES

A METICULOUS PREVIOUS OWNER HELPED KEEP THIS RVING COUPLE'S 2005 AIRSTREAM 396XL LAND YACHT IN PRISTINE, TURN-KEY CONDITION

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

**B**uying a used motorhome is a little like online dating — you see a photo, send some emails, maybe chat on the phone, and then drive or fly to meet the person you hope will be "the one." Unfortunately, for many potential RV buyers, that stunning picture from the ad turns out to be a decade-old and "lightly used" motorhome that has been sitting derelict for years. If you have the time and skills, as many of our readers have demonstrated, it is possible to bring a dead or dying coach back to life. But most of us don't get into the RV lifestyle to spend the first year in the driveway tearing out soft floors or replacing a roof. We want to be out on the road, preferably

right after we sign the check. As Dave Pass will tell you, such a fairy-tale ending is possible, if you pay attention to two words.

"Maintenance records," he says emphatically. "They are the key to everything."

Dave, and wife, Lynn, had owned three Airstream travel trailers, but in 2013 they decided they wanted to make the move to a Class A motorhome. They were looking for more space and comfort while driving, and the convenience of being able to move around while on the road. As active members of the Airstream owners' club, and frequent participants in rallies and caravans, they didn't want to lose that social



Dave and Lynn Pass have enjoyed five trouble-free years and more than 30,000 miles in their used Airstream.

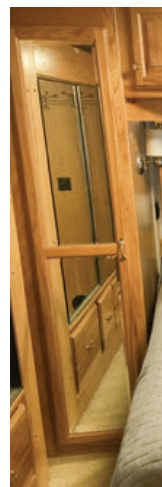
connection, but they also weren't interested in a vintage Airstream renovation. They wanted an Airstream coach that was less than 15 years old, and since the company produced fiberglass motorhomes beginning in the 1990s through 2006, that narrowed their search.

At the time, there weren't a lot of



Sunset in Cheyenne, Wyoming, on the Land Yacht's maiden trip home with its new owners.

# The Classic Ride



larger Airstreams on the market, and the couple started to think they might have to go with another manufacturer. Then they were given a lead by a couple they met on a caravan trip to New Mexico who knew someone in Wisconsin who might be thinking of selling. They immediately contacted the owner and, after a few conversations, they booked a flight to look at the 2005 396XL Land Yacht. Two days later, they were driving it to their home in Portland, Oregon, and they have been camping in the Airstream at least 150 nights a year ever since, all without any problems.

What made the Passes' experience so much more positive than most of the buyers we've met? While they agree that their coach's quality construction is certainly a factor, they largely give credit to the Airstream's previous owner. The motorhome's Caterpillar 330 diesel engine and Freightliner chassis had been meticulously maintained. A professional truck driver, the owner had consistently changed the oil and fluids nearly twice as often as the owner's manual recommended.

"He said, 'Fluids are cheap,

rebuilding is expensive,' and I've followed his advice," Dave explains.

The seller's commitment to the motorhome did not end there. When Dave and Lynn decided to buy the coach, the owner let them stay for two nights in his driveway as they became acquainted with all of the systems so that he would be available to help with any questions or problems. He even took Dave out for a driving lesson, since this was the couple's first Class A. By literally going the extra mile, the Airstream's seller provided something seldom included in a used RV purchase — peace of mind.

Despite being 13 years old, the 396XL Land Yacht has all of the amenities one would expect in a luxury motorhome. Two furnaces, two rooftop air conditioners with heat strips, and an 8-kW Onan generator make the Airstream well equipped for all-season camping. The large slideout expands the kitchen and the seating area, and there is a slideout for extra space in the bedroom as well. One feature the couple appreciated was that, unlike many modern coaches, the layout still

provides plenty of room even when the slideouts are not extended, providing ease of movement while underway. They also point to the high-end cabinetry and woodwork as a factor in their decision to buy. Everything is solid hickory, including the bedroom door. They say this is just one example of the unit's overall quality construction.

"We don't worry about it falling apart going down the road," Dave laughs.

While the Airstream was in turn-key condition, the couple has made some modifications in the five years they have owned it. The two interior TVs were replaced with new flat screens, and the stereo was upgraded to double as an entertainment sound system. Space already existed for an outdoor TV, so they had an Airstream dealer install one. They changed out the faucets in the kitchen and bath, upgraded from two 4D to two 8D batteries, and added an additional 160-watt solar panel to the 50-watt panel that came with the unit. On the motorhome's exterior, Dave changed out the headlamps for better nighttime visibility, and they replaced the fabric

## CALLING ALL YACHTIES!

A new 2005 Airstream with the same options as the one purchased by Dave and Lynn Pass sold for about \$250,000. They paid \$100,000 for their unit in 2014, a good price considering its pristine condition. While not made in large quantities, there are a number of Land Yachts on the used market. Expect to pay as little as \$50,000 for an older model (2002 or before) to as much as \$120,000 for a 2006 in excellent condition, with average prices in the \$75,000 range.

► This pre-owned Airstream Land Yacht provides luxury at a relatively affordable price.





From far left: New tile updates the pass-through portion of the bathroom. Solid hickory cabinets and woodwork throughout are a hallmark of this Airstream's quality construction. Bottom left: Artist/owner Lynn Pass painted this original mural to personalize and add a sense of space to the small split bath.

"Don't be afraid of mileage, especially in a diesel," he recommends.

He points out that his own engine is under warranty for 300,000 miles. While it had only 62,005 miles on the odometer when they purchased it, he says they have put on 30,000 more. Many people express concern when they see mileage approaching 100,000, but for a well-maintained diesel, that is barely broken in. He also cautions buyers to look at the date stamp on tires when purchasing a used RV.

"Our expense to replace all our tires comes to about \$3,000," Dave says, pointing out that this a significant amount of money and should be factored into the purchase price depending on the tires' age.

His last bit of advice?

"You'll never be unhappy with a larger engine."

In fact, that is the only major feature about the 396XL he would consider changing. While the 330 engine is adequate, the couple does a lot of mountain travel while towing, and he says a bit more power might be nice. Still, Dave and Lynn would not consider parting with their Airstream, which they have nicknamed "Alley Cat" in honor of its diesel engine. It has taken them down the West Coast and all across the Southwest, and they are currently planning a trip to Canada. Their experience proves that buying an older coach does not necessarily mean spending months in renovation. It all starts with choosing the right motorhome, and that's why the Airstream 396XL Land Yacht is the Passes' classic ride. **M**

*We're on the lookout for classic rides! If you, or someone you know, has a terrific older motorhome, send an email with info and a photo to Ann Eichenmuller at [aceichenm@gmail.com](mailto:aceichenm@gmail.com), and your RV might be featured in MotorHome magazine!*

on the two slideout awnings. They also added an awning over the bathroom window to keep it cooler on hot days.

The most creative modifications were in the split bath. The couple tiled the open vanity area, but they also wanted to improve the appearance of the enclosed bathroom. Lynn, an artist whose work has even graced the White House in the form of an original Christmas ornament, painted a bright and inviting mural that makes the Airstream's smallest space also its most visually interesting.

They are now considering replacing the dark Corian kitchen counter with a lighter granite or quartz, and they plan to replace the large outdoor awning this spring. Otherwise, Dave says, there is not much else they would change about their Airstream.

"We love it. It is just so comfortable!" Lynn agrees.

Dave does have some advice for anyone in the market for a used motorhome.



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# GUIDE TO RV TRAVEL

Good Sam's annual RV-park directory sets a course for adventure — and rewards RVers with savings



Hot off the press, the 2018 guide is packed with RV-park listings, travel information and discounts.

The 2018 Good Sam RV Travel & Savings Guide not only provides information on 12,116 RV parks, campgrounds and services, it pays for itself many times over in discounts. The new edition features outdoor tips for adventurous RVers, updated RV-trip itineraries and a NASCAR track guide, plus more than 400,000 updates to North American RV parks, campgrounds, ratings and maps.

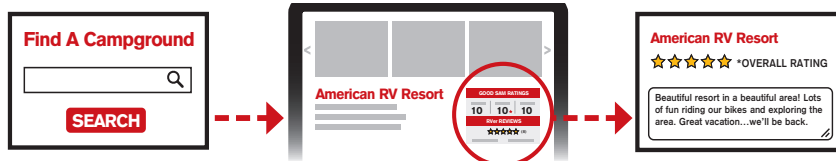
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▶ Good Sam Club members can buy the guide for \$6.95 — 65 percent off the \$19.95 non-member price — at Camping World SuperCenters and on the Camping World website at [www.campingworld.com/2018guide](http://www.campingworld.com/2018guide).

## Tried-and-True Reviews

The go-to place for RV-park feedback combines firsthand accounts and Good Sam's annual ratings

Looking for a place to stay? Take advantage of the thousands of RV Park Reviews posted on the Good Sam Club website in the past three years. Since Good Sam launched RV Park Reviews, park guests have posted hundreds of reviews each month, providing firsthand impressions of their visits. They've also rated the parks from one to five stars, and the average score appears on each reviewed park's information page, along with Good Sam's annual three-numbered rating.



▶ Beyond learning from the experiences of other RVers, you can share your own by going to [www.goodsam.com/rvparkreviews](http://www.goodsam.com/rvparkreviews) and clicking on Get Started Reviewing. Use the Find a Campground search tool to look up the park you'd like to review. Once on the park's information page, go to the Reviews tab and start sharing.

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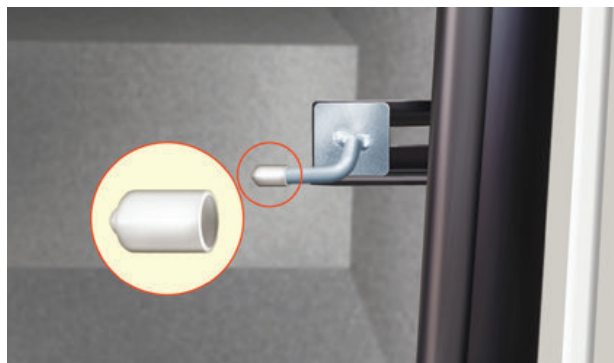
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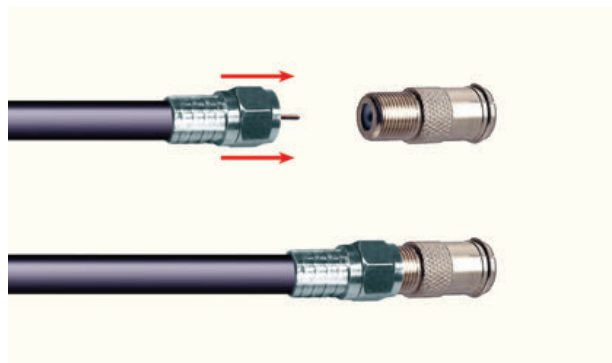
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## Skin Saver

My husband figured out how to mostly eliminate getting scratched when he pulls items out of our motorhome's cargo bays — he put a ¼-inch rubber tip cap on the latch hook inside the cargo bay doors. When you reach inside a cargo bay to retrieve something, your arm usually passes by a latch hook, which sticks out about 1 inch. The rubber cap will prevent you from getting a deep scratch on your arm. You can go to any hardware store to get this inexpensive item to put on all the catch hooks. You will be happy you did.

**Janet Duvall | Jacksonville, Florida**



## Quick Disconnect

If you have trouble with, or are simply tired of, screwing on the TV cable to the hookup when you arrive at a campsite, we found an easier way. We bought two F-type push-on coaxial quick connectors that screw onto each end of the TV cable (these stay on the cable). One end connects to the RV's cable hookup, and the other connects to the campground post. To hookup, just push the connector onto the post. This stays in place until you remove it. We paid \$2.99 each at RadioShack, but any electronics store (or many online stores) should have them.

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

## What to Dew?

When camping in damp climates, moisture can accumulate on the windows of your motorhome, including the windshield, which is difficult to reach by hand with a paper towel. If you already have a Swiffer (or similar product) for cleaning floors, your problem is solved. Wrap a paper towel around the cleaning surface, and secure it by pushing the top surface into the four plastic insert slots. The long handle allows you to reach every corner of the windshield, as well as other windows.

Replace the towel when it becomes saturated.

**Larry MacDonald | Victoria, British Columbia, Canada**

## Buzz Off!

My husband and I just returned from a four-week vacation, and most of our time was spent in Grand Teton and Yellowstone national parks. My husband loves to fish so we always camp by rivers or lakes, which means mosquitos can be a problem. Before our vacation, I ordered Permethrin Insect Repellent, which is designed for clothing and gear but is not to be applied to your skin. I am very sensitive to mosquito bites, so I sprayed the screen door on our motorhome and then sprayed our canvas folding chairs and easy-up canopy. We only did one application and it lasted the entire trip. The spray worked so well that my husband sprayed the rug outside and some of the grass area around our campsite. The mosquitos never came near the door, and for the entire vacation they did not come into our motorhome. This made my camping experience so much more enjoyable.

**Charleen and David Eaves | Mission Viejo, California**



### Have an Idea?

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

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## Out of Business?

Worried that a vendor might be out of business and would not deliver a product that had already been paid for — and after waiting nearly a year for a response — a reader turned to Hot Line for help. He wrote:



“ I am concerned that a motorhome parts vendor may no longer be able to support users of its products. The product is the Bullseye Leveling system, which is probably on many motorhomes, particularly those a few years old. My concern is prompted by the fact that I had a gear failure in one of my levelers, so I ordered a replacement gear plus a complete set of replacement gears for one leveler for future use. I sent the vendor my credit card number and was charged \$488. It took six weeks to get one gear, but I have not yet received the others and the vendor no longer answers my calls.

**Gerald Spielbusch | Brookings, Oregon**

We visited the website ([www.bullseyeleveling.com](http://www.bullseyeleveling.com)), which indicates that the company is still in business. A call to the phone number listed revealed the same. So, we were a bit puzzled by Bullseye's lack of response to Spielbusch. We passed along Spielbusch's letter, and eventually received an update from him.

“ My issue with Bullseye Technologies Inc. has been resolved. The parts I ordered in November 2016 arrived December 11, 2017.  
— G.S.

### Vexing Valve

Frustrated after the manufacturer of a newly replaced part couldn't replicate the problems he was having, a reader turned to Hot Line for assistance.

He wrote:

“ I own a 2004 Monaco Cayman equipped with an RVA J-11 leveling system. The system was manufactured by RVA Co. in Escondido, California. During a trip last summer, two jacks lost pressure over time, so I called the company and talked to Dennis Kay, the owner,

who told me the problem was with the retract valves. He then provided information on how to clean the valves.

After using his procedure twice and not resolving the problem, I ordered two new retract valves. Once I installed the new valves, they appeared to hold the pressure so, after a couple of weeks, I retracted the jacks and reset them. I then tried to adjust the jack by momentarily using the retract toggle, but the retract valve would not close and relieved all the pressure to the jack. This happened on both jacks that I had installed the new valves on.

I again contacted RVA and was told to swap the new valve with a valve that was working. I did that, and the problem moved to the new location, indicating the valve was bad. I called RVA again and was asked to return both valves so they could retest them.

After a couple of weeks I was told they could not reproduce the problem

because their test equipment can only check whether the valve holds pressure — not whether it can be adjusted. I was also told they didn't have replacements on hand, but would soon receive some from their manufacturing facility, and after they tested the new valves, they'd send them to me.

Following a few unanswered phone calls, I requested they just send my parts back. The new parts were returned, and installed, but there was no improvement. I would like RVA to provide me with the parts that work the way they are supposed to.

**Jerry Dettmann | Tucson, Arizona**

It's frustrating to take a vehicle to the mechanic because it is acting up, only to be unable to replicate the problem, but we need to stress that such problems rarely, if ever, fix themselves. We felt that RVA Co. should do more to accommodate Dettmann, so we passed along his complaint.

“ I was never contacted by RVA, so I drove my motorhome to the company's location in Escondido. After showing them how the valves were working, I removed the valves and they allowed me to view the testing process. I confirmed that the way they were conducting testing does not check for the ability for adjustment. RVA agreed the valves did not work as designed, and they did replace one valve at the time of the check. It was tested in my presence. Unfortunately, they didn't have a second working valve.

I would like to thank *MotorHome* for its help with this matter.

— J.D. 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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ITEM 61969/61970/69684 shown

13723275

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• Weighs  
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13732284

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1750 PSI ELECTRIC  
PRESSURE WASHER

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ITEM 64046/64045/63770 shown

13796001

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**HaulMaster** SUPER COUPON

Customer Rating **★★★★★**

12 VOLT MAGNETIC  
TOWING LIGHT KIT

COMPARE TO OPTRONICS \$33.59  
MODEL: TL21BK

SAVE 70%  
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ITEM 63100

13796008

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7 AMP ELECTRIC POLE SAW  
9.5" BAR

6 ft. to 8 ft. 10"

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ITEM 68862/63190/62896 shown

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ITEM 61888/68885 shown

13810676

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Customer Rating **★★★★★**

STEP STOOL/  
WORKING PLATFORM  
• 350 lb. capacity

COMPARE TO GPL \$57.55  
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SAVE 65%  
**NOW \$19.99**  
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ITEM 62515/66911 shown

1382067

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18 VOLT, 3/8" CORDLESS  
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Includes one  
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ITEM 69651/62868  
62873/68239 shown

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Customer Rating **★★★★★**

3/8" x 50 FT.  
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AIR HOSE REEL

COMPARE TO KOBALT \$99  
MODEL: SDY-AIR184

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ITEM 69265/62344/93897 shown

13922081

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**WARRIOR** SUPER COUPON

Customer Rating **★★★★★**

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DRILL BIT SET

COMPARE TO DEWALT \$60  
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ITEM 62281  
61637 shown

13970421

LIMIT 6 - Coupon valid through 6/13/18\*

**CENTRAL MACHINERY** SUPER COUPON

Customer Rating **★★★★★**

20 TON SHOP PRESS  
• Pair of arbor  
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SAVE \$72  
**NOW \$149.99**  
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COMPARE TO MAXWORKS \$222.49  
MODEL: GP2002

ITEM 32879/60603 shown

13871957

LIMIT 5 - Coupon valid through 6/13/18\*

**HARDY** SUPER COUPON

MECHANIC'S GLOVES

Customer Rating **★★★★★**

SAVE 73%  
**NOW \$3.99**  
~~\$5.99~~

COMPARE TO MECHANIX \$14.99  
MODEL: 5075800

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

13881210

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Customer Rating **★★★★★**

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By Ken Freund

## Gas-tank Filling Problem

**Q** We have a 2008 Chevrolet Class C motorhome and I have had trouble filling the gas tank ever since I bought it. The pump stops filling when I try to fill up. I have told gas station attendants that they had a problem with their pumps, and they told me the problem was with my RV. I also contacted GM, and they told me it was the gas pumps. I cannot even fill my motorhome, as it takes me 30 minutes to put 10 gallons in it. We have not used the coach since June because of the problem. We found out from a repair shop that the filler neck pipe is only 1 inch in diameter and by law should be 2 to 4 inches in diameter. I have contacted GM, my state's attorney general and the coach manufacturer, but to no avail. We need to replace the tank and filler to the tune of more than \$2,000. We have been told by the attorney general's office to go to small claims court, but we have also been told that even if we win we will likely never see the money from GM. We feel this should be a recall issue.

**Joe and Christine Savard | Huber Heights, Ohio**

**A** Recalls are limited to safety concerns, and slow fuel filling probably does not qualify for a federally mandated multimillion-dollar recall. Your Class C is built on a GM van cutaway chassis. That means that it's delivered to the motorhome builder with just a cab and running gear, with a bare frame aft of the cab. The fuel tanks and systems on these chassis have been around a long time, have been certified to meet Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standards, and have been proven in



thousands of fleets and in private use. I think the 1-inch hose you mentioned is a vent line, not a filler hose. Many of these situations spiral out of control because an owner who doesn't understand how the system works takes the problem to a shop that doesn't understand how to fix it. I do not dispense legal advice, only mechanical tips. A lawyer can charge you a lot of money, but will never fix your fuel-filling problem.

The motorhome manufacturer, which you didn't identify, builds the body and installs the external fuel filler and plumbing to the tank. Most of the problems with slow filling turn out to be caused by the body installer. They are usually fairly simple, caused by a pinched hose; a hose that is too long and sags, allowing fuel to collect and block flow; or faulty vent-hose-routing prevents proper flow. If the air can't escape from the top of the tank as it's filled, the pump will kick off repeatedly. Also, when you are filling the tank, try rotating the filler handle and nozzle assembly to either side to find a different position. Often that is all that is needed.

### Coach Current Draw

**Q** I have two RV lots I rent. Last summer both 50-amp breakers failed. I suspect that the 50-amp breaker, which is only rated for 40-amp continuous use, is being overloaded by the big coaches with all of their extras like a washer/dryer. People may forget and not realize that it may not be feasible to have everything turned on at the same time. My question is, what is the load [amps] the large coaches with all of their extras can put on the 50-amp breaker? This potential problem would be magnified where

the lot is rented for long periods of time. It may be that the power demands of the larger coaches have outgrown the power source.

**Denver Isaacs | Leesburg, Florida**

**A** It's quite possible that they were overloaded. I don't know of any scientific statistical survey done to determine average usage. However, average usage wouldn't necessarily be helpful because we're concerned with peak usage by a small percentage of the highest power users. Did you take the old failed breakers apart and look at their contacts? If they were heavily

burned, that increases the likelihood that they failed due to overload. Some of the larger luxury coaches do have many power-consuming appliances which could, if used together, surpass the 40-ampere continuous rating. Heating elements, such as hair dryers, irons and water-heater coils — along with space heaters and inverters/converters with battery chargers — all have high current draws. Dishwashers, washing machines and, of course, air conditioners have high draws as well. But in addition, when compressors, such as those found in air conditioners start up, they draw up to

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several times their running current. The 50-amp service was introduced to accommodate the heavier loads produced by newer RVs. A 30-amp service at 120 volts can provide up to 3,600 watts. A 50-amp system has a different 120/240-volt AC split-phase service, which means there are two 120-volt AC 50-amp poles, which can provide up to 12,000 watts (120 volts x 50 amps = 6,000 watts x 2 = 12,000

watts). So, the change from 30 to 50 amps doesn't seem like much, but the difference is 3,600 versus 12,000 watts. However, this assumes that the loads are balanced between the two 50-amp poles. If most of the loads are on one side of the panel (on one breaker) there's only 6,000 peak watts available, and to stay under 40 amps continuous that needs to be less than 4,800 watts. Therefore, it is essential for the loads

to be balanced between both breakers in order to get maximum capacity and prevent overloading breakers. Unfortunately, you don't have control over how the loads are balanced in coaches staying at your campground sites.

### Tire-pressure Variation with Temperature

Chris Quaderer's "Inflation Pressure Versus Altitude" question in the October 2017 issue was good, but many of us live where weather temperatures also affect tire pressure. Living in Minnesota, the pressure can change 5 to 8 pounds from the summer reading when below-freezing temperatures occur. If one is a "snowbird," keep this in mind.

**Carl Wilkins | Via email**

Thanks for writing, Carl. A good rule of thumb for tire-pressure variations due to air temperature changes is: For every 10 degrees Fahrenheit change, tire pressure will change by 1 PSI. For example, if the outside air temperature drops 10 degrees, the tire pressure will drop by about 1 PSI. For every decrease of 10 degrees Celsius, tire pressure drops by approximately 2 PSI. Or, 1.1 kPa for each 1 Celsius degree decrease in temperature (1 bar equals 100 kPa). When the temperature rises, the same thing occurs in reverse; as temperatures rise so do tire pressures, in the same percentages.

### Leaky Light Tip

This is in reference to the "Leaky Light" letter in the December 2017 issue, where you discussed finding a clearance light for a 2003 Winnebago. The authors (Joe and Gwen Russell) should try Transwest Truck Trailer RV (a Winnebago dealer), at 816-892-5941. Transwest tracked down a taillight lens for a 1998 Holiday Rambler for me. Also try Visone RV (606-843-9889, www.visionerv.com).

**Bob True | Via email**

Thanks for writing. Transwest is a franchised dealer for Newmar, Renegade, Roadtrek, Tiffin, Winnebago

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and Keystone, and has a number of locations. The Transwest location for the phone number you provide is in Belton, Missouri, and has 29 service bays. Visone RV is a salvage dealer that specializes in used parts, located in East Bernstadt, Kentucky.

**Leaky Light Tip II**

Regarding the "Leaky Light" letter in

the December 2017 issue, I found a similar light at NAPA auto parts. It was marker light No. 25765y, with gasket No. 97701. Hopefully this will help the Russells and others with a similar problem.

**Shawn Cannon | Via email**

Thanks for providing this tip, Shawn. NAPA often has one of the largest selections of items like this.

**Horsepower Differences**

**Q** We have a Class C motorhome on a Ford chassis with a V-10 engine rated at 305 hp. I also see Ford V-10s rated at 320 and 365 hp. How do they get the higher horsepower from the same engine?

**Ron Swierski | Sun City West, Arizona**

**A** Actually, it's a similar engine from the same family, but it's not the same engine. The E-Series vans and cutaway chassis come with lower 305-hp ratings than the F-53 motorhome chassis because the E-Series has a smaller engine compartment. Ford has been installing V-10s with three valves per cylinder (two intakes, one exhaust) in the 6.8-liter V-10 since 2005. These heads flow more air and therefore can deliver more power. The E-Series vans still get the two-valve-per-cylinder V-10, which is the older design because of the greater width of the three-valve heads. The higher horsepower-rated engines also have different intake and exhaust manifolds. So, it's not something that can be inexpensively changed.

**Intermittent Water Heater**

**Q** I have a 2014 Fleetwood Excursion. Recently the 6-gallon Atwood water heater (model GC6AA-10E; manufacturing date 08/30/13) has become intermittent on LP-gas. The 120-volt AC side works fine. Sometimes the heater will not ignite on gas only, but will always ignite when the electric side is turned on first. I had the circuit board tested and no problem was found. I have cleaned all the 12-volt DC electrical contacts. Atwood tech support has not been able to help. It seems like the problem must be a part that is common to both the gas and 120-volt AC sides. Any ideas?

**Robert Macdonald | Lancaster, California**

**A** Intermittent problems are the worst because you're never sure if or when you have it fixed. Hopefully the circuit board was tested properly by a qualified expert; if not you could spend

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a lot of time chasing problems that are actually caused by the board. Measure the voltage of the DC power going to the unit at the ECO and thermal fuse and compare it to voltage measured at the house battery(ies). Also check the ground connection of the water heater. With the LP-gas and the control switch on, check for sparks from the igniter system. If you don't have good sparks, then troubleshoot that. Check all connections for corrosion or looseness. Look for dirt and crud in the area, too. Listen for the click of the gas valve opening. If there is good spark and the gas valve opens, have the gas pressure tested. Last, check the burner tube for obstructions, such as a fine spider web, which will impede proper LP-gas flow.

### Concerns on an F-53 Ford

**Q** My wife and I are the owners of a 2016 Fleetwood Bounder 33C on a 2015 Ford F-53 chassis (V-10, 6.8-liter engine and five-speed automatic transmission) with 16,000-plus miles. We purchased the unit new in February 2016 and are concerned about two observations I made regarding the chassis drivetrain. The first issue involves burned oil on the engine oil dipstick, which has been present since the first time I checked the oil level. Shortly after I first made this discovery, I cleaned the dipstick but the burned oil returned shortly thereafter.

I frequently observe the engine-oil temperature indicator so I know the oil in the sump has been running at normal temperature. I traced the routing of the dipstick tube and found that it is positioned between the engine and the driver's-side exhaust manifold and only about  $\frac{3}{16}$  of an inch from the manifold. I observed a scorched area on the exterior of the dipstick tube immediately adjacent to the exhaust manifold. When I called Ford Tech Support, technicians told me this has been a known issue for several years, but they stated it would not cause any problems with the engine over its life. My concern is that burned oil on the interior of the dipstick tube, and the repeated withdrawal and insertion

of the dipstick, will cause particles of burned oil to be deposited into the oil sump. Could this debris cause excessive wear on the oil pump or other engine parts?

The second issue is a very loud, high-pitched whistling noise from the drivetrain that frequently occurs when the engine is under heavy load and running at high RPM in the lower gears, most often when climbing steep

grades. When it occurs, the whistling noise is always at the same pitch — it does not vary with engine speed or with the performance of the transmission. The volume of the whistling does vary with engine load, but there is never any loss of performance from the engine or transmission. Although Ford Tech Support told me it has received reports of this before, it could not give me any information on the **(continued on page 112)**



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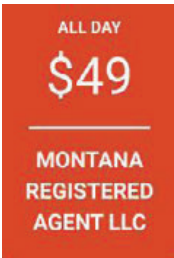
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While every effort is made to maintain accuracy and completeness, last-minute changes may occasionally result in omissions or errors.

(continued from page 107)

source of this noise and suggested that it is not a concern. What are your thoughts on these issues?

**Mark Schall | Leland, North Carolina**

**A** I doubt that the small amount of oxidized oil will cause any problems. If it goes down the tube, the oil pickup screen will prevent large particles from entering the oil pump, and then the oil filter will remove any remaining tiny specks. If you are still concerned, it's possible to insulate the dipstick tube with heat shield wrap, available in speed shops and online.

To track down the sound, I suggest you remove the engine cover in the cockpit and have an assistant listen for the source while you test drive the motorhome. A length of hose can serve as a stethoscope to pinpoint the location. Everyone has a different name for sounds, but from your description it may be the engine-cooling fan (I'd call it a roar). A vacuum leak causes a whistle, but varies with engine load and speed. The fact that it doesn't seem to have any harmful effect leads me to suspect the sound is from a normal function.

## CPAP Power Tip

This is in regard to your answer in "Power for a CPAP Machine" in December 2017. Like so many other RVers, I use a CPAP machine. Mine is a Phillips System One 460P. I purchased a separate cord that plugs into a standard 12-volt DC outlet from the manufacturer. I believe it was around \$25. My wife and I installed a 12-volt DC outlet in the cabinet next to the bed (my wife is a good electrician). We tapped into a nearby 12-volt DC light. When we travel, I just plug into the 12-volt DC outlet. My machine will operate whether we have shorepower or not. I don't have to switch plugs.

**Jerry B. Prickett | Santa Rosa, California**

Thanks for writing. This subject stirred up a lot of reader interest. The machines don't draw a lot of power, particularly if you do not use the humidifier setting. Just make sure

there is sufficient battery capacity when dry camping because you should not draw the batteries down below 50 percent capacity or it will shorten their life.

## Another CPAP Solution

In the December 2017 issue, the lead letter was about rewiring the 120-volt AC receptacle by the bed to be powered by the inverter to allow a CPAP to be used. A much simpler solution is to install a 12-volt DC receptacle on the bed pedestal and obtain a 12-volt DC adapter cord for the CPAP. Most CPAP manufacturers have an accessory that will power the unit with 12 volts DC. That is what I did and, in fact, the receptacle also has a port for charging a cellphone. In addition, running the CPAP directly off 12 volts DC is more efficient than running it through the inverter first, which may reduce the use of power slightly while boondocking.

**Dennis Chamberlain | Via email**

## Yet Another CPAP Tip

In December 2017 there was a question about wiring a motorhome to run a CPAP machine. In addition to RV camping, I also love to do motorcycle camping. When I was diagnosed with apnea and prescribed a CPAP, I thought my motorcycle camping was over. However, I did some research and found a solution that works for both motorcycle and RV camping. My CPAP has a transformer on the power cord that converts 120-volt AC power to 12-volt DC power. So, you can connect the CPAP directly to the 12-volt DC in-house power system of the RV or motorcycle. But it gets better. There are rechargeable lithium batteries on the market that are strong enough to kick-start a car and, I have found, can power the CPAP for two nights without recharging. I purchased a battery from Weego and it came with all the connections you need to start a car, power 12-volt DC devices like the CPAP and recharge phones. On the motorcycle, I use the battery to power

my CPAP all night and recharge my phone. Then, during the day, I connect the battery to my motorcycle battery and recharge it while I ride. On a trip in my motorhome last fall, I used the battery when parked overnight at truck stops and rest areas so I didn't have to run my generator and charged it during the day (charger plugs into cigarette lighter). I believe this is the easiest and most flexible solution to traveling/camping with a CPAP.

**Bob Berg | Julian, Pennsylvania**

Thanks for sharing your tip, Bob. This would be helpful when dry camping with small battery capacity.

## Best Flooring?

I read with interest your response to the flooring question in the November 2017 issue ("Which Flooring Is Best?"), and thought I'd add to the discussion. Carpet is quieter; it minimizes road noise, walking noise and any other sounds within the unit. Our 2005 Itasca Class A motorhome has lots of carpet, as well as a carpet-like fabric on the ceiling, and it is much quieter than newer models, which are mostly vinyl, tile, glass and laminate. I shudder to think how we would ever replace all of that carpet if we need to, though. It's wrapped around everything at the floor level. I suspect we would have to remove all of the furniture.

**Alan Spear | Batavia, Illinois**

Thanks for writing, Alan. Each type of material has its pros and cons. I like carpet for its sound, temperature control and insulating qualities, and the fact that it's flexible and won't crack or split like some types of flooring. **M**

## Have a Tech Question?

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## Decoding History

A chance meeting with a genuine Navajo “code talker” helps unlock one of World War II’s best-kept secrets

By Alan Rider

**A** while back, I had to take my rig in to a dealership to figure out what was up with an illuminated Check Engine light. Turned out that, after the operation’s service-writer read the obscure diagnostic code, it was a problem that was — thankfully — resolved free of charge.

But it got me to thinking. At one time or another we’ve all had experience with codes. Even if they were no more complicated than the ones we got off the back of a cereal box as kids.

While those secret message ciphers from our childhood could have been easily broken, there was one spoken code in history so impossible to crack that it’s been credited with helping the U.S. to win the Battle of Iwo Jima during World War II. It was a novel approach to cryptography that was both elegant in its simplicity and fiendish in its complexity.

I’m talking here about the top-secret tongue created by the “code talkers,” young men plucked from the remote Navajo Nation and thrust into service in the United States Marine Corps beginning in 1942. According to one of the last living code talkers, Peter MacDonald Sr. of Tuba City, Arizona, the system they used to communicate was based on his native tongue, an unwritten language spoken by only a handful of people outside the borders of the 27,000-square-mile reservation.

This little-known chapter of America’s military history (the 2002

movie, *Windtalkers*, was inspired by the program) began with a World War I vet named Philip Johnston who had grown up on the Navajo reservation as the son of missionaries. Johnston, one of the few non-natives to speak the language fluently, suggested to commanders of the Pacific Fleet Amphibious Corps that this convoluted local dialect might make a good way to securely communicate instructions on the battlefield without the time-consuming tasks of encoding and decoding a given message.

When I met MacDonald a few months back, he held his tour group audience spellbound with the story of the 400-plus code talkers who served with the Marines in the Pacific Theater. Collectively, this small band of highly specialized warriors took part in every USMC assault from Guadalcanal to Okinawa.

Beyond the rigors of basic training at Southern California’s Marine Corps Base, Camp Pendleton, the code talkers faced the challenge of memorizing as many as 600 words and phrases that described everything from troop movements to requests for artillery support. Making things more difficult was the fact that the Navajo language lacked words for many of the basic tools of modern warfare, forcing them to simply make them up.

“That’s part of what made the code so effective,” says MacDonald. “Even someone from the reservation would hear a string of Navajo words like ‘sheep, eyes, nose, horse, onion, turkey’ and it would just sound like gibberish.”

Not surprisingly, MacDonald told me, the entire project was considered so important to national security that the code talkers were told not to discuss it with anyone. And they didn’t for nearly a quarter-century until their work was declassified in 1968, which was the first time their contributions to the Allied victory in the South Pacific could be recognized. All of the code talkers, including MacDonald Sr., received the Congressional Medal of Honor in 2001 for their previously unheralded service.

Ultimately, meeting MacDonald Sr. and hearing his stories became the high point of my travels through the Southwest’s Four Corners region, and yet another example of what keeps us all out here trying to decode history along The Road Ahead. **M**

“At one time or another we’ve all had experience with codes. Even if they were no more complicated than the ones we got off the back of a cereal box as kids.”

### Code Talkers ↻

From right: Two code talkers relay orders in Navajo on a field radio in 1943. Peter MacDonald Sr. tells his story; all code talkers received the Congressional Medal of Honor in 2001.





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