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# MotorHome

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May 2017

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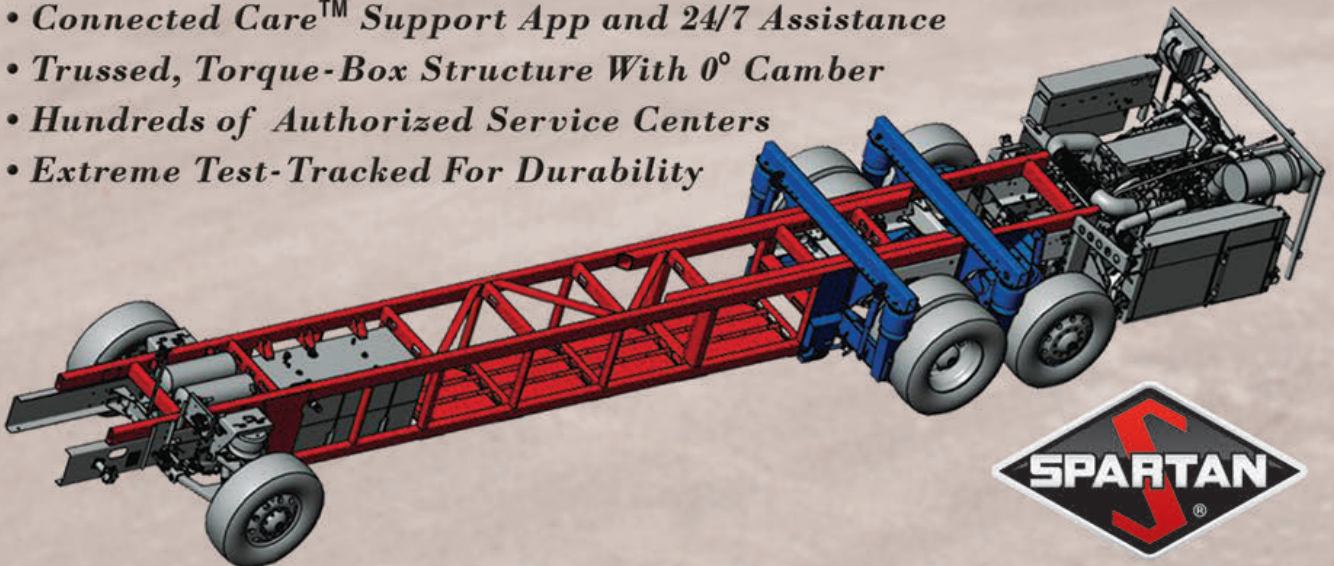
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The Reno, Nevada, area is a true outdoor playground, offering hiking, rock-wall climbing and boating with a beautiful backdrop (see page 23).



Two full bathrooms and a handful of TVs make Forest River's Legacy SR 340 one of our 10 featured motorhomes ideal for entertaining friends and family. Pg. 64

## 4 ON RAMP

The Entertainment Age

## 6 P.O. BOX

MotorHome readers share their opinions

## 13 ESCAPES

Road Foodie, Wheels & Gear, Crossroads

## 96 TECH SAVVY

Quick Tips, Hot Line, Coach & Powertrain

## 110 THE ROAD AHEAD

People and places worth the drive

## FEATURES

### Blame It on Reno.....23

From riding the rapids to wetting a line to world-class skiing and golfing opportunities, Reno is a gateway to outdoor adventure

### Oregon's Awesome Crater Lake...30

The sapphire-blue waters may be the main attraction, but there's much more to do at Crater Lake National Park

### New York's Finger Lakes.....38

A visit to this upstate region allows you to get up close and personal with waterfalls, wineries and the Amish

### Motorhome Multitasking .....49

Using your coach for activities other than traditional camping is a great way to enhance the lifestyle

### Compass 23TB.....58

Thor's Class C RUV is compact and easy to drive, plus it packs quite a few amenities in its small footprint

### That's Entertainment!.....64

With open floorplans, additional facilities and beefed-up audio/video features, these motorhomes help get the RV-park party started

### Power Players.....75

Products designed to prevent damage to your motorhome that can be caused by electrical problems

### Vision Quest .....83

Upgrading your motorhome's basement lighting with LEDs from Boogey Lights dramatically increases cargo visibility

### Classic Ride — DIY Dream Ride...92

A salvaged 2003 Coachmen Cross Country Elite is brought back to life and restored to its old glory

## ON THE COVER

Thor's Compass 23TB features a surprising amount of livability in a compact package. The motorhome's size and superior handling make it easy to maneuver into even the tightest spaces at the RV park and on the road (see test on page 58). Photo by Shawn Spence.



By Kristopher Bunker

# The Entertainment Age

**L**ike many RVers, my exposure to the great outdoors began while camping as a child. We had a large canvas tent, and would spend long summer weekends by the lake, waterskiing, swimming and wetting a line. Then one summer a friend and his family took me to San Diego, California, for a full week of beach living in a motorhome. Naturally, I was immediately hooked, and even at a young age appreciated all the conveniences of home wrapped in a mobile platform.

But whether we were all gathered in the tent or seated around the dinette in the motorhome, there was one common thread: The entertainment was up to us. If you got bored, you slapped on a swimsuit, explored the area or grabbed the tackle box. Once the sun went down, the entire party would generally convene around the campfire and swap stories, sing songs or tell jokes. Watching television or a box-office blockbuster never even crossed your mind because it simply wasn't a possibility.

Hosting a gathering in a motorhome these days, though more technologically driven than those warm summer evenings so long ago, hasn't really changed all that much. True, things like a movie under the stars or a tailgate party watching the big game are much more prevalent, but the overall concept is the same: Spending time with friends and family remains at the heart of the RV-park experience,

regardless of the electronic gadgetry we have at our fingertips.

The ongoing evolution of what's considered entertainment is a key factor. Whereas most folks on RV trips used to content themselves with nature hikes, skipping stones or bird-watching, many of today's RVers are no longer averse to dinner and a movie in their motorhome. After all, most new motorhomes are equipped, at minimum, with a flat-screen TV. The majority also feature a surround-sound setup, and many also include additional TVs, inside and out. These appointments alone make motorhomes ideal vessels for 21st-century entertaining, but it doesn't stop there.

Recognizing the need for these

more entertainment-friendly floorplans, many manufacturers have set out to design motorhomes that are ideal for hosting a campsite shindig. And, as you'll see in "That's Entertainment," beginning on page 64, the fruits of their labor have borne positive results, as a variety of coaches in various configurations fit the good-time bill.

Wide-open floorplans, luxurious seating and additional bathroom facilities all point toward opening your motorhome's doors and inviting loved ones along for an evening of togetherness. Residential refrigerators and appliances make sure the guests are well-fed and content; innovative sleeping arrangements offer an ideal spot for night owls to sleep off the festivities before heading home.

It's easier than ever to host the ultimate party at the RV park, be it a techno-savvy soiree or a simple affair spent playing charades or a game of cards in the living area. Either scenario can lead to the fond, long-lasting memories for which we all strive as we enjoy the motorhome lifestyle. **M**

**“Hosting a gathering in a motorhome these days, though more technologically driven than long ago, hasn't really changed all that much.”**



Photo: Mercedes Morgan Photography

## Contributors | May



**Emily Fagan** and her husband, Mark, have been traveling full time since 2007. They chronicle their journey with lively stories and beautiful photography at <http://roadslesstraveled.us>.



**Holly and Norm Roy** have been RVers since 1995 and are in their 13th year as full-timers. Usually in pursuit of grandchildren, the New Englanders have been to every state and most provinces.



**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.



**Randy Springer** is a lifelong camper who currently owns a Jayco Seneca motorhome. He and his wife, DeAnn, are rapidly approaching their goal of working from the road full time-ish.



**Rosanne Wagstaff** and her husband, Greg, an award-winning photographer, are living their dream of full-time RVing in their Monaco Diplomat motorhome, and enjoy sharing their adventures.



**Larry Walton** is a freelance photojournalist and lifelong RVer who loves exploring the Pacific Northwest with his wife, Robin, and their two dogs, Buddy and Sunny.

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*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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## How important is a panoramic view, given the wall space/storage you trade for it? Have you found a motorhome that provides this kind of encompassing view? Would you like manufacturers to offer more designs with wider visibility?

Those are the questions we asked in the February issue, and here are some of the replies we received:



### Quality Control

So happy you asked the panoramic view question! We've been traveling in a Class A motorhome for nine years. We frequently pull our coach into a campsite, rather than back it in, to afford ourselves the view through the windshield. We have a great Newmar, but the curbside features just two small windows. This has frequently been disappointing, especially when weather or insects force us inside.

Storage is very important in a motorhome, but the view is more important. I've added storage to the inside of closet doors, added pantry drawers, utilized organizers and hooks, and even eliminated a large cabinet to move the TV for comfortable viewing, but, the view is why we go in

the first place!

That said, the absolute most important aspect of any motorhome is the quality of its parts and construction. When this fails, nothing else matters. I would love for manufacturers to accomplish both.

**Andrena K. | Via email**

### Classic Views from a Class C

Large windows were definitely on our list of must-haves when we selected our motorhome. Our 24-foot Lazy Daze, with a front-lounge floorplan, has the largest windows we found in any Class C manufacturer. There are two opposing 5½-foot-wide windows in the lounge area, a 4-foot-wide window in the galley, a huge 4½-foot-wide window in the bathroom and even a

2-foot-wide window in the shower stall. Combined with the windshield, we have 360-degree views from anywhere in the motorhome. With the obvious exception of the windshield, the windows are all dual-pane and tinted, so we still have privacy while we enjoy the view.

**Andrew Majewski | Winters, California**

### Backward is Beautiful

In response to the question about windows, we have had quite a few experiences. Our Class A motorhome has one great window — the windshield. That's why we carry about 40 feet of water hose and 35 feet of sewer line so we can either back in or pull in so as to enjoy the best view out the front.

We have had people tell us we

## Featured Letter

### A View Without Thrill

In Alberta, Canada, most campgrounds have small, back-in stalls. This makes the outdoor space for your use on the passenger side of the motorhome, as illustrated by the placement of most outdoor kitchens and entry doors. But most motorhomes have their indoor kitchens on that side as well, leaving the [larger] seating-area windows looking out over the neighbor's site or, if you're really unlucky, their hookups. I think it would be more enjoyable to watch my husband barbecue or the grandkids play instead. My brother-in-law hunted high and low for this setup, pointing out the advantages to us too late for our last motorhome purchase.

**Melodie Cochrane | Red Deer, Alberta, Canada**





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were in the site the wrong way and offered to help, until we told them why we were parked that way. Once I overheard a discussion between a husband and wife as they set up next to us. He was certain we were hooked to his connections until his wife showed him their connections!

We like views, but realistically, in most sites, large side windows would only result in a better view of the neighbors. A nice rear window might be good in the bedroom, but the front of the motorhome is still the best place to sit and enjoy the view.

The only drawbacks of setting up “backward” is that you have to run the power, water, and sewer lines under the motorhome, and you have to be extra careful not to stumble over them when you exit the motorhome. Carefully placing two ropes on the ground before you pull in helps. I use one to pull the power and water lines, and one to pull the sewer line.

Just a little planning can give you a

great room with a view!  
**Don Miller | Leesburg, Florida**

**International Sights**

Being able to view the scenery around us while sitting on the sofa or dinette was a major reason for us to switch from our Class C motorhome to a Class A with a large front window. Due to the cabover beds and the kitchen covering another side, our Class C practically offered only one side to look at the landscape around us — and spectacular surroundings have always been a major criterion for selecting a campground.

Once we were camping in Siena, Italy, on a hill opposite the old town. The site offered a great view of the cathedral but we had no chance to enjoy the view from inside the motorhome. It was really frustrating. Our new motorhome therefore had to offer a three-side view from the seating areas. I had really been astonished how few brands offer such floorplans.

More than half the brands didn't have a single offering in their whole product line! Our new Class A offers large windows behind the dinette and the sofa facing each other, and an L-shape kitchen facing the midcoach entry door. This floorplan doesn't trade any storage or space to the view. That's the way we wanted it and we really appreciate it every day when camping with views of the sea, lake, mountain, old town, etc.

**Rolf P. Maisch | Boppelsen, Switzerland**

**The Other Side?**

My husband and I spent a lot of time shopping for our new Class A; we walked through dozens of motorhomes. After many months of shopping we finally had to give up and settle for a terrible view. Our Coachmen Pursuit 31BD has the perfect floorplan and amenities to fit our needs, but almost no view out the passenger side. Most RVers try to have the passenger side situated toward a

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lake, river or the best scenery, since we want to sit under our awnings to enjoy the view. Why are the biggest windows almost always on the other side of the coach? In our case there is plenty of wall space to accommodate a larger window over the sink area. I wish the manufacturer had used that space for a window instead of a wall.  
**Christy Pifer | Grinnell, Iowa**

### Short and Sweet

I traded my Class A Tiffin Allegro Bus for a 2004 Gulfstream Atrium Class A just for the windows and views. The views from the atrium slideout area are spectacular.  
**David Lawson | Via email**

### Active Lifestyle

I wanted to comment on Mary Zalmanek's "Passion in Action" article in the January issue. While the people and their hobbies were certainly interesting, [the hobbies discussed] were all very sedentary activities. Some of us baby boomers choose more physically active and exciting pastimes that serve to challenge other RVers to stretch their imaginations regarding what they can do.

Personally, I'm a 63-year-old single full-time RVer that just completed training on my new powered paraglider (think go-kart with a large propeller on the back suspended below a rectangular fabric wing for lift). I'm currently building a "second floor" on my flatbed trailer so that I can winch the quad (the "go-kart" part) over the car for transport to warmer climes for flying. The wing portion (officially called the "glider") gets stuffed into a large bag and is carried onboard the RV. The powered paraglider requires very little flat ground for takeoff and landing so, as you travel down the road and see something interesting, you can pull over and launch and fly over your interest!

It's an exciting and burgeoning sport. In fact, the week before my training, a 74-year-old gentleman from San Diego had just completed his own training.

Long story short, please consider giving a little space for more physically active hobbies.  
**Fred Copping | Via email**

### A Second Opinion

I recently purchased the TireTraker TT-500 for my six RV tires before going from Virginia Beach, Virginia, to Tampa, Florida. I am very pleased with TireTraker's performance, and also very appreciative with the fast and detailed helpful response of a TireTraker service tech when I emailed TireTraker with a question about the difference in my PSI readings and the air gauge I had been using. The tech, named Jeff, told me something I had never heard: Most tire shops can check my gauge against their calibrated gauge/machine. By doing so, I could come very close to knowing exactly where I stood regarding my tires' PSIs.

The reason this was so important is because my tires are 295/75R 22.5, 16-ply rated, and call for 120 PSI at a cold temperature due to the weight of my RV (16 tons). Most RVs call for 110 PSI or less, which is easier to take care of. A slow leak had developed in one tire, and Harris Tire in Chesapeake, Virginia, turned it into a flat but would not call back to fix the problem that they had caused. Mike's Mobile Tire Service in Virginia Beach corrected the problem Harris Tire had created and gave an immediate, informative and reasonably priced service and cure.

My wife and I were able to monitor all our tire pressures and temperatures in the comfort of our RV during 800 miles of rain and outside temperatures ranging from the low 40s to 80s. Other Class A motorhome owners need to understand the comfort this is, especially after having tire problems.  
**Steve Wilbraham | Via email**

### Another Cold-Weather Motorhome

In August 2003, we took delivery of a 2004 Triple E Commander 36-foot motorhome with two slides and nearly every available option on a gas Workhorse chassis. We've logged 180,000 kilometers (nearly 112,000 miles) through 48 states and nine

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provinces, crossing the continent a half-dozen times, including a year of full-timing. As Edmontonians (North America's most northerly city with a population of more than 1 million), we needed the very best in cold-weather operation.

We've driven in blizzards, boondocked in snowstorms and experienced more than 20-below weather,

but have never had a problem. The Commander is very well-insulated and has two furnaces that also provide heat to the storage compartments. On windy nights at those temperatures we did need to shelter the motorhome to maintain a comfortable interior temperature, and the generator needed to run to keep up battery power, as furnaces draw a lot.

The Commander units were manufactured in Triple E's plant in Winkler, Manitoba, but the company stopped production about a half-dozen years ago and now make the popular Leisure Travel Vans. Many do remain on the road, and they are great for cold-weather RVing.

**Earl and Liz Andrusiak | British Columbia, Canada, and Indio, California**

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### The Cat's Meow

To help combat the cold, we have an Edenpure electric heater and an Olympian Wave 8 LP-gas heater. The only time we use the motorhome's furnace is when we've been gone all day and come home to a very chilly RV. The reason we seldom use the furnace is because we've read that 40 percent of the heat goes out the flue. We crack a window when the catalytic propane heater is on. We've used it for years with no problem.

**Carl and Ruth Engstrom | Via email**

### Motorhome Seat Covers

My husband and I have been readers of *MotorHome* since we bought our first coach. We travel with a dog and a cat, and have found that many *MotorHome* readers also have pets. I have noticed claw marks where our cat has jumped on the seat, and would like to find seat covers to help protect the fabric.

Most seat covers I have found are not large enough for motorhome seating, and it's simply not feasible to leave the motorhome at an upholstery place for an extended amount of time in order to have something made. Any suggestions from fellow readers?

**Sandy and Al Torrens | Lawrenceville, Georgia**

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## GOT A V10?

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



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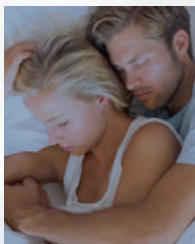
### Question of the Month

Have you purchased seat covers for your motorhome? If so, did you find a retailer, or were they custom-made? Or, what other methods have you employed to protect the seats?

Send your comments to:

*MotorHome*, 2750 Park View Court, Suite 240, Oxnard, CA 93036; or email [letters@motorhomemagazine.com](mailto:letters@motorhomemagazine.com)

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## Top of the Morning

Take a hike with a ranger in Colorado's Rocky Mountain National Park

By Morey Edelman

**R**ocky Mountain National Park in Colorado makes the most of its 415 square miles with soaring mountain peaks, an elevation range of 7,500 feet to more than 12,000 feet and some 355 miles of hiking trails — many of which can be explored on a ranger-led hike. Every Wednesday during the summer season, visitors can experience some of the best Rocky Mountain has to offer by taking a four-hour ranger-led hike from the Glacier Gorge Trailhead, just steps away from a shuttle stop. What a great opportunity to hike to one of the magnificent glacier lakes in the Bear Lake Corridor on the east side of this park!

Our hike along the Loch Vale trail was led by ranger Trevor Cullen. We hiked the 5.7-mile round trip to The

Loch, a breathtaking glacier lake situated at an altitude of 10,190 feet. Along the way we stopped at Alberta Falls and also discussed a number of park issues, including the definition of a designated “wilderness area,” and the impact this designation has on the land. Cullen also pointed out many of the trees, rock formations and the wildlife along the way.

Camping is available across the street from Glacier Gorge Trailhead at Glacier Basin Campground. The campground is scheduled to be open May 25–September 11 this year, and offers 150 primitive sites (35-foot maximum length for RVs) and flush toilets.

For more information, call 970-586-1206, or visit [www.npg.gov/romo](http://www.npg.gov/romo).

By Bobbie Hasselbring

# Spring Means Salmon

**M**y sister-in-law hates fish — except salmon, which she loves. Salmon is the “anti-fish.” The rich pink-to-orange-to-red flesh doesn’t taste fishy and even folks who don’t like fish are surprised at salmon’s delicious flavor. And none is better than Northwest spring salmon.

Salmon is not only tasty, it’s healthful. These high-protein fish are loaded with heart-healthy omega-3 fatty acids and vitamin D. Health authorities suggest we eat oily fish like salmon two to three times per week.

The name salmon comes from salmo, Latin for “to leap.” If you’ve ever seen salmon muscularly jump over rocks, rapids and even waterfalls to return to spawning grounds, the name makes perfect sense.

Most salmon species are born in freshwater creeks and rivers and migrate to the ocean and then return to their original freshwater to lay eggs and die. A few landlocked species live in freshwater only. On North America’s East Coast, salmon exist in the rivers and streams that feed into the Atlantic Ocean; on the West Coast, they’re found in tributaries that feed into the Pacific Ocean. In addition to wild fish, salmon may be farm raised in holding pens.

There are a number of different species of salmon, many with several different names, which can be confusing. Atlantic salmon is found on the East Coast. In the West, chinook salmon (aka king, blackmouth or spring salmon) is one of the largest (weighing up to 30 pounds) and most prized for its delicate orange flesh. There is also coho or silver salmon; chum salmon (aka keta, dog or calico salmon), often fed to sled dogs; sockeye or red salmon, with high oil content and characteristic red flesh, is often smoked; and pink salmon, also called humpback or humpies, a small variety (generally weighing 3-4 pounds) that’s commonly canned.

All types of salmon are delicious, but it’s chinook salmon caught in the spring that make fishers and foodies swoon. Spring chinook is especially fresh and clean-tasting with a delicate flavor. It also commands top prices.

It’s fun to catch your own spring salmon. If you don’t own a boat, there are plenty of fishing charters that provide the bait, tackle and know-how. I’ve caught chinook on charters in both Alaska and on Oregon’s Tillamook Coast, and there’s nothing more thrilling than bagging a 25-pounder and filling your motorhome’s freezer with this delicious fish.

**Got a favorite salmon recipe you’d like to share?**

Email [bobbie@realfoodtraveler.com](mailto:bobbie@realfoodtraveler.com) with “Salmon” in the subject line.



From top: The author with her 25-pound catch on Oregon’s Tillamook Coast. Salmon charters provide all the bait, tackle and know-how for your salmon fishing adventure.

## BUTTERY BROWN-SUGAR BAKED SALMON



This super-easy salmon from Kaspar’s in Seattle, Washington, is sweet, moist and slightly peppery.

- 4 6-ounce salmon fillets
- Salt
- ¼ cup butter, softened
- ½ cup light brown sugar
- ½ teaspoon crushed black pepper

► Preheat oven to 375 F. Season fillets with salt. Mix butter, sugar and pepper to form a paste. Spread evenly over fillets. Place salmon on greased cookie sheet with sides and bake for 12-15 minutes, basting with its own juices every 5 minutes. Do not overcook. Salmon is done when internal temperature reaches 140 F.

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## Portable Power

Renogy introduces the Phoenix Generator 20W All-in-one Solar Kit, a briefcase-sized personal solar-energy solution that transforms the power of the sun into easy-to-use, dependable energy for smaller electronic devices. The Phoenix is a compact, lightweight backup system that combines two 10-watt monocrystalline solar panels and can expand up to 120 watts with additional photovoltaic cells. The built-in 150-watt USB and AC/DC outputs are compatible with many smaller devices and appliances, allowing users to charge and power items including smartphones, TVs, laptops, cameras, lighting and more. The Phoenix can be charged using the sun, a standard 120-volt AC outlet or an automotive 12-volt DC lighter outlet. The unit comes with a built-in sturdy and comfortable handle for easy portability and a high-quality LCD panel that shows remaining power and output usage. MSRP: \$588.99.

**Renogy | 800-330-8678, [www.renogy.com](http://www.renogy.com)**



## KING OmniGo

KING is beaming in a new portable omnidirectional over-the-air (OTA) antenna. The OmniGo is powerful and compact, and has been designed to pick up signals from all directions, without the need to move or adjust the device. The amplified signal maximizes signal strength to provide the best reception available in the area, eliminating the need to rotate the antenna. The omnidirectional antenna receives free SD and HD VHF, UHF and FM OTA signals, and comes with a collapsible tripod, magnetic vehicle mount (for temporary mounting), 25 feet of coax cable, 12-volt DC power supply and convenient carry bag. MSRP: \$129.99.

**KING | 952-922-6889, [www.kingconnect.com](http://www.kingconnect.com)**

## Spots Be Gone

A clean, spot-free finish after washing a motorhome can be difficult to achieve, especially when considering the impurities in the city water. Drip Dry Spotless is a complete wash system that is said to leave users with a drip-dry rinse similar to those at a drive-through car wash. The system is designed to remove the suspended salts, minerals and sediments in water, leaving a clean, spot-free finish. The lightweight unit comes with a carry handle, a 50-foot expanding hose, a nine-setting soap gun and a 1-year warranty. The RV System pictured here can be used for washing and for filtering drinking water, and also includes a hook for keeping the filter upright, two carbon filters and a total dissolved solids (TDS) meter to monitor water quality. MSRP starts at \$165; RV System starts at \$235.

**Drip Dry Spotless | 877-357-8260, <http://dripdryspotless.com>**



## Pedal Protection

USARoadbag has rolled out its new 2017 FL bike travel bag. The Front Load (FL) bag features the same high-quality 600-denier canvas material of other Roadbag products, but is designed in a reverse pattern, allowing those with little room between their bikes and the motorhome to easily reach the zipper in order to install the back panel. The LT-27 (covers two bikes), the LT-37 (covers two to three bikes) and the LT-47 (covers three to four bikes) can all be ordered in the new FL configuration. The weather-resistant bags are designed to protect against harsh elements, and include small holes at the bottom to allow for drainage should any water intrude around the hitch opening. Six highly reflective webbing strips are included on each bag to increase visibility to other drivers. MSRP: starts at \$169.95.

**USARoadbag | 208-660 6351, [www.usaroadbag.com](http://www.usaroadbag.com)**

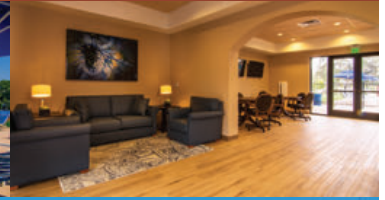






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## ESCAPES CROSSROADS

Morristown, Tennessee

### Crockett Tavern Museum

Most everyone has heard of Davy Crockett, a genuine American hero probably best known for his role at the Alamo in San Antonio as part of Texas' battle for independence. But his early life may not be as well-known. The Crockett Tavern Museum, located in Morristown in northeast Tennessee, explores the life and times of the man known as "king of the wild frontier."

Crockett and his family lived in east Tennessee. His early years were tough; his family struggled with debt and moved often, but eventually worked to establish a successful tavern. Young Crockett's jobs were to hunt game for the tavern's supper table and to take care of the livestock of tavern guests, which often included cattledrivers and shepherders.

The tavern is a representative building of the type of structure that Crockett's father would have constructed, and contains furnishings of that period. It sits on the approximate location of the original building, and is open May through October. After your tour, be sure to visit Davy's Trading Post, a gift shop offering pioneer-related items for sale.

**For more information**, call 423-587-9900, or visit the website at [www.crocketttavernmuseum.org](http://www.crocketttavernmuseum.org) — James Richardson



Photo: James Richardson

Barstow, California

### Desert Solitude

Even though Mojave National Preserve is the third-largest National Park Service area in the lower 48 states at 1.6 million acres, it is seldom visited. After the summer heat subsides, this high-desert area is a remarkable place with many varieties of plants, including cactus and a Joshua tree forest, canyons, volcanic cinder cones and sand dunes. The landscape changes as you drive through the different elevations. There are a number of developed hiking trails, including the Rings Loop Trail (1.5 miles), which ascends narrow Banshee Canyon.

Stop at Kelso Depot Visitor Center (check the website for days and hours of operation), view the

20-minute orientation video and tour the historically furnished depot. This rail depot was built in the first half of the 20th century to support the local ranchers and miners.

All of the major sights can be reached on paved roads. There are also graded gravel and dirt roads, which go farther into the preserve, but check at the visitor center for road conditions.

There are two campgrounds in the preserve. Hole-in-the-Wall Campground is at 4,400 feet elevation and has no hookups, but does have potable water and a dump station. Mid Hills Campground, at 5,600 feet, has no facilities other than vault toilets and is not recommended for motorhomes.


**For more information**, call 760-252-6100, or visit [www.nps.gov/moja](http://www.nps.gov/moja) — Morey Edelman 



Photo: Morey Edelman



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## REVIEWS YOU CAN USE

Reading and sharing guest feedback about RV parks is easy on the Good Sam Club website



California's Caliente Springs Resort (above) and Colorado's Tiger Run Resort (top) are two of the thousands of RV parks and campgrounds that can be reviewed on the Good Sam Club website.

Have you found a great-sounding RV resort online? Before booking a reservation, check the RV Park Reviews on the Good Sam Club website, [www.goodsam.com](http://www.goodsam.com), to make sure the destination lives up to your expectations.

More than 10,000 RV Park Reviews have been posted by park guests on the Good Sam website, providing invaluable firsthand impressions of overall service and quality. Reviewers also rate RV parks from one to five stars, and the average score appears on each reviewed park's information page. Also included in each RV park's online listing is Good Sam's annual three-numbered rating.

Since launching RV Park Reviews two years ago, hundreds of reviews have been posted each month, and the results have shown the following:

- ▶ Sixty-two percent of all parks reviewed receive four or five stars.
- ▶ Good Sam Parks, which offer members a 10 percent discount on nightly stays, earn an average of four stars.

### START REVIEWING AND JOIN THE CONVERSATION

You can share your own RV Park Reviews on the Good Sam website 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. On the park's information page, go to the Reviews tab and start sharing. To leave a review, RVers must be signed in on the Good Sam Club website.



**📌 DID YOU KNOW?** The Good Sam Club got its start in 1966 with a simple letter. A small RV periodical named *Trail-R-News* heard from a reader who suggested that the magazine form a club. The publisher, Art Griffin, printed stickers of the smiling, haloed mascot, and members were encouraged to help each other on the road and in the campground.

### The Reviews Are In

As the following excerpts show, RV Park Reviews give RVers information they won't find anywhere else.



"What a pleasant surprise to pull in and be welcomed by a staff that was so efficient. All spaces are large. Ours was 100 feet. We went to the on-site café for dinner and breakfast. The meals were great."



"Very large sites and lots of grass for our pets. Staffers were extremely friendly and very attentive to the campers' needs."



"The campground staff is very helpful. Sites are generally level and easy to access. The only drawbacks are that the Wi-Fi is very weak and cellphone service is almost nonexistent."



"Arrived after dark and was surprised to find no lighting, not even in the sign, making it tough to find. This park is set back off the highway and is quite dark at night."

## SMARTER HOME SECURITY

Good Sam members can protect their homes without a contract — and get two months of free monitoring

After his friends were robbed, Chad Laurans learned that most home security companies charge hefty fees and lock users into long-term contracts, so he came up with something new. Relying on his electrical engineering degree from Yale and an MBA from Harvard, Laurans designed a more affordable 24/7 home security system, SimpliSafe.

True to its name, the wireless SimpliSafe system is easy to install, and security monitoring starts at \$14.99 a month, less than half of what many other companies charge. And unlike most of the competition, the service doesn't require a long-term commitment.

For Good Sam Club members, the deal is even better. SimpliSafe is now offering members two months of free round-the-clock monitoring with the purchase of a security system. Members also save with free shipping and can try the system risk free, thanks to the 60-day money-back guarantee. The company even covers the cost of return shipping.

With no hard-wiring or drilling needed, SimpliSafe can be set up in about 30 minutes, so there are no installation fees. There's also no vulnerable landline that can be cut. A security camera provides live-stream HD video, and owners can check in from anywhere on a smartphone or other internet device. All of these features helped SimpliSafe win an Editors' Choice award from CNET, a leading technology news and reviews organization.

► To learn more about the SimpliSafe home security system and the Good Sam Club deal, go to [www.simplisafe.com/goodsam](http://www.simplisafe.com/goodsam).



## THREE MORE WAYS TO SAVE WITH GOOD SAM



**COUPONS:** With exclusive retail coupons, Good Sam Club members can save

hundreds of dollars on outdoor gear and RV accessories at Camping World SuperCenters and on phone orders at **888-857-6631**. The members-only coupons are updated every quarter on the Good Sam Club website. Check often to find the latest offers at [www.goodsamclub.com/coupons](http://www.goodsamclub.com/coupons).



**LP-GAS DISCOUNTS:** Good Sam Club members can save 25 percent off the regular

retail price on up to 40 gallons of LP-gas every Tuesday and Wednesday at Camping World SuperCenters. LP-gas (aka propane) is available at most Camping World locations throughout the United States. To find participating stores in your neck of the woods, go to [www.campingworld.com/stores](http://www.campingworld.com/stores).

## GOOD TIMES, GREAT SAVINGS WITH THE RV TRAVEL GUIDE



The 2017 *Good Sam RV Travel & Savings Guide* gives Good Sam Club members the tools to plan great trips and save big bucks along the way.

This year's guide comes packed with information on 12,504 North American RV parks and public campgrounds, including more than 2,100 Good Sam Parks that offer 10 percent discounts to members. New for 2017, campground listings include Wi-Fi-at-site availability and expanded hookup and amperage information.

Helping readers decide where to stay are Good Sam's exclusive RV park ratings and articles on everything from family camping to snowbird destinations. State and provincial maps make navigation easy. Also included in the annually updated guide is \$1,000 worth of coupons redeemable at Camping World.

► Members can save more than 60 percent off the newsstand price of the 2017 *Good Sam RV Travel & Savings Guide*, paying just \$6.95. That's a \$13 savings off the \$19.95 non-member price. The guide is available at Camping World SuperCenters and [www.campingworld.com/2017guide](http://www.campingworld.com/2017guide). Good Sam members provide their membership number at checkout for the discount.



### MAIL FORWARDING:

Traveling Good Sam Club members and full-time RVers can check on their mailboxes daily, just like at home, with easy-to-use online tools from Good Sam Mail Service. The basic plan ships mail and packages to requested destinations at selected intervals, shreds and recycles unwanted mail, sends email notifications for certified mail and jury summons, and provides a unique Florida mailing address. To learn more, visit [www.goodsammailservice.com](http://www.goodsammailservice.com).

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## FURRION



Sparks Marina Park offers views of Slide Mountain and Mount Rose, plus a 2-mile walking path around its 77-acre lake, swimming, fishing, and a dog park.

## Blame It on Reno

A far cry from the air-conditioned casinos, nightclubs and showrooms in Las Vegas, this Nevada gem is a premier outdoor playground

By Rosanne Wagstaff

**M**ention Reno, Nevada, and visions of a casino town boasting crowd-pleasing rodeos, hot air balloon races and classic car galas may come to mind. But under its glittering marquee, the “Biggest Little City in the World” harbors a secret identity. Clues are everywhere. With a whitewater park rushing through downtown, a ski resort featuring the highest base elevation in the area, golf courses begging play, and a choice of RV parks, Reno is a premier outdoor playground as well.

### Ride the Rapids

Returning to this former hometown of ours in May, my husband, Greg, and I felt like kids on spring break. The annual Reno River Festival (May 13-14 this year) was hosting the U.S. National Whitewater Freestyle Championships, and the riverbanks buzzed in anticipation.

“Folks, the powder you skied on yesterday is the water you’re riding today!” the announcer called out. The river, fed largely by

Sierra Nevada snowmelt, thunders through the city center, crashing over 11 drop-pools in the half-mile-long Truckee River Whitewater Park. Based on a scale of 1 (a lake) to 6 (a waterfall), the course is rated 2-3. Beginners and experts alike enjoy paddling kayaks, inner tubes, rafts and canoes downstream. Boaters launch their watercraft upstream along easily accessible flat-top rocks and boulders. When the pros come to town, these 7,000 tons of installed smooth rocks serve as grandstands.

Fans cheered as freestyle athletes spun kayaks into the air with gymnastic-style spins and cartwheels under the judges’ scrutiny. Upriver, a series of paired poles suspended over the tumbling water marked a slalom course. Competitors in carbon-fiber racing boats, kayaks, canoes and creek boats maneuvered through the gates battling currents to stay on course. The boater-



### Getting There ➔

Reno is located approximately 450 miles northwest of Las Vegas, Nevada. Take U.S. Highway 95 north for nearly 420 miles, then merge on to Interstate 80 headed west. You’ll enter Reno after about 35 miles.

## GETAWAY

RENO, NEVADA

cross, a crowd favorite, drew a large audience as kayakers raced a buoy course to the finish line.

If you're a water sports enthusiast, splash into the city's free water park with your own watercraft, rent one or leave the navigating to an expert on a guided tour. Helmets and flotation vests are required and water temperatures vary seasonally between 50 to 70 degrees. If you're new to the sport, several outfitters can assist with general information, lessons, tours, and boat and gear rentals. For more information visit Tahoe Whitewater Tours at [www.gowhitewater.com](http://www.gowhitewater.com) or Sierra Adventures at [www.wildsierra.com](http://www.wildsierra.com).

### Climb a Wall

Have you ever dreamed of rock climbing? Venture into BaseCamp Reno at Whitney Peak Hotel and climb its signature 164-foot outdoor climbing wall for a bird's-eye view of Reno's downtown. No experience is necessary for a one-hour attempt to reach the top. Under the watchful eye and belaying (rope management) assistance of a BaseCamp staff member, novices clamber up the wall along a beginner route dotted with



Climb up and ride down on BaseCamp Reno's outdoor climbing wall at Whitney Peak Hotel. The 164-foot-tall outdoor structure affords a great view of the area from the top.

gumball-colored grips and footholds. Sport climbers follow an expert-level path scaling the multipitch wall with a 70-foot climb to the first ledge and a 94-foot ascent to the second.

Not ready to take on the monster wall? Have some fun on the shorter, 35-foot sections with a self-regulating, magnetic braking system called an auto-belay. Climbing is not on my list of fun outdoor activities but, I must admit, this wall tempted me. Watching youngsters scrabble 5 to 10 feet high, hang like bugs on a wall and then gently ride down made climbing look

like great fun.

Still not convinced? Practice first with some indoor bouldering in the 7,000-square-foot facility with more than 3,200 square feet of climbable space and cushy, padded flooring. Day-use fees apply, and all climbing equipment is provided for a nominal rental fee. The outdoor climb-to-the-top costs \$50 and bragging rights are included! For more information visit [www.basecampreno.com](http://www.basecampreno.com).



Spectators enjoy the Reno River Festival's slalom competition from the "grandstands" at the river's edge.





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### Ski or Golf

To ski or to golf, that is the choice. Why choose? Why not hit the slopes in the morning and tee off in the afternoon? At a dizzying base elevation of 8,260 feet, Reno's Mount Rose Ski Tahoe resort offers spring skiing just 25 minutes from downtown while sunshine warms the golf courses in the valley.

Ski and snowboarders of all skill levels coast down the mountain ribboned with more than 60 trails. Expansive, gentle slopes encourage beginners, while the adrenaline-pumping, 200-plus acres of vertical Chutes dare experts. The resort's Rosebuds program offers a two-hour ski or snowboard group lesson for young travelers. Check out the resort's website at [www.skirose.com](http://www.skirose.com).

Whether your tee shots sail down the fairway or dribble off the tee box, you're sure to enjoy a round of golf in Reno. How can you not, on courses framed by towering mountains, city skylines and an occasional coyote trotting by? Popular Wolf Run Golf Club challenges players over scenic desert terrain with plenty of elevation changes. Lakeridge Golf Course, a mature course lush with trees and greenery, belies its desert surroundings. As you tee off on its signature 15th hole, 140 feet above an island green, don't get distracted by the city skyline or you may just plunk your golf ball into Lake Stanley.

When you kick off your ski boots and head to the tee box, you may be interested in knowing that you spent the morning skiing down Slide Mountain. Curiously, the resort's namesake, Mount Rose, looms nearby and is known for its summit hike.

### Hike and Picnic

Our hiking boots crunched and slipped on the pebbled, rocky surface. "A moonscape," I thought, as the wind whipped and the forest disappeared

**“ Fixing our eyes on the steep trail, we trudged to the mountaintop. Looking up, I gasped. Reno sprawled below in miniature detail. ”**



behind us. Fixing our eyes on the steep trail, we trudged to the mountaintop. Looking up, I gasped. Reno sprawled below in miniature detail. Lake Tahoe reflected liquid blue and views stretched in endless panoramas. I felt like I was peering out an airplane window and, at an elevation of 10,776 feet, I could have been! That first trek to the Mount Rose summit led to many more and the views never dulled.

You don't need to hike to the top to enjoy the trail, but it's encouraging to know that the trailhead sits at the summit of Mount Rose Highway (state Route 431), at an elevation of 8,900 feet, so just parking your dinghy vehicle gets you partway up! The first couple of miles wend pleasantly to a seasonal waterfall that is a popular (and respectable) turnaround point. The greatest elevation gain (approximately 1,800 feet) occurs in the last 2 miles of the 5.2-mile ascent.

Tucked in the pines, well before the highway summit, lies Galena Creek Regional Park. Appearing simply as a local park, this hidden gem doubles as a gateway to the Mount Rose Wilderness. It's ideal for a picnic in the

woods, a youngster's fishing lesson at Marilyn's Pond (stocked with catchable rainbow trout) and a refreshing retreat from summer's rising temperatures. Beyond the picnic tables, forested paths and 0.4-mile interpretive trail, the wilderness beckons ardent hikers, mountain bikers and snowshoers to the popular Jones-Whites Creek Trail. This 9.2-mile loop delivers panoramic city views, creek crossings and overarching forests. A left turn at the trailhead sets you on a grueling 1.9-mile ascent, but the views are worth it. For a moderate start, turn right. The park is open year-round for day use and the visitor center ([www.galenacreekvisitorcenter.org](http://www.galenacreekvisitorcenter.org)) is open seasonally from May through mid-October.

### Ladders and Lakes

Anglers, perched on stepladders in a lake, catch gigantic trout. It may sound like a fish tale but Pyramid Lake, 35 miles northeast of Reno, is home to the mighty Lahontan cutthroat trout, the largest of the cutthroat trout species. The world record-holder was fished out of the lake in 1925, earning its title at 39 inches in length and a whopping 41 pounds.

Famous for its unconventional "stepladder fishing," the lake lures anglers away from the shoreline



Above, left: Wolf Run Golf Club treats players to a challenging round of golf in a scenic, high-desert setting. Above, right: Sparks Marina RV Resort is ideally located near Sparks Marina Park and the Legends complex with brand-name outlet stores, choice restaurants, an IMAX theater and anchor store, Scheels. Downtown Reno is usually abuzz with activity.



armed with kitchen ladders, 6-foot ladders and utility ladders. They waded into deeper water toward drop-offs where the fish swim to get into casting range. This ingenious method, pioneered in the 1970s, can be quite the spectacle on prime fishing days, as fisher-clad ladders stretch along the shallows. The Lahontan cutthroat trout season extends from October 1 through June 30, but experienced anglers tout March and April as the prime fishing months. Avid fishers cast lines from opening day right on through the winter. The lake is located on the Pyramid Lake Paiute Tribe's reservation, and the required tribal fishing permits can be purchased at the Sutcliffe Marina's Ranger Station or online at [www.pyramidlake.us](http://www.pyramidlake.us). For more information on the area's fishing, gear rental (including ladders) and guided fishing trips, visit Reno Fly Shop ([www.renoflyshop.com](http://www.renoflyshop.com)).

### Home Away from Home

There's no better way to top off a play

day in Reno than by relaxing over a great home-cooked meal with family and friends. Pinocchio's Bar & Grill satisfies this craving with a welcoming ambiance and a menu reflecting proprietor J.P. Pinocchio's passion for Italian and Cajun cuisine, a blending he created after his culinary training in New Orleans. This not-to-be-missed family-owned eatery has held a loyal following since its inception back in March 1997.

From a traditional meat lasagna with a pesto marinara sauce to a Bourbon Street pasta sauté — a blend of chicken, sausage, shrimp, peppers, onions and mushrooms in a Cajun cream sauce — it's nearly impossible to choose a favorite. Applewood smoked ribs tops the favorites list of many patrons. Simpler fare includes a delightful selection of salads, pizzas, burgers, sandwiches and freshly ground turkey burgers.

While your meal is being prepared, sink back and enjoy the eclectic collage of treasures gracing the walls and

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## GETAWAY

RENO, NEVADA

ceilings. "What's the story behind all this?" I asked. "I'm a collector," J.P. smiled. His wife and co-restauranteur, Barbara, created the pleasing display that begs you to wander the restaurant like a gallery. An airplane pedal car hangs in the air as if in flight while a Jerry Mahoney ventriloquist dummy silently eyes patrons. Family, friends and celebrities smile from framed photos and vintage signs brighten booths. Each has a story, best told by the owners, like the 61-foot sculling boat that "lost" 8 feet in transit and hangs like crown molding in the bar. When asked what he hopes customers will remember about their dining experience, J.P. Pinocchio simply said, "That it's like their home away from home." And, indeed it is. Visit both family-run locations in Reno and Sparks and take a sneak preview of the menu at [www.pinocchiosbarandgrill.com](http://www.pinocchiosbarandgrill.com). **M**

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# OREGON'S AWESOME CRATER LAKE

Translucent. Startling. Sapphire Blue.

**S**eeing Crater Lake, the deepest lake in the United States, for the first time causes most people to sharply suck in their breath. Stand at any overlook and you'll hear phrases like "Oh my goodness." "It's so blue." "You can see through the water." "It looks like a jewel."

Dubbed the "gem of the Cascades," Oregon's Crater Lake is a geologic anomaly: an extraordinarily deep lake situated in a huge volcano filled with water that's eye-poppingly blue and incredibly pure because it's a closed system — no water comes in or out other than rain or snow that falls and evaporates. And for those who live in or are traveling through the Northwest, Crater Lake National Park makes the perfect RV getaway.

We head south on Interstate 5 around noon on a Friday under brilliant summer skies, an ideal start to our three-day adventure. It's about five hours from Oregon City to Crater Lake

and, just south of Salem, we leave the work-a-day traffic behind and cruise through the rolling hills and fields of wheat and sunflowers of the Willamette Valley.

Just south of Albany, we're ready for a break from freeway driving and, on a whim, turn off on exit 216 at the sign for the Brownsville historic museum. Just a few miles down the quaintly named Over the Rivers and Through the Woods Scenic Byway, we come to the village of Brownsville, population nearly 1,700.

The Brownsville Historic Pioneer Museum (aka Linn County Historical Museum) focuses on relics from the pioneer migration on the Oregon Trail to the early 1930s. Too often, community museums are just collections of old stuff donated by area residents. The Brownsville museum features plenty of donated items, including the 1865 Drinkard covered wagon, one of only three remaining wagons known to have come over the Oregon Trail.

Museum coordinator Mandy Cole and her small volunteer staff also know how to tell a good story. They've created a miniature "town" complete



with blacksmith, dentist office, beauty parlor, post office and dry-goods store. They also have old musical instruments, neon signs, an unusual 1909 Brush two-person runabout car and an impressive collection of antique guns, including a flintlock musket and an 1878 Springfield rifle.

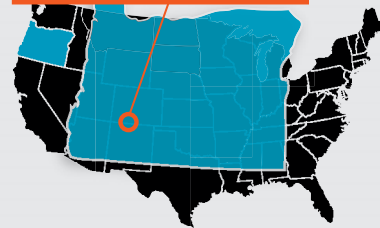
Historic Brownsville is intriguing, too, with period brick buildings and wooden storefronts that beg further exploration, but Crater Lake beckons so they'll have to wait for another day. Back on I-5, the land has become drier and hotter with oaks replacing fir on the hills and poison oak already turning red along the roadway.

### Along the Umpqua River

At Roseburg, we leave the freeway and, after a quick fuel stop, head east on state Route 138, a dotted highway on the map. This is the North Umpqua Highway and it soon becomes apparent why this road has been designated the Rogue-Umpqua Scenic Byway. Almost immediately we begin to climb into mountains dressed in thick forests of oak, madrone, pine and Douglas fir.

The two-lane road meanders along the North Umpqua River, a clear, shallow ribbon of green with occasional rapids and waterfalls. As we climb up and up, the forest thickens with more fir, cedars and maples shading the road, and the

### CRATER LAKE NATIONAL PARK



### Getting There

Crater Lake National Park is located in southwest Oregon on state Route 62. From the south take U.S. Highway 97 to Route 62. From the north, follow state Route 138 to the park's North Entrance. The park's North Entrance is closed for about seven months each year, beginning November 1 (or earlier, if there is significant snowfall). When the North Entrance is closed, take Route 138 to state Route 230 to Route 62 and the park's West Entrance.

canyon becomes steep and narrow with impressive rock outcroppings. There are plenty of trailheads and forest campgrounds and, at 4,500 feet elevation, RV camping at Lemolo Lake.

Our ears are popping as we reach the summit (5,920 feet), pass Diamond Lake (another RV camping option) and sail through Crater Lake National Park's North Entrance. A seven-day pass to the park costs \$15, but we've got an America the Beautiful Senior Interagency Pass (a one-time \$10 fee), so we drive through at no cost. One of the best bargains going for older RVers, this lifetime pass also entitles us to half off camping in the park.

---

Visitors can take boat tours to Wizard Island. Guests at historic Crater Lake Lodge enjoy breathtaking lake views. A mom and her son capture memories of their Crater Lake visit.



Photos: Anne Weaver

Our first park view is Pumice Desert, a broad, flat plain covered with ash and pumice up to 200 feet deep from the explosion of Mount Mazama. After nearly 8,000 years, this desert is just starting to be invaded by scattered lodgepole pines.

### First Views

We climb to 7,270 feet and pull over at the first turnout overlooking the crater's rim. We're mesmerized by the sight — a 5-mile-wide expanse of bluer-than-blue water surrounded by soaring cliffs 2,000 feet high and a black dollop of volcanic rock called Wizard Island that's topped with a 700-foot cinder cone studded with trees. Across the indigo blue water, we spot the frothy wake of a single boat as it churns away from the island. While dozens of people stand with us, the only sound is the wind. All of us are rendered speechless by our first view of Crater Lake.

Scientists believe Crater Lake was formed 7,700 years ago when 400,000-year-old Mount Mazama, then 12,000 feet high, erupted in a series of massive explosions. The eruptions drained the mountain's giant magma chamber and the massive peak collapsed, leaving a 4,000-foot hole.



A short hike down easily navigated stone stairs takes visitors to Sinnott Memorial Overlook, where park rangers offer interpretive talks and displays. Trekking through Godfrey Glen under towering old-growth forests offers a cool and easy mile-long hike along Munson Creek.

Over time, the crater filled with water. As the water rose, the mountain blew out a few more eruptions, one that formed Wizard Island. Today, the lake holds 4.9 trillion gallons of water and is 1,943 feet deep in spots, so deep it causes all the colors of the spectrum except blue to be absorbed, giving the lake its distinctive color.

We drive toward Rim Village, stopping at some of the 30-plus turnouts to admire the ever-changing blue water as evening descends. We encounter two of the lake's residents: the golden-mantled squirrel and Clark's Nutcracker, a handsome gray and black bird about the size of a crow. The squirrels, which resemble

RVs easily navigate the main road into Crater Lake National Park and RV camping is available at nearby Mazama Village Campground.





chipmunks, scamper fearlessly over, under and around the rocky scree, stopping occasionally to beg for a handout (don't feed them!). Clark's Nutcrackers, who possess the same bold personalities as blue jays, are the lake's gardeners, cracking open whitebark pine cones and planting thousands of seeds that eventually grow into trees.

Fatigue pushes us to seek out Mazama Village Campground, one of two campgrounds within the park and the only one that accommodates RVs (214 sites; \$31/\$35 electric). Pull-through sites accommodate rigs as large as 50 feet, but many other RV sites are challenging to back into. While the online reservation system ensures a site, it doesn't actually assign one and both nights we encounter difficulty securing a campsite with power. Once we do, however, we set up and head out for a free ranger talk at the amphitheater. Tonight, it's "Pikas in Peril," about how climate change is impacting resident rodents; the next night it's "Denizens of the Dark" on nighttime animals in the park.

### Historic Lodge, Rim Tour

The following morning, we wake to radiantly clear skies and, on the road to Rim Village and Crater Lake Lodge,

we can see all the way to Klamath Basin. We snug the motorhome into an RV parking spot in the upper parking lot. RVs aren't allowed in the lower lot near the lodge and by 11 a.m. this RV-designated lot quickly fills with cars that can't find a spot elsewhere. By noon, RVs and cars are double- and triple-parked, awaiting a spot.

We walk along the paved trail to Crater Lake Lodge, an impressive stone hotel and restaurant celebrating its 100th birthday. Originally built in 1913 in a slipshod manner, by the 1980s the old building was falling in on itself. The park service wanted to tear it down, but the public rebelled. So from 1989-1994, they built a new building within the original stone shell, retaining the old lodge's character while installing modern systems and upgrading seismic standards.

The dining room, all gray chiseled stone and massive tree trunks, offers impressive lake views. We grab a seat at one of the Mission-style tables and enjoy a sumptuous breakfast of stuffed biscuits and gravy.

There's a three-mile drive around the lake's rim, and while we could drive it in the RV, we opt for a two-hour, narrated tour in a natural-gas-powered trolley. When we discover dusty, gravelly road construction, we're especially happy with our decision.



On Crater Lake Trolley's two-hour tour, visitors leave the driving to the tour guides while interpretive rangers share the history and geology of the lake.

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Originally opened in 1915, Crater Lake Lodge was renovated in 1994 and, while modernized, retains its historic character.

Trolley tours cost \$27 per person (\$24 for 60 and older) and stop at some of the most photographic views, including Phantom Ship, a craggy cinder-cone remnant that looks like a ghostly pirate vessel. Ranger Karlie tells us about the lake's geology and natural history, including fascinating facts like how the neon green staghorn lichen on the trees marks the yearly snow level.

After the tour, we check out Sinnott Memorial Overlook, a small rock parapet and indoor room built into the cliff with killer water views. There's a fascinating relief model of the lake and exhibits on the lake's geology and ongoing research.

### All Levels of Hikes

Whether you like to boat, bike, fish or hike, there's plenty to do. If you're



willing to navigate the dusty, steep Cleetwood Trail down to the water (700-foot elevation loss), the park offers boat tours (\$40) and you can fish for rainbow trout and kokanee salmon from shore (no limit, no license required, artificial lures only). Don't

forget to factor in the steep hike back up once your boat tour ends! The beautiful Rim Drive is also a favorite with bicyclists and motorcyclists.

Hiking is more our style, so after a late afternoon lunch in the motorhome we set out for a 2-mile hike along the caldera's western rim. The park offers more than a dozen hikes from easy half-milers to challenging 10-mile treks up steep terrain. Our trail along the rim is perfect — just enough up and down to get our hearts pumping, and there are plenty of spectacular views along the lake. By the time we head back to Mazama Campground, we're ready for another interesting ranger talk and a restful night under the trees.

Sunday is our last day in the park, but we want to get in a little more fun. After breakfast, we head to Steel Visitor Center at Park Headquarters to watch a 22-minute film about the park and to pick up a few souvenirs in the book/gift shop.

Then it's one last hike. We choose Godfrey Glen, a path that wends through old-growth forest and along steep and narrow Annie Creek Canyon. The trail follows Annie and Munson creeks, and there are several places where the waters have carved the volcanic ash and pumice into impressive pinnacles that look like giant, otherworldly soldiers standing guard over the landscape.

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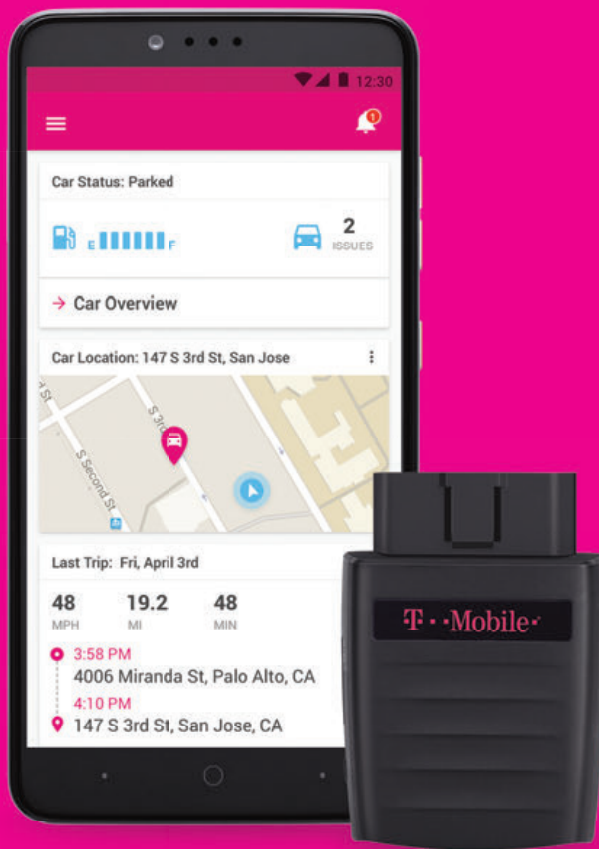
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Tiny wild huckleberries can be found along the trail in Godfrey Glen. Their small size reflects the harsh environment and short growing season. Pumice Castle, eroded spires of pumice/lava along the east wall of the lake, stands 400 feet below the crater rim and is clearly visible from many turnouts along Rim Drive.

By the time we reach the motorhome, the weather has changed dramatically, a phenomenon not uncommon at these rarefied elevations. The temperature has plummeted and threatening clouds gather over the lake. While we've marveled at Crater Lake's majesty, it's definitely time to head home. **M**

### For More Information

#### Crater Lake National Park

541-594-3000, [www.nps.gov/crla](http://www.nps.gov/crla)

#### Diamond Lake RV Park (110 full-hookup sites)

541-793-3318, [www.diamondlakervpark.com](http://www.diamondlakervpark.com)

#### Lemolo Lake Resort (20 full-hookup sites)

541-643-0750, [www.lemololakeresort.com](http://www.lemololakeresort.com)

#### Mazama Village Campground

[www.craterlakelodges.com/lodging/mazama-village-campground](http://www.craterlakelodges.com/lodging/mazama-village-campground)

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# NEW YORK'S FINGER LAKES

Up close with waterfalls, wineries and the Amish

**S**urprisingly, in the Finger Lakes region of upstate New York, bucolic farmland stretches as far as the eye can see and Amish horses and buggies clip-clop along the roads all day long. This area is ideal for a motorhome road trip, with easy, scenic drives and activities galore. Leisurely travel on the pretty roads offers not only a glimpse of America's bygone family-farm heritage but a chance to play and swim in the lakes, visit tall waterfalls and sample fine wine at dozens of upscale wineries.

On a recent RV trip through the area, my husband, Mark, and I were amazed by just how appealing the Finger Lakes

area is, and we loved the tranquility of the region. There are 11 lakes altogether, each one long and narrow and running north-south, like fingers, between the rolling hills.

Our first stop was in the town of Seneca Falls, which sits on the banks of a river connecting the north ends of Cayuga and Seneca lakes. The back side of this historic town may be its most beautiful side, as all the brick buildings back up to the river, and visiting boats tie up along the docks there. From our vantage point across the river, the boats and brick buildings made a striking image as they gleamed in the morning sun.

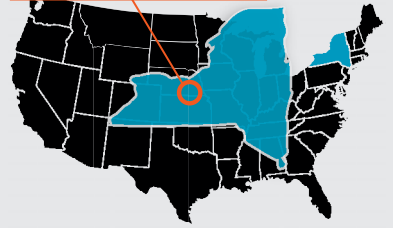
To our surprise, we learned that Seneca Falls was

Photos: Emily and Mark Fagan



Pleasure boats tie up at the docks in Seneca Falls on the canal connecting two of New York's Finger Lakes: Cayuga Lake and Seneca Lake (pictured).

## FINGER LAKES, NEW YORK



### Getting There

The Finger Lakes region of New York lies just below Lake Ontario, between Buffalo and Syracuse. To reach Otisco Lake Park (the easternmost of the Finger Lakes) from Syracuse, take Interstate 81 South to U.S. Route 20 West. Turn left onto Buckwheat Road, then right on Kinyon Road. Turn right onto Otisco Valley Road.

the birthplace of feminism. Back in 1848, 300 people gathered in Seneca Falls for the "Woman's Rights Convention." They documented the current status of women in America, which was decidedly subordinate to men in every respect, and they called their document the "Declaration of Sentiments." Some 62 women and 38 men signed their names to it.

The Women's Rights National Historical Park in Seneca Falls, run by

the National Park Service, is dedicated to the evolution of women's rights since that first gathering, and there is a wonderful statue of Susan B. Anthony, Amelia Bloomer (who invented the namesake pantaloons of the time) and Elizabeth Cady Stanton overlooking the river. The three first met each other in that spot three years after the convention, in 1851, and together they ushered in the women's rights movement that eventually gave women

The Finger Lakes region is full of wineries, Amish farms and cute small towns that is ideal for touring by motorhome. Left: The area has long been an upscale rural getaway for urban New Yorkers. Right: Sunrise casts a pink glow on a quiet country lane.



A motorboat zips past Trinity Episcopal Church in Seneca Falls, where the first "Woman's Rights Convention" was held in 1848.



the right to vote in 1920 via the 19th Amendment to the Constitution.

While Seneca Falls offers a peek at historical events of 165-plus years ago, the Amish people whose farms dot the landscape still live the way folks did in those times. The pretty town of Ovid is at a crossroads between Amish farming neighborhoods, and as we stood on the sidewalk in town, we were amazed to see one horse and buggy after another pass by.

Unlike other parts of America where Amish communities are on display for tourists like living museums, no one advertises the presence of the Amish in the Finger Lakes, and they go about their lives naturally without presenting a formal facade to the curious public. We spoke at length with an Amish 19-year-old about his open two-seater buggy,

a style of horse carriage used by unmarried men for courting. Showing us its steel tires and well-crafted drum brakes, and explaining the price differences between a fast horse and a slow one, the twinkle in his eye belied the freedom he felt at having his own set of wheels. His happy smile was not unlike the grin of a teenager holding the keys

to his first car.

Friends of ours who live in the area have befriended their Amish neighbors, and they took us to see the inner workings of an Amish family's dairy farm. We were surprised to find the cows hooked up to milking machines, and realized we had expected to see bearded Amish men sitting on milking stools!

We also visited an Amish chicken-and-egg farm and were impressed by the large yard where 5,000 hens roamed outside. The farmer showed us the clipboard where he recorded detailed data on the egg production rates of his hens every day. Usually averaging 94 percent, he told us he'd been alarmed when egg production dipped to 80 percent after he'd inadvertently bought a bad batch of feed. Replacement feed quickly brought the production rates back up to normal.

The Amish are not allowed to use electricity because doing so would make them dependent on the community at large, which is the antithesis of their social goals. However, they do use propane to power their lights, and Amish homes are as well-lit at night as their non-Amish neighbors. We had a special and rare chance to show an Amish mother and daughter the inside of our RV. They loved our little home-on-wheels and nodded in recognition at the LP-gas-powered refrigerator!

Perhaps the highlight of our Amish immersion in the Finger Lakes was a

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visit to the Seneca Produce Auction. Held in a huge modern warehouse-style building, this auction brought Amish produce sellers and both Amish and non-Amish buyers from far and wide. The Amish were all dressed in handmade royal blue and black outfits. The men wore straw hats encircled by a ribbon and the women wore white bonnets. An Amish auctioneer moved slowly from one crate of watermelon or corn or cantaloupe or tomatoes to the next, singing a rapid-fire patter of prices and quantities as buyers standing in a tight circle around him used hand signals to bid up the prices and make their purchases.

We stood at the back of the room, floored by the scene we were witnessing. Crates of produce that had been claimed were gradually taken out of the auction hall and loaded onto horse-drawn trailers and into the beds of pickups to be sold at farm stands and small grocery stores throughout the region.



The bucolic rural countryside is filled with natural beauty, including two fawns and a fox who paused for a picture. The towns and beaches of the area are fun to explore in an RV.

This auction gave us a real-life peek at how agricultural business and trade were conducted 100 years ago. Even more intriguing, though, was when we gazed at the landscape all around this part of the Finger Lakes and realized that the profusion of small farms owned by Amish families has given the world a way to see what much of the American countryside used to look like a century ago, before the rise of massive automated farm equipment and factory farms. Without the

Amish, those living images would likely be lost.

While the personal lifestyle choices of the Amish may seem quaint and a bit odd, the unintentional gift they have given this country by quietly retaining the farming lifestyle of our forefathers and keeping patches of the American landscape free of suburban homes and big-box stores is priceless. Interestingly, their numbers increase by almost 5 percent a year, and the Amish population as a whole doubled between 1991 and 2010.

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The Amish don't drink or grow wine grapes, but the Finger Lakes is becoming increasingly known for its fine wine, especially white rieslings, and it seems there is a winery offering wine tours and tastings every half-mile or so on every road. For those who prefer a good microbrew beer, there are quite a few brewpubs too.

We stopped in at the Wagner Valley Brewery Co. in Lodi, and enjoyed a microbrew out on the huge shaded deck that overlooks Seneca Lake. This microbrew pub shares a gorgeous setting with the Wagner Vineyards Estate Winery ([www.wagnervineyards.com](http://www.wagnervineyards.com)). Deciding whether to learn about and sample wine or beer is simply a matter of choosing which door to enter!

As we savored a delicious dark beer, we watched a bevy of winsome young women enjoying a wild bachelorette party at the next picnic table on the deck. It turns out the New York Finger Lakes are a favorite spot for



At Watkins Glen State Park, the Gorge Trail follows Glen Creek up stone staircases and across beautifully crafted stone bridges (above left), and takes visitors past many breathtaking waterfalls (above right). Near Cornell University, the Ithaca Falls Natural Area boasts an enormous, rushing waterfall (above middle).

Manhattan brides-to-be to take their friends on a day and night of winery or brewpub hopping, and these girls were whooping it up with glee on their second stop of what was to be a 10-stop winery tour.

Beginning about 150 years ago, New York City people built summer mansions along the Finger Lakes, and

a few can still be found by the shores of Seneca Lake. These graceful old homes are girdled by wide shaded decks, and their grassy green lawns spill down toward the lake. Dense woods spread out behind them.

As we drove the backroads past these elegant mansions, we caught sight of two sweet little spotted

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Tourists at a viewing area stop to admire the towering Taughannock Falls, which drop 215 feet down the face of 400-foot cliffs.



fawns and a fox. The trio was walking together through a meadow, and when they heard our vehicle they stopped and turned to have a look at us for a few precious minutes before wandering on. Mother Nature was giving us her best that day, and just a short way farther on we saw a doe and her pure white baby fawn. The Seneca white deer are not albinos but are sprinkled throughout the deer gene pool in the area. What a unique treat it was to see one!

Nature abounds in the New York Finger Lakes, and there are lots of stunning waterfalls. Taughannock Falls is enormously tall, plunging 215 feet straight down from top to bottom, and there is a great viewing area right across from it that offers a clear view of the whole waterfall. Ithaca Falls Natural Area is near the Cornell University campus and offers shady trails and a big area below the wide and expansive falls to wade in the water.

Another dramatic cascading waterfall is Hector Falls. The main part of the waterfall is on one side of the highway, but we scrambled down the rocks under the highway bridge to get a better view of the falls from below as the water slipped over stair-stepped slabs of stone beneath the bridge.

We bumped into Hector Falls while on our way to the granddaddy waterfall system of them all: stunning Watkins Glen State Park. We visited Watkins Glen on a gloomy, drizzly day, which turned out to be a fabulous time to visit because all the waterfalls were running at full force. We walked on the Gorge Trail through the canyon, following the carvings made in the rocks by Glen Creek. We climbed up and down stone staircases and crossed over the creek on handsomely crafted stone bridges.

Watkins Glen is home to waterfalls of all shapes and sizes, and each has its own personality. Cavern Cascade is tall and straight, and the trail scoots behind it, while Rainbow Falls is a thin veil of water that glitters like a spray of falling diamonds. We laughed as they sprinkled us when we dashed underneath. In between the waterfalls, the creek was serene and smooth, mirroring the surrounding cliffs on its surface.

We found a different kind of water play at the town of Hammondsport on Keuka Lake, where the community park at Champlin Beach provides an inviting spot for a swim. Sailboats lined the water's edge and the beach was hopping with sunbathers. The weather had turned hot and sultry,

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A steady stream of Amish horses and buggies clip-clop down the streets as farmers go about their daily business in the small town of Ovid.

and we happily joined the throngs of people jumping in the water for a refreshing dip.

From swimming to waterfall hunting to vineyard visits and mingling with the Amish, we look back on our New York Finger Lakes road trip as a true highlight in our travels. **M**

**For More Information**

**Finger Lakes Tourism Alliance**

800-530-7488, [www.fingerlakes.org](http://www.fingerlakes.org)

**Ithaca Falls Natural Area**

607-274-6527, [www.visitithaca.com/attractions/waterfalls.html](http://www.visitithaca.com/attractions/waterfalls.html)

**Taughannock Falls State Park**

607-387-6739, [www.nysparks.com/parks/62](http://www.nysparks.com/parks/62)

**Watkins Glen State Park**

607-535-4511, <http://nysparks.com/parks/142>

**Women's Rights National Historical Park,**

315-568-0024, [www.nps.gov/wori](http://www.nps.gov/wori)

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**Sampson State Park**

315-585-6392, <http://nysparks.com/parks/154/details.aspx>

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877-763-3227, [www.sned-acres.com](http://www.sned-acres.com)

**Spruce Row Campground & RV Park**

607-387-9225, [www.sprucerow.com](http://www.sprucerow.com)

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# MOTORHOME MULTITASKING

So, what else can I do with this thing?

**T**he most common reasons people buy a motorhome are to travel the country, to go camping and to view nature in all its splendor. But when you're not out on the road, you have a very expensive vehicle sitting unused somewhere in a parking spot. But what if you didn't have to leave the motorhome stranded for weeks or months at a time? What if there were everyday uses for a motorhome that would make it less of a mobile vacation home and more of a utility vehicle? Think about your daily activities and ask yourself, "Could I be using the motorhome for this?"

I have a 37-foot Jayco Seneca Super C, so I need to pay close attention to the parking situations wherever I go. Always check on parking availability before heading out on your urban adventures.

## Shopping

As a child, decades before I was even close to purchasing an RV, I often thought about how much better Christmas shopping would be if I only had a place to relax for awhile. My mother would take the family to the mall where everyone would be set free for the entire day to do their gift shopping. After an hour or so I was done (How much could a child really buy?), but the rest of the crew was still going strong. With an RV I could have gone to the parking

lot, kicked off my shoes and made lunch instead of sitting on those hard plastic mall chairs by the fountain or in a freezing car. I purchased my motorhome after my kids were older so I have never done a mall trip with my family. But when I am making modifications to the motorhome that I know will require several trips to the hardware store, I will occasionally drive it over and work on it in the store's parking lot, if it's OK with the store and if it's not too big of a project.



## Tailgating

When I bought my motorhome, one of the first things I wanted to do — apart from camping — was to tailgate at a Green Bay Packers game. I had been to Lambeau Field before in a car or van, and parking was easy. If the lots were full, we'd pull into someone's yard, as everyone with an open square of land was charging for parking. On our rookie season with the motorhome, we didn't have a plan for RV parking, and there wasn't a lot of information available online. We took our chances and set out for Lambeau the morning of the game. We came into town heading northeast on Oneida Street, but when we arrived at the stadium lot we found that a prepurchased pass was required. We weren't going to put a 37-foot motorhome in any of

Above: A motorhome can be so much more than a way to travel from campsite to campsite. Having your own facilities during a day of hitting the beach can make you the envy of others. Inset: Tailgating at an NFL game is even more enjoyable using your motorhome.

the front or backyard parking spots we passed along the way, so we turned left on Lombardi Avenue and, after passing the stadium, found a sea of RVers. The Kmart parking lot was opened up on game day to the local D.A.R.E program, and they were charging for parking to fund the organization. Once we set up, we asked around and learned from seasoned tailgaters that we could arrive at least a day before and leave the day after a game. We saw what we could bring, from tents and tables to fire pits and grills. We also found the person who could reserve a spot for us. Things have changed over the years, and with the new Tittletown complex going in, the RV parking is in limbo. I'll have to make another trip up there this year to see what happens. Since that first experience, we have tailgated in San Diego, Dallas, Houston and Nashville. Eventually we would like to hit every football stadium, then maybe move on to baseball.

### Supporting School Athletics

For a smaller, yet equally important sporting event, think locally. My two sons played lacrosse for several years from high school



The author's Seneca made the ideal basecamp for a weekend bike race, offering a great place to get dressed and recharge. The Jayco also served as the tow vehicle for a friend's pop-up trailer.

to college, and we would often attend tournaments that would last for an entire day or weekend, so on a few occasions we drove the motorhome. These were mostly local tournaments, but having a place to sit and relax between games was great for my boys and the rest of the team. Especially when we could have air conditioning on a hot day or a place to get out of the rain between games. Plus, having all of the equipment along to cook and serve lunch kept the team well-fed and ready to play.

### Bicycle Racing

I am a member of the Bike Haven Race Team in McHenry, Illinois. There are several races each season where nearly the entire team participates, and many of these races have dry camping available on-site. For the larger races I occasionally bring the motorhome as our team bus. Having a place to get dressed, to work on the bikes and to prepare a proper meal before — and enjoy a hot shower after — a race is extremely helpful. Recently, the team attended

This Jayco Seneca Super C is well-traveled, as the author and his family have hosted tailgating gatherings in Green Bay, San Diego, Dallas, Houston and Nashville.



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the Wisconsin Off Road Series at Cascade Mountain Ski Resort in Portage, Wisconsin. To make sure we found sites together, a teammate and I drove up on Thursday night. He towed his trailer and I towed another teammate’s pop-up trailer behind my motorhome. We spent the night in the main parking lot, and the next morning they moved us up to the top of the ski hill where we “circled the wagons.” The rest of the team arrived later that day with various tents and trailers. Having the RVs there for the weekend was extremely helpful; we hosted several riders, saving money on hotel rooms. Temperatures on Friday and Sunday climbed above 100 degrees, while on Saturday it poured rain the entire day. Our team members won several medals and the team is in first place overall. I’d like to think it’s because of the relaxed atmosphere we created with the RVs.

### Concert Tailgating

Jimmy Buffett concerts have always been some of my favorite tailgating events. It’s a group of 30,000-plus fans having a good time in a field outside of a show, before having a good time in a field inside the show. Before I had a motorhome, I would organize bus trips to Alpine Valley in East Troy, Wisconsin, for the annual Buffett show, and it was always a chore bringing up the people, food, drinks and decorations. Once I had the motorhome, it was a lot easier and more comfortable, and other friends could drive up separately and meet us at the motorhome. I no longer needed to load coolers and grills in the back of a bus. We just showed up to the parking lot and set it up like



Now that he brings along his motorhome, the author no longer is tasked with organizing elaborate bus trips to the annual Jimmy Buffett concert, allowing even more time to explore the venue with fellow “Parrotheads.”

a normal campsite, except with hundreds of other like-minded partiers. Plus, the benefit of not having to wait in the portable-toilet line is worth the extra cost of parking the motorhome. Once the concert was over we could relax and unwind, maybe cook a little food and wait out the two hours it took for the parking lot to empty.

### Just Going Out

For a time, my son was in a band playing clubs throughout our local area, and we would often have groups of friends who wanted to see them. For many of those shows we would load up the motorhome with snacks and drinks for the ride to whichever venue he was playing. There were usually several bands playing, and when one would end it could be an hour before the other started. If it was crowded, we would go back to the motorhome to rest comfortably while waiting for the next band to start. The motorhome was a great way to extend the night for the group beyond the show.

### Happy New Year!

On New Year’s Eve 2015, a group of us wanted to see a band in a bar about 90 minutes from home. The event included dinner, drinks and a midnight champagne toast. Knowing it would be a late night and that there would be drinking involved, we decided to bring the motorhome. I located a lot across the street from the venue that would allow us to park the coach, and we got up there early to make sure we had a space. We started the fun in the motorhome in the parking lot before the doors opened. The band was great, the food was good and, after ringing in the new year, we walked back across the street to our own warm bed. As we watched the parking lot clear out, we toasted to the new year before turning in. In the morning we enjoyed a nice homemade breakfast as we readied for the drive home on the relatively empty roads.

### Bachelor Party

My most recent non-camping-related trip was a bachelor party last June for my oldest son. We live in a northwest suburb of Chicago without a lot of options for the gaming-themed party the best man had set up. Long drives between stops were a concern for getting people safely between venues while still being able to keep up the festive atmosphere. I volunteered to chauffeur the party in the motorhome. Everyone was picked up in the motorhome and the fun started as we drove nearly an hour to play laser tag. We arrived safely and parked, leaving the generator running and the air conditioning on, knowing this was going to be a



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## MOTORHOME MULTITASKING

hot and sweaty event. Once the group burned off a bunch of calories and the first round of drinks, it was back to the cool motorhome for a 45-minute drive to Gameworks for food, more drinks and video games. More people met us at the second stop, so we had a group of about a dozen people in the parking lot before we went in for dinner. As the night was winding down and knowing we had a long drive home, we added a stop for pizza in the middle. At the end of the night, all of the guests were dropped off safely at their homes.



Spending a day at the local game, or a leisurely afternoon at the park? Avoid the expensive concession stands and grill your own meal.



The author and his wife enjoy a surreal afternoon with band members including hard-rock legends Don Dokken and Kip Winger.

## Temporary Rock Stars

My wife is a big fan of 1980s hair metal, so when the promoter of the Farm Rock festival in Wauconda, Illinois, asked if our motorhome could be used as a green room for some of the acts, she was very excited. In exchange for VIP backstage passes and access to my motorhome during the show, the promoter had us park on the grounds of the venue behind the stage. While we were enjoying the concert, Don Dokken and Kip Winger used our motorhome as their dressing room, waiting for their turn on stage. Sebastian Bach of Skid Row, Lita Ford and about 20 other acts had RVs around us for their use as well. My wife had a great time meeting the musicians to whom she had listened for years, but the high point was when we were in our own motorhome with Dokken and his band, and Winger discussing touring and music. It was surreal meeting the artists, and having them stand there in our motorhome was a delight.

## Everyday Use

A large motorhome may not be the best vehicle for everyday use, but there are other ways to use your motorhome beyond the RV park. Before embarking on these types of adventures, make sure you are prepared. Will there be parking for a big rig? Are there any impediments along the way, such as low bridges or tight entrances? My rule is that if it's a place where buses normally take four groups or trucks make frequent deliveries, you'll probably be fine. You can also purchase an RV GPS that details drivability along your intended routes. Call your destinations ahead to make sure parking is available, especially if you plan on staying overnight.

If you're going in the winter in a cold climate, make sure you have plenty of LP-gas, and that your plumbing system can handle the cold; otherwise, go dry. If you have a generator, that makes things even better since you will most likely have no power to connect to. Just make sure you have enough fuel, and the facility permits use of a generator.

Your motorhome is a recreational vehicle, so feel free to use it for all types of recreation. If you're doing something that requires extra time or driving, or even a large group of people, ask yourself if it would be more fun to take the motorhome. You'll find the answer is almost always in the affirmative. **M**

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**SURGE GUARD™**

With the substantial investment you make in owning and maintaining your RV, a commonly overlooked need is electrical protection.

Do you ever wonder why electronics and electrical equipment seem to fail more regularly in an RV than in a home? This is all related to the condition of the power source to which the equipment is connected. Campground power systems are not rated for the same demand as a residential system, which can lead to issues with the incoming voltage levels. In addition, physical damage to the electrical equipment is more likely to occur at a campground. Damaged receptacles or damaged wires very often result in electric shock, fire or equipment damage.

Southwire has meticulously engineered and refined one of the most complete lines of protective devices for RV power protection. From full electrical protection, to surge protection with diagnostics, Southwire's Surge Guard® power protection products have you covered. Surge protection with diagnostics is designed for pop-up campers and small travel trailers without many electrical amenities, while the full electrical protection products are ideal for larger towables and motorhomes that contain more electronics. Protect your family and investment from the dangerous and costly results of bad campground power.

## Surge Protection with Diagnostics

Surge Guard® models 44260 and 44270 provide trusted surge protection with easy-to-read wiring diagnostics. LED indicators provide a read out of the incoming power condition to alert you to open ground, open neutral and reverse polarity. There is also a surge protection status light to indicate if the product is still protecting against a surge. The 30A #73993 provides 2100 Joules of surge protection while the 50A #73995 provides 4200 Joules.





## Surge Protection with Enhanced Diagnostics

New for 2017, Surge Guard® models #102467 and #102468 provide the same trusted surge protection (2100/4200 Joules) as models #73993 and #73995, while upgrading the diagnostic capabilities. In addition to open ground, open neutral, reverse polarity, and surge status indication, this product also indicates reverse ground/line and overheating plug. Flip-up weather cover protects receptacle.



## Portable – Full Electrical Protection

Surge Guard® models #81277 (2450 Joules) and #81278 (3850 Joules) provide full electrical protection for any RV type and are highly recommended for larger towables and motorhomes. With an easy to read LCD display, these models provide a textual information display that does not require code interpretation. Real time voltage and amp draw are continuously displayed on the LCD screen. Power is automatically disconnected if the following conditions are present: low/high voltage, open ground, open neutral, reverse polarity, and overheating of plugs. The incoming power is constantly monitored, allowing for automatic reset when acceptable power is restored. These models also include a surge status LED indicator.



## Hardwire – Full Electrical Protection

Providing the same features and benefits as the portable Surge Guard® models #81277/81278, the hardwire Surge Guard® models #90195 and #90196 provide full electrical protection with the convenience of being wired directly into the coach. With multi-mode surge protection, the hardwire Surge Guard® models will automatically monitor the incoming power and disconnect when a fault is present. These UL listed devices are installed out of the elements without the need to carry in and out of your coach to plug in. An optional LCD display, part number #90197, is available to provide an easy to read display that can be located anywhere inside of your coach. The #90197 display includes 50' of data cable.



*Don't let this happen to you! Using a surge protector that offers multi-mode surge suppression and additional safety features will help protect against the risk of electrical fire, which can quickly consume an RV and leave you, your family and pets little time to escape.*

Southwire's Surge Guard® products and accessories are available at Camping World stores and other retail outlets. Southwire provides everything you need to "Protect What You Value Most™" when you plug in your RV.

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# Compass 23TB

Thor's 2017 Class C RUV features many creature comforts in a compact, nimble package

By Holly and Norm Roy

**C**ompasses were developed by the Chinese 200 years prior to the Common Era and have been used for eons to indicate the direction one should travel. Thor Motorcoach developed its Compass — a Class C diesel Recreational Utility Vehicle (RUV) — for touring said direction in style and comfort. The company's new 23TB floorplan is both recreational and utilitarian, something of a multiuse tool among compact motorhomes; one that might easily meet the expectations of first-time RV adventurers, small families or veteran RVers considering a smaller unit.

The Compass lineup features three floorplans riding on the Ford Transit chassis (23TB, 23TR and 23TK) and one floorplan (24TX) on the Mercedes-Benz Sprinter chassis; all Compass motorhomes are less than 25 feet in length. The test motorhome — the 23TB — is powered by a 3.2-liter five-cylinder Power Stroke turbodiesel with 185 hp and 350 lb-ft of torque.

This is a 21st-century motorhome featuring amenities

such as USB ports at charging stations fore and aft. A large skylight brings natural illumination to the interior — wonderful for reading or hobbies — and spectacular views of the stars and moon at night. The intensity of light can be adjusted with an electric shade controlled by a switch mounted within easy reach of the driver or navigator, or from the living space. The natural light, combined with light-colored flooring, cabinetry and upholstery, makes the interior seem larger than measurements may indicate.

Compass designers found ways to incorporate three televisions into this floorplan. Think about that: Three TVs in a 23-foot motorhome mean you're never more than a few feet away from your own little flat-screen festival. TVs are mounted above the entry door, in the bedroom and in a weather-tight exterior compartment beneath the awning. The AM/FM radio and DVD player is just inside the door, mounted above a panel incorporating the slideout switch and indicators showing holding-tank levels and battery condition.

**ABOVE:** Despite its small footprint, the Compass 23TB from Thor Motorcoach offers many features normally found on larger vehicles. Built on the Ford Transit diesel chassis, the Recreational Utility Vehicle is nimble and exhibits fine road manners.

For safety and convenience, the entry steps are illuminated and a long, sturdy interior grab handle eases entry and exit. Switches at floor level control step lights, the patio light and a 14-foot Carefree lateral-arm awning. One touch of the awning-control switch extends the sheet, which appears to roll too far, then retracts and adjusts perfectly to display a strip of LEDs in the roller tube. Those lights cast a soft glow on the curbside of the motorhome.

Entering the interior, one steps onto light-colored residential vinyl flooring that extends from behind the cockpit through the bedroom and bathroom. The floor is easy to sweep clean with a hand brush and dustpan. Overhead is a hard vinyl ceiling that conceals ducts that distribute cooled and heated air from the rooftop air conditioner and heat pump.

The couch on the streetside wall sits beneath a large window. Covered with soft leatherette, the jackknife sofa easily converts to a bed. Seat belts at the couch will harness a pair of passengers but, as a bed, it will accommodate but one. While some couches can be uncomfortable without pillows to support one's back, this one is a perfect size for shorter folks, and very comfortable to boot. Its neutral color would be easily accessorized with a few bright pillows, if desired.

Serving as a dining table or workstation, a pedestal table mounts in front of the couch and swivels to ease access. On the road, the tabletop and

A 32-inch LED TV is mounted above the entry door. Topped by LED strips, Euro-style cabinets span the kitchen counter, which includes a round sink and two-burner range.



post stow beneath the couch. Adjacent to the couch, behind the driver's seat, a charging station accommodates up to four devices corralled in a net sling. Two cup holders complete that panel; one residential AC electrical outlet is near the floor.

Above the couch, European-style cabinet doors pivot on soft-close hidden hinges and are accented with generous, easy-to-grasp handles. LED strips above the cabinet doors create indirect lighting at the ceiling. When more direct and more brilliant lighting are needed, flush-mounted ceiling and undercabinet fixtures are controlled by switches at the entry door, the bedroom and

beneath cabinets.

A 32-inch LED television hangs opposite the couch, above the entry door. On that curbside wall, another large window spans the length of the kitchen counter.

RVers who do the cooking will be impressed with the deep, round, stainless-steel sink. The tall, single-handle faucet allows one to easily rinse fruits and vegetables and clean the sink. A sink cover fits perfectly to make a flat countertop. Even with the cover in place, the gooseneck faucet with extendable sprayer is sufficiently tall to allow filling of tumblers or pans. To the right of the sink is a European-style, two-burner LP-gas cooktop with glass cover.

A cabinet convection microwave oven and drawer are beneath the counter. Location of the microwave at knee level made reading its electronic touchpad a bit of a challenge. Drawers throughout the motorhome roll on full-extension, ball-bearing guides.

Above the sink and window, another two-door cabinet is convenient to stow

While compact, the bathroom, left, is ample and the shower stall sufficient for a good rinse. The skylight over the shower helps make the bathroom bright. Accessible from the kitchen, the pantry, right, is one end of the bedroom closet, a space-saving design element that works really well in the Compass.



dishes, glasses and coffee mugs. Each cabinet is divided with a recessed shelf that affords easy access to items of disparate height. An AC outlet is mounted in the underbelly of one cabinet, a safe and rather convenient spot. That said, one might have to boost the toaster or percolator to a height at which its AC cord will reach the outlet. The rack from the convection oven worked like a charm.

To the right of the cooktop, the two-door refrigerator easily handles perishables sufficient for about five days. Shelves in the door were the right size for our collection of condiments; small drawers held fresh produce. A bonus was the folding shelf to accommodate tall bottles, such as a two-liter bottle of soda. Freezer capacity was more than adequate for a like number of days. Two additional drawers are below the refrigerator.

Opposite the refrigerator is a pantry with adjustable shelves for dry goods. Two drawers below the pantry were perfect for flatware, cooking utensils and kitchen linens.

The bath is located at the curbside rear corner. The sink cabinet and medicine chest are nestled into the corner opposite the door and provide adequate storage for toiletries and first-aid supplies. The small, round

The step built into the bumper of the Ford Transit cab affords a good foothold for cleaning the windshield and easy access to check fluids in the engine compartment.



stainless-steel sink is reminiscent of those found on planes and trains. Brushing one's teeth takes some practice ... and good aim. The vanity beneath the sink has additional storage.

The commode is plastic with two-position foot flush, allowing the addition of water for complete cleansing of the bowl. The shower stall is of more than adequate size, and the surround has corner shelves to hold tall containers of soap and shampoo. The skylight over the shower makes the bathroom bright. The floor of the shower was unnervingly flexible, a condition that might be resolved simply with additional support installed at the factory, as an owner would have a tough time accessing this area for a modification after the fact. A grab handle on the wall over the commode is convenient to assist getting into and out of the shower. While the bathroom is comparatively roomy, blow-drying one's hair is best accomplished after opening the door.

The bedroom area is an adventure in itself. The queen-size folding mattress can be opened only when the slide is fully extended, a distance of about 3½ feet.

Extended, the bedroom is spacious and comfortable. Windows flank the headboard, and lighting has been well-positioned for reading. Nightstand counters at each side will hold books and reading glasses; another USB charging station is at the front corner of the bed frame and AC outlets are accessible at each side of the headboard. A 32-inch LED television is

WHAT'S HOT

Interior design, storage and lighting, digital-age charging ports

WHAT'S NOT

Plastic commode, flexible floor in shower, dark exterior compartments

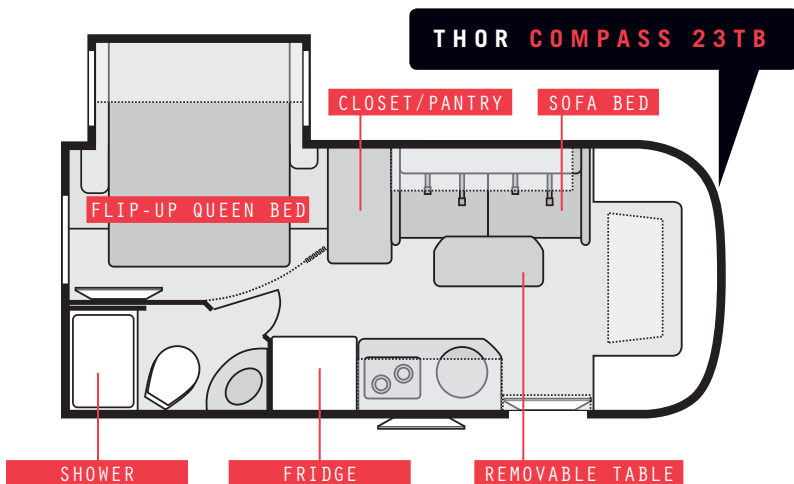


mounted at ceiling level on the wall at the foot of the bed.

Concerns regarding the level of comfort offered by a folding mattress were without foundation, so to speak. While shorter folks might need a running start to surmount the foot of the bed, once nestled in, campers will feel pleasantly at ease.

A closet beside the bed offers about 2 feet of hanging rod and has a deep drawer below. A curtain provides a modicum of privacy between the bedroom and living area; another privacy curtain mounts with hook-and-loop tabs up front, inside the windshield.

Retracting the bedroom slide involves folding the foot of the bed toward the ceiling, something akin to half a Murphy bed. Moving the slide out and leaving the bed folded uncovers a





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# Specifications

## Chassis

Model	Ford Transit
Engine	3.2L I-5 Power Stroke turbodiesel
SAE Hp	185 @ 3,000 rpm
Torque	350 lb-ft @ 1,500 rpm
Transmission	6-speed automatic overdrive with SelectShift
Axle Ratio	3.73:1
Front Tires	195/75R16
Rear Tires	195/75R16
Wheelbase	156"
Brakes	Disc
Suspension F/R	Independent MacPherson-strut/leaf springs with heavy-duty gas shocks
Fuel Capacity	25 gal
Fuel Economy	17.5 mpg
Warranty	60 months/60,000 miles on powertrain; 36 months/36,000 miles Ford bumper-to-bumper; 24 months/24,000 miles Thor limited warranty on structure, side walls and roof; 12 months/15,000 miles on motorhome

## Coach

Exterior Length	23' 9.5" (with ladder)
Exterior Width	7' 6"
Exterior Height	10' 5"
Interior Width	7' 3"
Interior Height	6' 8"
Construction	Welded tubular aluminum roof and side-wall cage; vacuum-bonded roof, walls and floor; block-foam insulation
Freshwater Capacity	31 gal
Black-Water Capacity	19.5 gal
Gray-Water Capacity	37 gal
Water Heater	On-demand
LP-Gas Capacity	16 gal
Air Conditioner	13,500 Btu
Furnace	19,000 Btu
Refrigerator	5.5 cubic-foot, three-way
Inverter/Charger	30-amp
Battery	(1) 12-volt chassis; (1) 12-volt house
AC Generator	3.6 kW
MSRP as tested	\$104,140

## Wet Weight

(Water & fuel tanks full; no supplies or passengers)	
Front Axle	3,360 lbs
Rear Axle	5,840 lbs
Total	9,200 lbs

## Chassis Ratings

GAWR F/R	Front 4,130 lbs/Rear 7,275 lbs
GVWR	10,360 lbs
GCWR	13,500 lbs
ROCCC	1,160 lbs

GAWR:	Gross Axle Weight Rating
GVWR:	Gross Vehicle Weight Rating
GCWR:	Gross Combination Weight Rating
ROCCC:	Realistic Occupant and Cargo Carrying Capacity



Beneath the folded bed, left, is a cushioned seating area and mounting point for the table, creating a workspace illuminated by the large window at the rear of the coach. With the bed deployed, right, there is still room to get around the foot of the queen-size mattress.

paddinged seating area with three drawers and another mounting point for the pedestal table. Moving the table from the forward position to the rear creates a workspace suitable for a laptop and printer. The space is well-illuminated by natural light from the large rear window.

Getting on the road allows this little motorhome to shine. On the highway, the Compass is nimble and exhibits fine road manners. The five-cylinder Power Stroke diesel is responsive, which renders the 23TB more than adequate for city or interstate conditions. Circumnavigating Tampa, Florida, was a breeze, as the Compass easily kept pace with the flow of traffic.

One of our few complaints with this test motorhome was the amount of wind noise from the house entry door. Our resident technician determined that the condition could be corrected with adjustments to the door frame.

Cockpit ergonomics are friendly, with creature comforts such as open compartments of various sizes to hold sunglasses, extra keys, parking passes or tissues. Two cup holders are convenient to each seating position. The display on the AM/FM/CD stereo can be difficult to see in bright sun. The backup camera image is displayed in the rearview mirror. A generous, U-shaped overhead tray is a good spot for holding the *Good Sam RV Travel & Savings Guide*, road atlas, jackets and other items. Movement between the cockpit and living quarters is convenient since there is no center console. The

navigator seat swivels to add a seating position for socializing.

Design of the Transit van makes it easy for those inclined to service their own vehicle; dipsticks and fluid-reservoir caps are clearly marked and easily accessible. A sturdy step built into the front bumper puts even shorter folks at a height to reach into the engine compartment or clean the windshield. The fuel fill and reservoir for diesel exhaust fluid (DEF) are protected from tampering simply by closing the driver's door.

Baggage doors are well-gasketed to keep moisture and road dust out of compartments. The storage bays are wide and will easily accommodate folding chairs, patio carpet or small grills, but compartments are not particularly deep or high. Interiors are black, which can make it difficult to see what one is doing when connecting the sewer hose, for instance.

A large compartment beneath the kitchen window reveals the third — and optional — 32-inch LED television, which is mounted on a bracket that allows viewing from almost any angle.

Thor's Compass 23TB is a motorhome that will allow its owners to easily transit congested freeways, navigate city streets and breeze along country roads. Once positioned at an RV park, campground or other scenic spot, the Class C RUV offers creature comforts galore. **M**

## Thor Motorcoach

877-855-2867, [www.thormotorcoach.com](http://www.thormotorcoach.com)

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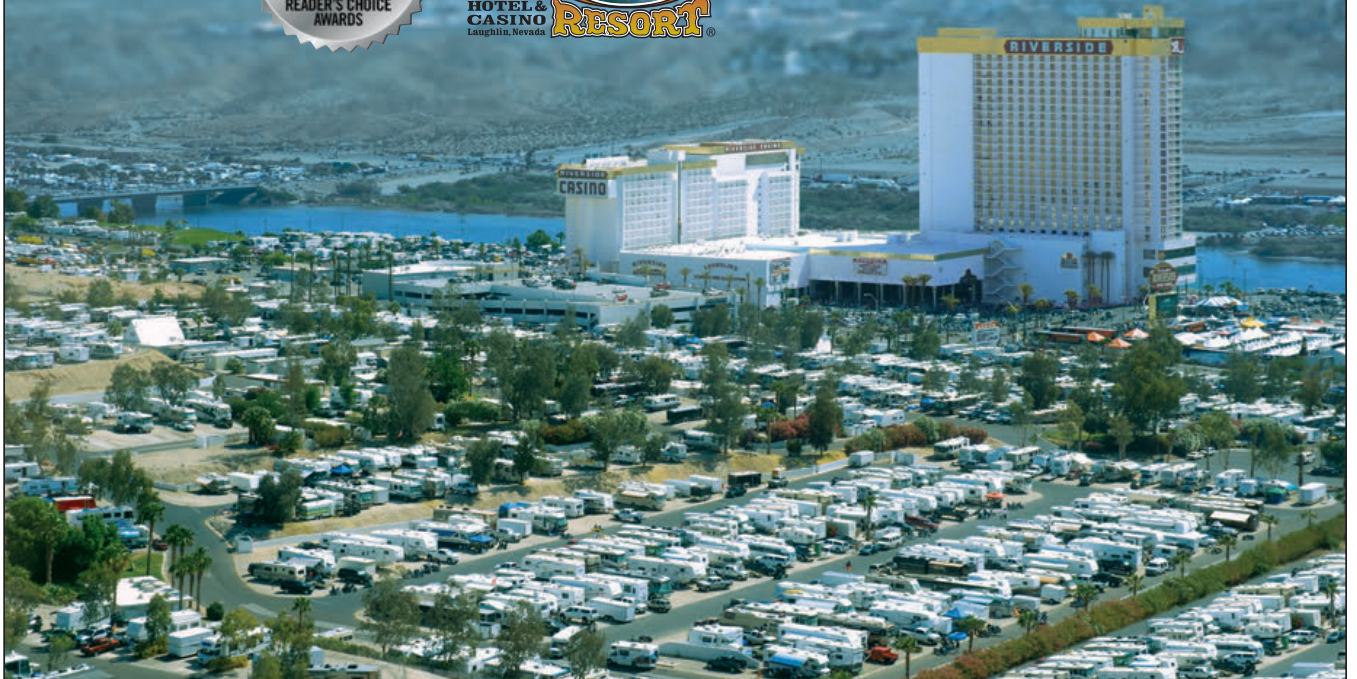
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# THAT'S ENTERTAINMENT!

TEN MOTORHOMES THAT FEATURE ALL THE INGREDIENTS FOR THE ULTIMATE RV-PARK PARTY

**T**he lure of all things nature may be what originally draws us to RVing, but to many motorhome owners, another — and equally important — aspect of the lifestyle is camaraderie with others. It's easy, and fulfilling, to hit the open road with only you and your co-pilot and family, but once you've arrived at the campground, we can all agree that opening our doors to friends, acquaintances and extended family only enhances the motorhome experience. The more, the merrier, right?

If you're a motorhome owner who enjoys hosting parties

or event planning for your RV, it's important to consider the possibilities when shopping for a new ride. Things like open floorplans, additional seating, extra bathrooms and, yes, upgraded home-theater systems all help get the party started (or keep it going); other considerations may include large refrigerators, multiple sleeping options or exterior amenities in case things get too cramped on the inside. Sure, most any motorhome is ideal for entertaining (yet another positive of our favorite pursuit), but some newer floorplans seem destined to be party central. Following are some of the top choices for 2017:

## Entegra Cornerstone

At just shy of 45 feet in length, the Entegra Coach Cornerstone 45K is sure to handle everybody on your guest list. With ample seating, an impressive in-coach entertainment center with 45-inch LED TV and fireplace — plus the exterior entertainment center with a 40-inch LED TV — there's no reason to miss a second of in-game or midmovie action. Inside, the 45K features a sofa bed loveseat (and full-length sofa bed option) for added sleeping space if your guests should decide to stay overnight. The half-bath located amidships means guests don't have to intrude on the master living area for trips to the lav, and the tiled flooring makes cleanup a breeze. A washer/dryer is located across from the half-bath for unfortunate drink spills. The Cornerstone 45K is built on a raised-rail chassis (resulting in additional storage for party favors), and its dimmable LED-lit quartz countertops, recessed LED lighting and residential appliances, plus residential-style walls and ceiling, add to the aura of luxury.

Chassis	Spartan K3
Engine	Cummins ISX diesel
Fuel Cap	150 gal
GVWR	54,000 lbs
Exterior Length	44' 11"
Exterior Width	8' 5"
Exterior Height with A/C	12' 11"
Wheelbase	320"
Freshwater Cap	100 gal
Black-/Gray-Water Cap	41 gal/62 gal
LP-Gas Cap	N/A
Base MSRP	\$669,408

**Entegra Coach**  
800-517-9137, [www.entegracoach.com](http://www.entegracoach.com)

Above: With plenty of space in the living area, wide-open floorplans like Entegra's Cornerstone 45K make it easy to host a gathering at the RV resort.

Photos courtesy of the manufacturers





### Fleetwood Storm 36D

The two large streetside slides on the Fleetwood Storm 36D make for a free-flowing, open floorplan ideal for the small crowd that will no doubt descend upon your RV resort gatherings. The roomy 70-inch sofa and 42-by-70-inch dinette are positioned for a great view of the 40-inch LED TV in the living area. The bunkhouse floorplan also features a 24-inch LED TV directly across from the bunk area (which converts to a gaming seating area), meaning



the little ones have their own hideout while the adults dance the night away by the light of the electric fireplace to tunes from the optional satellite radio. Thoughtful appointments like

an 18-cubic-foot residential refrigerator, glass-tile backsplash behind the polished solid-surface countertops and deep double-bowl stainless-steel sink make meal prep easy — and clean. But things really pick up outside the Storm, where an exterior entertainment center teams up with a kitchenette outfitted with a small fridge, sink and microwave to make the area surrounding the campsite the star attraction.

Chassis	Ford
Engine	6.8L Triton V-10
Fuel Cap	80 gal
GVWR	22,000 lbs
Exterior Length	36' 2"
Exterior Width	8' 6"
Exterior Height with A/C	12'
Wheelbase	228"
Freshwater Cap	60 gal
Black-/Gray-Water Cap	37 gal/37 gal
LP-Gas Cap	14 gal
Base MSRP	\$161,093

**Fleetwood RV**  
800-854-1344, [www.fleetwoodrv.com](http://www.fleetwoodrv.com)

### Forest River Legacy SR 340 38C

Sometimes, getting ready for the party is more difficult than hosting one, as the limited confines of an RV bathroom often necessitate primping and preening one at a time. The Legacy SR 340 38C features two full bathrooms, alleviating the pre-event holdups. Plus, the Truma on-demand water heater means there's plenty of hot water for everybody. Once the party does get started, the Legacy allows users to control electronics like the lighting and slideouts with its multiplex wiring from the push of a button on a downloadable app. Another highlight for tech aficionados: There are no fewer than five TVs on the 38C (living area, master bedroom, two near the bunks and one on the exterior). But screen time isn't the only entertainment-friendly feature: The two aforementioned full bathrooms, a cockpit dining table and whole-coach water-filtration system all make the Legacy a great choice for entertaining; a slide-out generator tray, water-manifold system, Sikkens exterior paint and what Forest River claims is four times the clearcoat shine of other RVs make the Legacy a great choice overall.



Chassis	Freightliner XCS
Engine	Cummins ISB diesel
Fuel Cap	90 gal
GVWR	27,910 lbs
Exterior Length	40' 4"
Exterior Width	8' 4"
Exterior Height with A/C	12' 4"
Wheelbase	252"
Freshwater Cap	86 gal
Black-/Gray-Water Cap	44 gal/44 gal
LP-Gas Cap	24.5 gal
Base MSRP	\$245,477

**Forest River Inc., Legacy SR 340 division**  
574-522-3693, [www.forestriverinc.com](http://www.forestriverinc.com)





**Holiday Rambler Vacationer 36X**

Whether for watching a movie, playing a party game or just mingling with others, a gathering needs to have enough seating for its guests. The Vacationer 36X offers a 54-by-75-inch convertible sofa, a loveseat for two and a 42-by-70-inch dinette — in addition to the swivel captain's chairs

and removable cockpit pedestal table. Coupled with the open-concept floorplan, there should be plenty of elbowroom on the dance floor and beyond. Plus, the residential refrigerator shares the living-room slideout with the dinette and loveseat across from the galley, which means foot-

traffic snafus while getting a drink can be a thing of the past. The standard 40-inch TV and electric fireplace in the living area help keep the party atmosphere in full swing; there's another 32-inch LED in the front overhead. And, opting for the free-standing dinette with credenza makes serving snacks and treats a more elegant affair. Other popular options include a king bed and a washer/dryer.

Chassis	Ford
Engine	6.8L Triton V-10
Fuel Cap	80 gal
GVWR	24,000 lbs
Exterior Length	37'
Exterior Width	8' 6"
Exterior Height with A/C	12' 10"
Wheelbase	242"
Freshwater Cap	100 gal
Black-/Gray-Water Cap	42 gal/58 gal
LP-Gas Cap	25 gal
Base MSRP	\$176,033

**Holiday Rambler**  
800-648-6582, [www.holidayrambler.com](http://www.holidayrambler.com)

**Jayco Seneca 37HJ**

It's tough to throw a party when you're exhausted after the drive to the RV park. The 2017 Jayco Seneca 37HJ is outfitted with Jayco's JRide Premium package, which includes rear air suspension, a heavy-duty stabilizer bar, beefy shocks, air brakes and a computer-balanced driveshaft, all of which is said to add up to a pleasant ride and lessened driver fatigue. The Seneca is more than a smooth-operating Class C, and includes en-

tertainment centers inside and out, an electric fireplace and sleeping for as many as seven pooped-out partygoers (depending on options). You can select theater-style seating for a more Hollywood approach, or expand the sleeping arrangements by checking off the dinette with sofa-bed ensemble option. The king bed in the master is flanked by nightstands, and is located across from a sizable TV cabinet/wardrobe that can hold enough garments for a costume ball.

The Seneca also features a seven-plug hitch receiver rated for up to 10,000 pounds, meaning you could take the party offshore if towing a boat or to the dunes with off-pavement vehicles (within weight ratings).



Chassis	Freightliner Business Class M2
Engine	Cummins ISB diesel
Fuel Cap	74 gal
GVWR	28,000 lbs
Exterior Length	38' 11"
Exterior Width	8' 5"
Exterior Height with A/C	13' 1"
Wheelbase	275"
Freshwater Cap	71.5 gal
Black-/Gray-Water Cap	33 gal/40 gal
LP-Gas Cap	16.5 gal
Base MSRP	\$239,698

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curved 4K Samsung in the overhead area, or the 50-inch 4K Samsung in the master bedroom. The patio features an outdoor TV in the underbay compartment and dynamic RGB undercoach lighting, while the huge patio awnings are enhanced with LED lights to add a warm glow. All audio/visual and lighting are controlled with the touch of a button on a Crestron-based iPad remote.

**Newell 1617**

There are times when the party is successful regardless of the location, and there are times when it succeeds because of the location. With Newell's new custom Show Coach 1617, we'll go with the latter. The luxurious motorcoach starts with a four-slide, 550-square-foot floorplan, including a unique midway entry door. Unlike most traditional floorplans, this design opens up directly to the underawning entertainment areas outside the coach,

allowing revelers to take their snacks (champagne and caviar, anyone?) directly from the kitchen to the patio dining table. The 1617 has a full bath and a half, and showcases underlit stone countertops. The 1617 features a GE Monogram refrigerator with two freezer drawers, a two-burner Wolf induction cooktop and a GE Profile convection oven for all your party snacks. Guests can watch one of three interior TVs, including the 48-inch

Chassis	Newell
Engine	Cummins ISX diesel
Fuel Cap	200 gal
GVWR	63,300 lbs
Exterior Length	39' up to 45' 8"
Exterior Width	8' 6"
Exterior Height with A/C	13' 1"
Wheelbase	308" (on 45' 8" exterior length)
Freshwater Cap	143 gal std (184 gal opt)
Black-/Gray-Water Cap	143 gal std (184 gal opt)
LP-Gas Cap	N/A
Base MSRP	\$1,978,005

**Newell Coach**  
 888-363-9355, [www.newellcoach.com](http://www.newellcoach.com)

**Newmar Ventana 4369**

One of 11 distinct floorplans under the Ventana lineup, the 4369 diesel pusher can be configured to become an entertainer's dream. The full-wall slide in the living area opens up the footprint considerably and reveals a large 87-inch sofa bed across from a 74-inch jackknife sofa, in addition to a 48-inch LED TV located in an electric lift. The 4369 offers polished solid-surface countertops throughout, complementing the standard maple cabinets with raised-panel glazed doors. A residen-

tial 19.7-cubic-foot residential refrigerator holds the foodstuffs, while an optional 30-inch convection microwave ensures party platters are cooked to perfection. When it comes time to serve said hors d'oeuvres, the optional buffet dinette with freestanding table (other buffet configurations are available) keeps the foot traffic flowing. Buyers can opt for an exterior entertainment center, which is a real treat in concert with the standard power awning and the optional Patio Hammock Package.



Chassis	Freightliner Passive Steer Tag Axle XCR
Engine	Cummins ISL diesel
Fuel Cap	100 gal
GVWR	44,700 lbs
Exterior Length	43' 10"
Exterior Width	8' 5.5"
Exterior Height with A/C	12' 11"
Wheelbase	281"
Freshwater Cap	105 gal
Black-/Gray-Water Cap	45 gal/65 gal
LP-Gas Cap	32 gal
Base MSRP	\$319,058

**Newmar Corp.**  
 800-731-8300, [www.newmarcorp.com](http://www.newmarcorp.com)



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### NeXus RV Bentley 38B

Spending all your money on a motorhome doesn't leave any room for celebration. When you buy factory direct from a manufacturer like NeXus RV, you can cut out the middleman and get more bang for your buck. NeXus RV's Bentley 38B diesel pusher offers a full kitchen that the company calls the largest in its class. It includes a four-door stainless-steel refrigerator with water and ice dispenser, a two-burner induction cooktop, a large stainless-steel convection oven,

a residential faucet with sprayer and plenty of cabinets to store party-platter essentials. Opposite the open kitchen, a plush sofa bed and dinette create comfortable seating for guests. While meals are being prepared, family and friends may be entertained by the 46-inch LED TV and be warmed by the electric fireplace. The front cab seats swivel and recline to add extra seating. Guests will also appreciate the one-and-a-half-bath layout; the rear bath features a full one-piece premolded shower with seat

and a glass shower door, plus an option for either a washer/dryer or added storage space.

For outdoor entertainment, the Bentley 38B is outfitted with a large power patio awning with LED lights above the entertainment center with LED TV. An accessible door to an inside trash receptacle is a nice touch that helps keep the campsite clean.

Chassis	Freightliner XCR Raised Rail
Engine	Cummins ISB diesel
Fuel Cap	100 gal
GVWR	28,000 lbs
Exterior Length	38' 10"
Exterior Width	8' 5"
Exterior Height with A/C	12' 7"
Wheelbase	258"
Freshwater Cap	100 gal
Black-/Gray-Water Cap	43 gal/43 gal
LP-Gas Cap	20.3 gal
Base MSRP	\$204,999

**NeXus RV**  
855-786-3987, [www.nexusrv.com](http://www.nexusrv.com)

### Thor Miramar 37.1 Bunkhouse

It's important to keep the little ones entertained when things go into full swing. Thor addressed this simple fact in its Miramar 37.1 Bunkhouse, a bath-and-a-half floorplan featuring bunk beds with their own LED TVs for on-screen entertainment. The Always-in-View 40-inch TV is situated across from the 68-inch sofa bed, or buyers can opt for theater seating in its place. The adjacent 72-inch Dream Dinette offers seating and a nice place for guests to lay down their heads

after a night of celebration, and a power drop-down mattress ups the sleeping ante. A spacious bathroom is located amidships, which is great for guests and owners alike, as mom and dad's rear bathroom can remain private. Vinyl flooring throughout makes cleanup easy, and solid-surface countertops, a residential refrigerator and a spacious pantry all contribute to the aura of entertaining. An exterior 32-inch LED TV, power patio awning with integrated LED lighting and

exterior Bluetooth-enabled speakers make it possible for even more happy campers to enjoy.



Chassis	Ford F-53
Engine	6.8L Triton V-10
Fuel Cap	80 gal
GVWR	24,000 lbs
Exterior Length	38' 9"
Exterior Width	8' 5"
Exterior Height with A/C	12' 9"
Wheelbase	262"
Freshwater Cap	100 gal
Black-/Gray-Water Cap	2 @ 40 gal each/ 2 @ 40 gal each
LP-Gas Cap	25 gal
Base MSRP	\$170,850

**Thor Motor Coach**  
800-860-5658, [www.thormotorcoach.com](http://www.thormotorcoach.com)





near the swivel captain's chairs, making it easy to grab a cold one without jamming up the galley area. An exterior entertainment system with 32-inch TV also is available, and is a great addition beneath the standard power patio awning with LED lighting.



**Winnebago Forza 38W**

Hosting a gathering doesn't always mean inviting anybody outside your immediate motorhome crew. With a rig like Winnebago's Forza 38W, which can seat up to nine RVers, you have the makings for a party before any invitations have been sent. Families and guests will appreciate the Forza's flexible sleeping spaces, such as the available StudioLoft 48-by-80-inch front overhead bunk. The new 38W

features three slideouts, two full bathrooms (one rear, one amidships), and an entertainment wall with an electric fireplace, a 48-inch LED TV on an adjustable mount, a Blu-ray player and a soundbar system. A 40-by-70-inch dinette with storage below and Flexsteel sofa bed are located opposite the entertainment wall. The two-door residential refrigerator with water/icemaker is situated streetside

Chassis	Freightliner XCS
Engine	Cummins ISB diesel
Fuel Cap	90 gal
GVWR	29,410 lbs
Exterior Length	39' 9"
Exterior Width	8' 5.5"
Exterior Height with A/C	11' 11"
Wheelbase	260"
Freshwater Cap	100 gal
Black-/Gray-Water Cap	49 gal/48 gal and 51 gal
LP-Gas Cap	23 gal
Base MSRP	\$236,789

**Winnebago Industries Inc.**  
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<sup>1</sup> According to TopConsumerReviews.com, available on TopConsumerReviews.com published on 9/22/2016.

\* Price reflective of \$5 Auto Renewal Discount. Introductory rate available for new members only. Camping World Merchandise Certificate will be mailed in membership kit and will arrive within two weeks. Benefits and services provided by Americas Road & Travel Club, Inc. for Members residing in Alaska, Alabama, Utah, and Virginia; and by Affinity Road & Travel Club, LLC for Members residing in all other States. Note: All program benefits are subject to limitations set forth in the current Member Benefit Brochure which can be found at [www.GoodSamRoadside.com/MBBs](http://www.GoodSamRoadside.com/MBBs)

\*\* Information obtained from AAA of Colorado Plus RV plan at [Colorado.aaa.com](http://Colorado.aaa.com) on 1/19/2017.

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# POWER PLAYERS

PRODUCTS DESIGNED TO PREVENT DAMAGE TO THE MOTORHOME CAUSED BY ELECTRICAL PROBLEMS

**M**ost of our favorite RV parks have one thing in common: great location. They were built in the remote corners of our continent. For the rare older RV park that hasn't been upgraded, electrical anomalies can occur. Add to this the wear and tear from storms, maintenance work in the park and the sometimes quirky nature of the power grid in remote areas, and you have a recipe for some serious voltage and shock problems. Damage to your motorhome is likely from power surges and from over-voltage and under-voltage conditions. Other electrical issues, such as a hot-skin condition where electrical current is flowing through the body and chassis, can pose some real dangers to you and anyone touching your motorhome.

These conditions are why a dedicated segment of the RV after-market has devoted its energies to protecting motorhome owners from a variety of power-supply problems, with both hard-wired and portable surge protectors, and electrical management systems.

The problems that cause these conditions are numerous, and include "damaged wiring, damaged receptacles, miswired systems, insufficient grid capacity or plugging into [240 volts AC]," according

to Bobby Raatz, national sales manager for Southwire Co., a manufacturer of wire and cable used in the distribution and transmission of electricity.

Joe Casale of Progressive Industries said, "Surges and high voltage, low voltage, as well as some simple electrical conditions — open ground, open neutral and reverse polarity," add to the list.

These dangers are why these companies make products designed to handle a lot more than just power surges. The products come in two basic configurations — portable and hard-wired — with functions ranging from simple surge protection to sophisticated analysis and power cutoff for a wide variety of conditions. Some even make the process seamless with automatic reset on power restoration.

Portable units plug in at the



pedestal or power source and usually provide warnings about anomalies even before you plug your motorhome into the protective device. Portables have the advantage of not needing installation and can be used, or not, as you see fit. On the downside, they can be awkward to deploy and store. Portables are exposed to the elements and therefore may be targeted for theft so features should take these factors into account.

Hard-wired units are mounted permanently onboard your motorhome and are in operation each time you plug in. They are protected from weather and theft but they are not as easy to service or replace. Some hard-wired protectors include a digital display that can be wall-mounted inside your motorhome for easy monitoring.

Power-protection devices are not designed to be daisy chained or used in conjunction with other power-protection devices (including power-cord adapters). Most are offered in 50-amp or 30-amp models, so get the amperage level appropriate for your motorhome.

Watch for features that address various electrical

problems, including over or under voltage, open ground, open neutral, reverse polarity and accidental connection to a 240-volt AC power source. Also, note the distinction between "detection" and "protection." A device may have the capability to detect a power problem but not the capacity to protect (interrupt the power) while the problem exists. When a device does interrupt power, does it take manual input to resume or does it automatically resume connection when the power problem is resolved?

For portable devices, also look for features that make it easier to operate (auto reset and easy-pull handles) that protect from weather (seals, guards or covers) and that protect from theft (locking brackets and available accessories). All units that are designed to act as surge protectors will have a joule rating. A joule is a unit of energy, and for simplicity purposes, the higher the joule rating, the more energy the unit can absorb from a surge event. It is usually higher for 50-amp devices, because there are more conductors in the incoming cable, and the conductors are larger, thus allowing for a higher spike to occur.

## Camco

Camco's Power Defender Voltage Protector helps protect a motorhome from damaging low- or high-voltage levels, power spikes and surges. The voltage protector (available in 30-amp and 50-amp versions) monitors incoming power and automatically disconnects when dangerous voltage levels are detected. It also automatically reconnects when levels stabilize between 102-132 volts AC. Camco's products include a reconnect delay to protect sensitive equipment from rapidly cycling power, and display faults for reverse polarity, open neutral and other power-pedestal wiring issues. MSRP: \$299 (30-amp); \$399 (50-amp).

The water-resistant unit incorporates integrated multilevel surge protection and diagnostic lights for visual indication of faults. Its

integrated surge protection has a 2,450-joule power rating for 30 amps and a 3,850-joule power rating for 50 amps.

Camco's Power Defender Voltage Analyzer is a 30-amp circuit analyzer featuring diagnostic lights to indicate electrical wiring faults before you connect the electrical cord. The compact, weather-resistant unit also includes integrated surge protection. MSRP: \$69.



Camco's PowerGrip Dogbone Circuit Analyzers (available in 30-amp and 50-amp versions) are weather-resistant and are designed to protect electrical equipment from improperly wired electrical boxes. Diagnostic lights indicate faults before you connect the electrical cord. This unit provides surge protection up to 2,100 joules for the 30-amp version and up to 4,200 joules for the 50-amp model. The PowerGrip handles make plugging and unplugging safer and easier. MSRP: \$104.99 (30-amp); \$139.99 (50-amp).

Camco Manufacturing Inc.  
800-334-2004, [www.camco.net](http://www.camco.net)

Voltage Protector ▶



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these 30- and 50-amp units have a lifetime warranty and the company provides technical support seven days a week. MSRP: \$258 (30-amp); \$349 (50-amp).

EMS-HW30C and EMS-HW50C Hardwired Electrical Management Systems include a digital display, which scrolls continuously through the power source information. A state-of-the-art microprocessor provides full motorhome surge and electrical protection against all adverse power conditions. Functions include detection and protection for over/under voltage, open ground, open neutral, reverse polarity and accidental 240-volt AC protection. It protects against high and low voltage and frequency, indicates a miswired pedestal, protects against surges and current issues, and displays the previous error code. They also feature an adjustable time delay. Each unit has a built-in scrolling digital display and is thermally protected, is field serviceable, UL Listed and UL Listed to Canadian safety standards. Made in the USA, these 30- and 50-amp units have a lifetime warranty and the company provides technical support seven days a week. MSRP: \$299 (30-amp); \$410 (50-amp).

Portable EMS-PT30X and EMS-PT50X with Surge Protection



◀ EMS-HW50C

EMS-PT50X ▶



feature detection and protection for over/under voltage, open ground, open neutral, reverse polarity, accidental 240-volt AC connection and AC frequency anomalies. The units employ bright three-color LED lights to indicate a miswired pedestal or surge failure. The protectors are designed for outdoor use and feature an All Weather Shield Assembly and tough Lexan housing. They also include an amperage meter display, previous error code, thermal protection, locking bracket and rugged pull handle. UL Listed and UL Listed to Canadian safety standards. Lifetime warranty

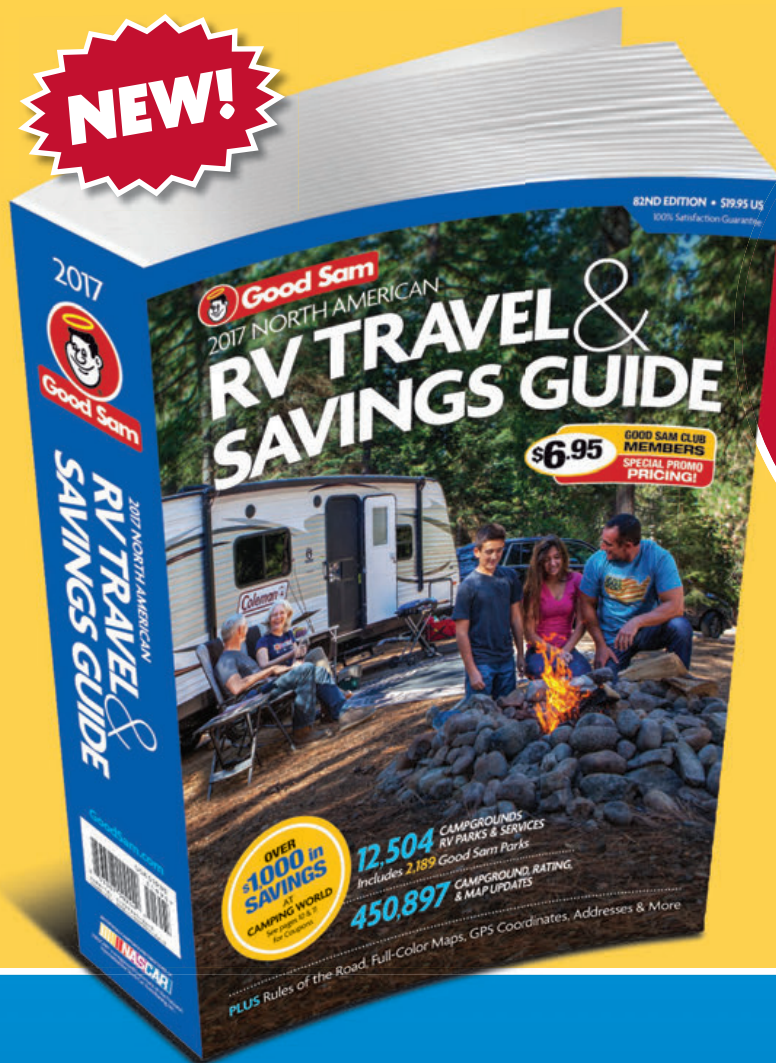
SSP-50XL ▶



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Portable SSP-50XL and SSP-30XL Smart Surge Protectors feature detection for a miswired pedestal, over/under voltage, open ground, open neutral and reverse polarity. The units provide surge and thermal protection. The protectors are designed for outdoor use and feature

an All Weather Shield Assembly and tough Lexan housing. They also include a locking bracket and rugged pull handle. UL Listed and UL Listed to Canadian safety standards. Lifetime warranty excludes the All Weather Shield Assembly. Made in the USA. MSRP: \$116.65 (30-amp); \$151.85 (50-amp).

Progressive Industries  
919-267-6948, www.progressiveindustries.net

Model 34850 ▶



**Southwire/Technology Research LLC**

Surge Guard Portable Models 34830 and 34850 provide full electrical protection for 30- or 50-amp systems, respectively, with an easy-to-read LCD display that shows textual information that does not require code interpretation. Real-time voltage and amp draw are continuously displayed on the LCD screen. Power is automatically disconnected when the following conditions are present: under/over voltage, open ground, open neutral, reverse polarity and overheating in the plug. Continuous monitoring allows the Surge Guard unit to automatically reconnect the power when acceptable power resumes. LED lights indicate if the device's surge protection has been activated due to a large surge or multiple small surges. Surge Guard 34830 provides 2,450 joules of surge protection, while the 34850 provides 3,850 joules of protection. Available at Camping World, \$219.97 (30-amp); \$299.97 (50-amp).

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# VISION QUEST

A basement-storage LED lighting upgrade makes finding your gear easier than ever



**T**he storage bays in most Class A motorhomes are not only large but are also generally easy to access, which makes them great for storing large items that are not often used. On motorhomes with a raised-rail chassis, the storage bays in the middle of the coach usually pass all the way through, meaning you can access them from either side. The biggest problem we have noted with these basement storage areas is limited, if any, lighting. If you have ever had to dig something out of the basement at the RV park at night or, even worse, while parked alongside the road in the dark, you know how frustrating it can be. Often we resort to holding a flashlight in one hand as we push items aside while trying to retrieve the item we actually wanted. Newer motorhomes can come equipped with standard or optional lighting packages inside or outside, but few have what we consider a fully functional lighting package that makes the basement storage areas completely usable in daytime or nighttime conditions.

[1] Shown here is the incandescent light fixture that came installed in this motorhome. Not only is it dim, it doesn't provide consistent lighting throughout each storage bay. [2] After removing the lens cover we unscrewed the light fixture from the wall of the storage bay.



After years of suffering with a few poorly placed incandescent wall-mounted lights in the basement of our motorhome, we decided it was time to finally fix the problem. Our upgrade goals were not only to have more total lumens in each basement cargo bay, but to also have more usable lighting that was spread out evenly throughout the bay. In this motorhome, the storage bay that contains the house and chassis batteries didn't have any lighting at all. The lack of lighting above the batteries made checking the electrolyte level particularly difficult, so we wanted to install a light and switch in there as well.

When determining what type of lights to use for our upgrade, we

## ➔ INSTALLATION TIP

**Time:** 2-3 hours

**Prerequisites:** Basic hand tools and knowledge of 12-volt DC circuits and ability to splice and solder or make crimp on wiring connections

**Physicality:** Ability to work while lying on back inside basement storage bays



3



4

looked at many types of fixtures and bulb types and our search pointed toward high-intensity LED lights. Not only are LED lights long-lasting, they also have very low current requirements, making them ideal for use in a typical 12-volt DC environment such as a motorhome. Another big advantage is that LED lights are available in long strips. In basement storage areas that are both wide and deep, it is important to light the entire area. Long strips of high-intensity LED lights are perfect for this application because they can be applied to the ceiling of the entire storage bay, which ensures consistent light throughout the bay.

When searching for LED lighting, be careful before you make a purchase because there are a lot of low-quality products on the market. After reading many reviews and looking at the various offerings on the market, we selected Boogey Lights ([www.boogeylights.com](http://www.boogeylights.com)). Unlike other brands on the market, Boogey Lights products are considered professional-grade, which relates to durability and longevity. Our basement-lighting package is a simple one-color setup with both LED strips and a few "pod" lights, but if you

[5] We then reconnected the light housing to the wall using the original screws. [6] Before mounting the LED light strip we tested it to ensure it functioned properly. As you can see, the light output is significantly improved when compared to the original light.

[3] Make sure there is no power to the lights before cutting or working with the wiring, then use a wire cutter to cut both of the wires leading to the lightbulb assembly. [4] Next, we took the power lead for the new LED light and wired it to the black wire in the toggle switch from the light fixture. The ground wire from the LED light strip was then connected to the ground lead from the coach. We elected to solder the connections and then cover them with shrink tubing. If you prefer, you can use crimp-type terminals and avoid soldering. Just make sure there is a solid connection or the wire can come loose.



5



6



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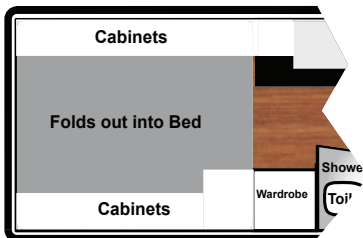
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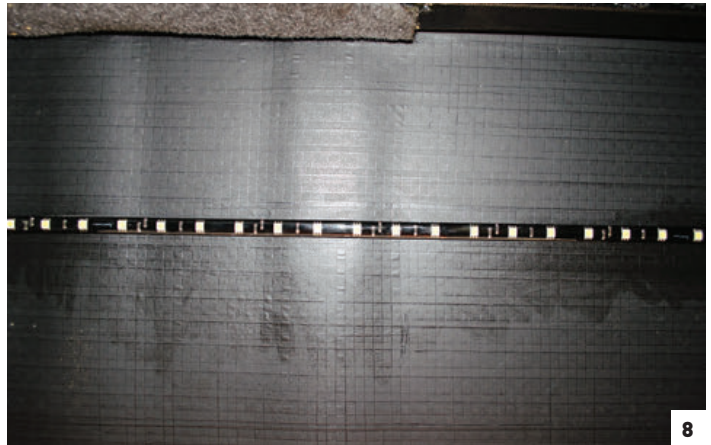
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want something more elaborate the company offers interior and exterior multicolor lights that can be controlled via remote or even Bluetooth using a smartphone.

Another huge advantage of dealing with a professional company like Boogey Lights is experience. No matter which lights you choose, if you don't get the correct products and techniques to install them properly they will fall off in a short time and you will be very unhappy. Boogey Lights sells the lights and also uses professional-quality installation products such as 3M-brand double-sided tape and 3M adhesion primer, as well as cable ties and mounts that are absolutely critical for a long-lasting and professional-looking installation.

Of course every installation is different but this article illustrates

[7] After cleaning the overhead area with alcohol, we used the supplied 3M-brand primer to ensure the 3M double-sided tape will make a permanent bond. Make sure to attach the tape on a smooth, flat area or else you run the risk of adhesion problems. In some areas you may elect to attach the light strip with cable ties, if that suits your application better. [8] Shown here is a segment of the LED light strip attached to the ceiling of the basement. After proper cleaning and priming, the adhesion of the system seems to be very strong. Don't take shortcuts with the installation — if you do, the lights may not adhere properly. [9] In order to make a professional-looking installation, we used these cable-tie mounts to hold the wires in place. Make sure to use the 3M primer and alcohol when installing these as well. Repeat this same installation process for each bay until you have all the old lights out and all the new LED lights installed and mounted. [10] Each storage bay is different, and of course, every coach is different, so you may have to be creative when looking for a good place to mount the lights. In this bay we attached the LED light to the steel tubing directly over the door. This location keeps the lights from being bumped with cargo and puts the light directly into the basement instead of into your eyes.

how we installed the LED lights in our motorhome. Since most of the storage bays in this motorhome already had a surface-mounted light that included an integrated on/off switch, we decided to use it as opposed to removing it and starting over. The light was already screwed to the wall of the bay and it had 12-volt DC wiring from the fuse box, so removing it would have left

holes in the wall. Therefore, we decided it was easier to leave the light mounted where it was and simply remove the existing 12-volt DC incandescent bulb and holder from the light fixture and then wire the new LED lights into the existing switch. This method prevented the unsightly holes in the wall and eliminated the need to buy and install an on/off switch in each bay. In the

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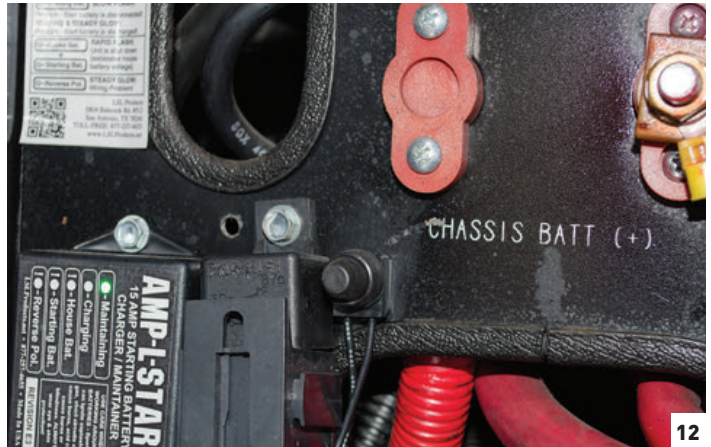


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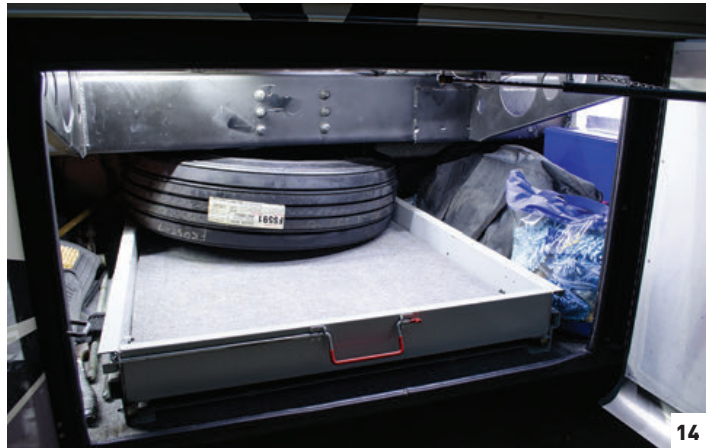
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12



13



14

section that didn't have a light or a switch we used a surface-mount push-button switch from Boogey Lights and mounted it to a hard surface on the wall.

When deciding what lights we needed for our project we first measured each bay and determined how long each light segment should be, and also measured to determine how long the power lead needed to be. Then we ordered each light custom-made to a length. In the battery bay we decided to use LED pods instead of a light strip. Overall the pods don't put out quite as much light as longer strips, so we used two of them directly over the battery bank. **M**

[11] In some cases, you may want to daisy chain lights together as shown here. When we placed our order with Boogey Lights we had power leads installed on each end of some lights to allow this to be done. If you decide that you don't need the extra lead, it can be cut off and not affect the function of the light. [12] In the battery bay we had to install a switch and light since none were present originally. We used a surface-mount on/off switch from Boogey Lights and attached it to the wall using the 3M tape. Now we can easily check the battery levels even at night. [13, 14] Here is a side-by-side photo taken at dusk with the exact same settings on the camera so you can see the drastic difference in lighting that is provided by the Boogey Lights high-intensity LED lights.

[15] After installing the LED lights, seeing the contents of the storage bays and accessing them at night is now an easy task. The light is so white and bright compared to the tired old incandescent lights that were there originally. Plus, the modular system allows you to install the lights exactly where you need them the most.



15





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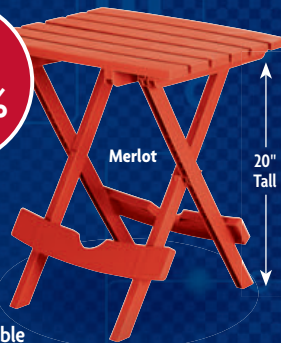
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# DIY DREAM RIDE

LEFT FOR DEAD AFTER A DAMAGING REFRIGERATOR FIRE, A SALVAGED 2003 COACHMEN CROSS COUNTRY ELITE HAS BEEN RESURRECTED TO CUSTOM-COACH MAJESTY

**M**ichelangelo once said that every block of stone has a statue inside it, and it is the task of the sculptor to discover it. That is a quote that Lamar Johnson likes to use to explain the potential he saw when he got his first look at the 2003 Coachmen Cross Country Elite 37.5 that would become his own work of art. It is an opinion not initially shared by his wife, Winda.

"She took one look at it and said, 'You're crazy!'" he admits.

The motorhome had all of the prerequisites on Lamar's list: a 300-hp Cummins diesel, two slides, hydraulic levelers, a washer/dryer, a split bath and a front entry door. Unfortunately, it also had serious damage from a refrigerator fire, leaving a gaping hole in the side wall and roof. The interior walls, carpet and upholstery were all burned or blackened by smoke. Everything would need to be gutted and replaced. The scope of the renovation

was so massive that the couple who had purchased it at auction had given up before they had even begun. Yet none of this phased Lamar.

"From the beginning, I was envisioning what it could look like. I wasn't intimidated," he says. "The chassis was intact, and the diesel engine was in good working condition. I just looked at everything else and thought, 'OK, all this can go.'"

The price for the salvaged coach was \$7,500, exactly what Lamar and his wife had gotten from the sale of their old gas-powered Coachmen Chaparral fifth-wheel. And perhaps it was no coincidence that they found this Coachmen in Phoenix, Arizona, a city named for the mythical bird that rises from the ashes to be reborn. In the end, Winda agreed, and they took their "project RV" back home to California.

Lamar's first concern was repairing the roof and side wall. He got a quote of \$8,000 for a new roof,



Above: Lamar and Winda Johnson are enjoying the good life after an intensive six-month restoration of their salvaged Coachmen Cross Country Elite 37.5 Class A.

but after doing some research and watching videos on the internet, he decided it was a job he could tackle with a little help. He needed to replace some of the roof's aluminum frame as well as an overhead interior ceiling truss, and fortunately a friend knew a welder who agreed to do the job after hours — for a mere \$40. The remainder of the repair he did himself, at a total cost of \$1,200 for materials.

Once the motorhome was sealed from the weather, the interior renovation began. Lamar contacted Coachmen, and the reps were extremely supportive, sending him the electrical schematics as well as detailed information on the motorhome's layout. He gutted the rig from outside the rear bedroom door, where all the fire damage occurred, to the front windshield and began the task of rebuilding. In the process, he replaced wallboard, ran new 12-volt DC wiring, added a new rooftop air conditioner and laid a porcelain tile floor. He found that the cabinets were all still structurally sound, so they were stripped and stained. Once cleaned, the Corian countertop was also still in good condition, but most of the appliances had to be replaced. He chose an apartment-sized residential refrigerator and a convection microwave, and kept the original four-burner LP-gas cooktop. He finished off the new, modern kitchen with undercabinet LED lighting and an attractive tile backsplash.

All of the furniture in the main living area was replaced, and both the driver and passenger seats were reupholstered, one of the few jobs



Lamar did not do himself. He also added a 52-inch rear-projection TV, a 32-inch flat-screen TV, a new stereo/DVD player, additional speakers for surround sound and several new reading lights. The bathroom also received a makeover, with new tile and a tempered-glass shower door to give the space an open, roomier feel.

The end result? An interior that rivals any new coach — and it only took six months.

“I got a lot of help from friends, and my wife was very supportive,” Lamar says. “She would bring out lunch, and diesel fuel to keep the generator running, so we could continue to work inside the RV when the temperature was over 100 degrees.”

Winda would also encourage him to “hurry up and finish our future penthouse” because she couldn’t wait to travel, an attitude that Lamar says was “a great motivator.” He also credits the RV community for its support.

“Whenever I needed guidance, I found it there,” he says.

He was equally impressed by his motorhome’s manufacturers. In addition to getting help from Coachmen, he also contacted Freightliner, makers of his chassis, to get engine specs, information about the hydraulics and information on finding replacement parts. There was a small leak in the plastic coolant reservoir, and they helped him find a new reservoir, along with the engine-coolant sensor. He praises both companies for their dedicated



A refrigerator fire caused extensive damage to the motorhome, both inside and out. Johnson began by repairing the roof and frame, and then worked his way to the interior. Inside, restoration included laying a new wood-look tile floor, repairing and painting walls and replacing the furnishings. Fortunately, Johnson found most of the cabinetry to be structurally sound, so it only required refinishing.

customer service, which made his own job much easier.

Lamar estimates that he has about \$23,000 invested in his Coachmen at this point. He still plans to have the entire exterior professionally painted sometime in the future. He would also like to add a Banks PowerPack System to the Cummins engine to boost power and to compensate for the added weight of the new flooring. Still, he is satisfied with his results thus far. He and his wife, and 10-year-old daughter, Keysa, spend vacations and holidays at their site in the Mountain Lakes Resort in Lytle Creek, California, or traveling to the beach,

and they all feel like the motorhome is part of the family.

“This was a route I could explore without going into financial debt. I knew what I wanted — a diesel engine, two slideouts, hydraulic levelers, even the layout — and I knew the price of a diesel coach. The best thing about this RV after the renovations is that I have no payments, and everything works just the way the factory designed it, only with my vision.”

Buying a salvaged motorhome is certainly not for everyone, a fact Lamar freely admits. In most states, including California, any damaged vehicle with repair costs that will

## TO SALVAGE, OR NOT TO SALVAGE?

Salvaged motorhomes are not an option unless you are a skilled DIYer. Even then, you need to carefully weigh the costs versus benefits. Many insurance companies will provide only liability coverage for coaches with a revived/rebuilt title, so all of that hard work could potentially go up in smoke. If you ever plan to sell, dealers often will not accept these RVs as trade-ins, and potential buyers may be scared off by the branded title. On the plus side, salvaged motorhomes are cheap and do give you the opportunity to upgrade affordably, something you might not be able to finance if you pay the price for the same older motorhome with a clean title. For example, a 2003 Coachmen Cross Country

Elite title sells for anywhere from \$52,000 to \$85,000 on the used market, and it is likely that the carpet, appliances and upholstery would still need updating. This makes the Johnsons’ \$23,000 investment a good deal, particularly since they have no intention of selling their motorhome. The bottom line: Salvaged vehicles are a gamble, but in some situations, that gamble can pay off, so caveat emptor — let the buyer beware.



▶ Although the coach already looks great, Johnson’s future plans include a professional paint job on the Cross Country’s exterior.

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## The Classic Ride



Above left: New tile and a tempered-glass shower door helped revive the bathroom. Above right: The built-in closets and dressers in the bedroom were refinished to like-new condition.

exceed 75 percent of its value can be declared a total loss by the insurance company. Given depreciation and the exponentially higher costs of rebuilding an RV versus a car or truck, older motorhomes that have sustained damage have a greater likelihood of being branded a "salvage" title. This doesn't mean they can't be brought back to life, but it does present a series of hurdles — and some long-term problems — for prospective owners.

In California, a salvaged vehicle can be rebranded as "revived" (some states term this as "rebuilt") if the owner follows certain requirements. To re-register a salvage vehicle, the owner must have bills of sale for all the major and minor parts used in the reconstruction of the vehicle, and an application for registration along with a vehicle construction statement will need to be given to the DMV. Revived salvage vehicles are also required to be inspected by the DMV or the California Highway Patrol (CHP) before DMV can issue title and registration. Even if the vehicle has been restored to pristine condition, it will always have a branded title, affecting potential resale value and insurance coverage.

None of that dissuaded Lamar. As he points out, he did not rebuild his Coachmen to sell it; he intends to use it. He expects that this motorhome will carry him and his family through the decades until retirement and beyond,

at a fraction of the cost of even a used diesel-powered motorhome with the same amenities.

"Besides, would Michelangelo ever part from his David?" he asks only half-jokingly because this motorhome really is his masterpiece.

As happy as he is with the product of his labor, Lamar has some cautionary advice for anyone considering a project of this magnitude. First, make sure you know what you want in a coach, since this is a job you only want to do once. Once you find your diamond in the rough, do your research to know what it will take to complete the job (building materials, special tools and skills like welding, plumbing, electrical or mechanical expertise). Then ask yourself, do you have the time, spousal/family support and patience for the project? Be honest with yourself; when you look back at your projects in the past, are you a finisher, or do you have a tendency to leave jobs incomplete?

"If you think you can, you can," says Johnson firmly. "If you think you can't, you won't."

One look at the Johnsons' 2003 Cross Country Elite is proof of just what positive thinking and elbow grease can accomplish. Revived by one man's dream, this motorhome ascended like a phoenix from the ashes, rising to take its place as a true classic ride. **M**

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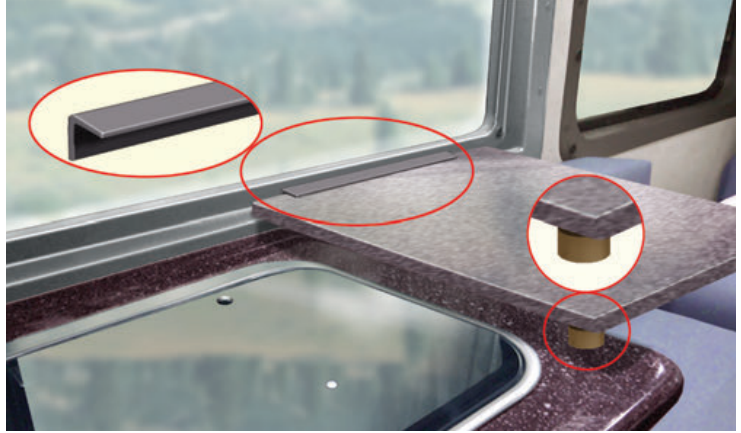
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## Counter Productive

The kitchen counterspace in our Class B motorhome is a bit small. I went to a local kitchen counter remodeler and bought a scrap of counter that was cut out for a sink. The 20-by-20-inch piece increased our counter by 400 square inches.

The add-on is held in place by a piece of angle aluminum, painted black, and held to the window frame with silicone adhesive. There is a 1-inch spacer leg at the corner that rests on the original counter next to the stove; this is also glued on with silicone.

**Greg Pickens | Sacramento, California**



## Screen-Door Handle

The standard screen-door latch on an RV is a fragile plastic assembly, which doesn't hold up well when constantly used to pull the door open. I've had to replace mine a couple times, and came up with a way to take the strain off the assembly.

Cut a 4-inch length of 1/2-inch-by-1/2-inch aluminum angle. Drill a hole near each end, mating holes in the lower section of the door's slide panel behind the release lever. Fasten with stainless-steel screws and nuts.

Now just press the release lever with your thumb or palm while pulling on the new handle with your fingers — no more strain on the latch assembly! It may not prevent the latch from breaking, but it will take the pressure off the latch. It's worked well for me.

**Tom Becker | Bernalillo, New Mexico**



## Put On the Squeeze

Filling the coach and starting batteries is often a difficult task, and one that can be hazardous, but I found a way to simplify this messy job by repurposing a plastic bottle. A stand-on-its-head ketchup bottle and a piece of 1/4-inch plastic tubing make an excellent battery water filler. Remove the bottle's labels, open the outer cover, drill a hole through the center of the threaded cover and insert a 1/4-inch plastic tube [approximately 24 inches in length] into the bottle to reach the bottom. (Drill the hole about a millimeter smaller than the tube for a tight fit.) To use, fill the bottle with distilled water, insert the open end of the tube into the battery and gently squeeze the bottle. Caution: Wear eye protection and do not overfill the battery cells. A permanent marker can be used to label the bottle as desired.

**Doug Warnecke | Harwood, North Dakota**



### 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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# Crack Down

Upset that their costly refrigerator developed a crack only a few months after its 1-year warranty had expired, a couple turned to Hot Line for assistance. They wrote:

“ We are writing to Hot Line hoping you can help us with a crack that appeared at the bottom interior of our four-door Norcold refrigerator. We purchased the refrigerator new on February 5, 2015, and paid \$3,602.38, which included a \$150 shipping charge. The refrigerator was shipped to River City RV in Grants Pass, Oregon, where we were in the process of purchasing our 2006 Fleetwood Pace Arrow. It was then installed on the motorhome, replacing the refrigerator that was in the rig. Upon receipt from the shipper and after installation, we carefully inspected the refrigerator for defects, inside and out, and did not find any. The 1-year warranty that came with the refrigerator expired in February 2016. We did not have any issues with the new refrigerator until September 2016.

On September 22, 2016, while on an RV trip to Brookings, Oregon, I opened the refrigerator door and discovered a crack, measuring approximately 4 inches, at the bottom of the interior of the refrigerator. The crack began on the right side of the plate located on the bottom center interior of the refrigerator and traveled back toward the right side crisper drawer.

I am certain that the crack was not present prior to our trip, and that nothing was dropped from an upper shelf in the refrigerator. The crack just “appeared” on that morning when I first opened the re-

frigerator door.

I contacted customer service at Thetford Corp./Norcold Inc. regarding this on October 7, 2016, and spoke to Myka Herron about the issue. Herron asked me to send her photos of the crack, which I did, along with an email. Herron sent me a reply email on October 17 that read, “This crack has come from the screw on the right-hand side being too tight. Unfortunately, you are out of your 1-year warranty with us, and we will not be able to cover this issue. However, this crack will not affect cooling of the refer. A suggestion would be to drill a tiny hole into the crack where it starts, and apply a silicone caulk to seal up the crack.”

I responded to her email stating that “I can’t believe that this \$3,600 refrigerator only comes with a 1-year warranty, especially since this appears to be a manufacturing defect. Can we get the crack in the refrigerator repaired in the manner you suggested, free of charge, at our nearest authorized Thetford repair dealer?”

A week later, I received a response from Herron that stated, “I have spoken to my superior and he has informed me that we would not be able to cover any labor costs on your

unit seeing that it is out of warranty and there was not any record of an issue with your refrigerator while you were within your warranty period.”

We would like our refrigerator either repaired by an authorized Thetford/Norcold dealer in our area, or replaced. A \$3,600 refrigerator should not get a crack in the interior when it has been properly cared for and is only 19 months old. We are not full-timers, so the refrigerator isn’t in constant use. A refrigerator is not something you expect to have to replace less than 24 months after purchase.

**Jim and Susan Ellsworth | Merlin, Oregon**

Although the refrigerator was indeed out of warranty, we passed along the Ellsworths’ request to see if Thetford/Norcold might reconsider. A few months later, we received a copy of the company’s letter to the Ellsworths, which filled us in on the resolution of their case. It read:

Thank you for bringing to our attention the concern regarding the lining crack in your Norcold refrigerator. Hopefully the repair performed by our field technician meets with your approval. Please let us know if you experience any further issues.

As a token of our appreciation for being a loyal Norcold customer, enclosed please find a bottle of cleaning solution.

**Kim Gordon, Sr. Manager Customer Service | Thetford Corp./Norcold Inc., Ann Arbor, Michigan**

## 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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Customer Rating ★★★★★

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ITEM 69091/61454  
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Customer Rating ★★★★★

2.5 HP 21 GAL 125 PSI

24590556

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1 TON CAPACITY FOLDABLE SHOP CRANE

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**CENTRALPNEUMATIC** **SUPER COUPON**

2.5 HP, 21 GALLON, 125 PSI VERTICAL AIR COMPRESSOR

ITEM 69091/61454  
61693/62803  
67847 shown

**SAVE \$296**

Customer Rating ★★★★★

2.5 HP 21 GAL 125 PSI

**SUPER COUPON \$149.99** ~~\$179.99~~ comp at \$446.61

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8750 PEAK/7000 RUNNING WATTS 13 HP (420 CC) GAS GENERATORS

ITEM 68530/63086/69671/63085 shown  
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**Customer Rating ★★★★★**

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16 OZ. HAMMERS WITH FIBERGLASS HANDLE

CLAW RIP

ITEM 69006  
60715/60714

ITEM 47873  
69005/61262

**Customer Rating ★★★★★**

**YOUR CHOICE \$3.99** ~~\$4.99~~ comp at \$17.99

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

ITEM 69249/69115/69137  
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**SUPER COUPON**

10" PNEUMATIC TIRE

ITEM 69385/62388/62409  
62698/30900 shown

**Customer Rating ★★★★★**

**SAVE 73%**

**SUPER COUPON \$3.99** ~~\$5.99~~ comp at \$14.99

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**PITTSBURGH AUTOMOTIVE** **SUPER COUPON**

RAPID PUMP® 1.5 TON ALUMINUM RACING JACK

ITEM 69252/68053/62160  
62496/62516/60569 shown

**Customer Rating ★★★★★**

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1-1/4 GALLON HOME AND GARDEN SPRAYER

ITEM 61280/63124  
63145/95692 shown

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**BADLAND** **SUPER COUPON**

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ITEM 61258 shown  
61840/68146/61297/63476

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By Ken Freund

## Speedometer and Tach Fluctuations

**Q** I have a 1998 Tradewinds diesel motorhome that I purchased new. On a recent trip from Minnesota to Arizona, the speedometer and tachometer would fluctuate while driving between 60 and 75 MPH, while I was holding the accelerator steady. When I would engage the cruise control, the speedometer would still fluctuate between 60 and 75 MPH, while my speed appeared to remain steady. After stopping for lunch or at night, it would be OK for awhile, but then start fluctuating again. Do you think this might be the instrument panel, a bad sender, a poor connection or ground, or a diode?

**Gerald Fenno | Sun City West, Arizona**

**A** The fact that both gauges fluctuate together and at a steady speed indicate that the problem is not in the vehicle speed sensor or tachometer engine speed signal. Also, if the vehicle speed sensor signal was fluctuating,



the cruise control would have problems maintaining a constant speed. So, yes, the problem likely lies in the dash cluster area. First, check the ground connection. Try running a new temporary independent wire with alligator clips, connected to a clean solid ground or directly to the battery ground post. The matching variations of the two gauges indicates a voltage fluctuation. If a good ground doesn't clear up the problem (although I suspect it will), measure the voltage at the gauges with a digital voltmeter while the motorhome is driven at the speeds you mentioned. This motorhome is on a Freightliner chassis, so besides taking it to an RV shop for help, you can also take it to a Freightliner dealer.

### Steps Not Working Correctly

**Q** I have an LCI retractable step on my 2011 Monaco Monarch motorhome. When I either retract or extend the steps, they will reach the full extension and the motor will continue to run, making a banging noise. It seems like there should be a limit switch to tell the motor to stop running. I called Lippert, and they said I should replace the complete motor system for \$125. The motor works OK, it doesn't know when to stop.

**Don Downey | Boardman, Ohio**

**A** Unfortunately, the limit switch that tells the motor when to stop is part of the motor assembly, and so it's all replaced as an assembly. The banging noise is probably stripped gears from the motor-drive assembly, which further reinforces the need to replace the whole unit. You might be able to find a lower price online somewhere, but

Lippert was right about the need to replace the motor assembly.

### Dead Outlets

**Q** We have a 2010 Rexall 35-foot motorhome. The electrical outlets don't work. I checked all the outlets and they all look good. The kitchen area and bathroom outlets work. Could the converter be the problem? Do you know where the converter is located?

**Douglas L. Atchey | Via email**

**A** The converter does not power the 120-volt AC outlets; it only produces 12 volts DC for low-voltage appliances, accessories and lights and battery charging, so this is not the culprit. First, check for a tripped circuit breaker in the onboard power-distribution panel. It's also possible that there is a bad breaker in the panel. Ground fault circuit interrupter (GFCI) outlets are typically used for the

kitchen and outside the motorhome, but it's possible that the nonworking outlets were wired into this circuit instead of those required by code. Find the GFCI outlet and make sure it's not tripped; reset if need be by pushing the appropriate button. If you have a higher-end coach, you may have an inverter/charger system instead of the converter. If this is the case, the inverter (Magnum, Xantrex, Go Power, etc.) may have a circuit breaker on it that could be tripped, so checking that is high on the list. If all the above pan out, then you could be looking at a wiring or receptacle issue. Sorting this requires a digital multimeter, and tracing the wiring from the circuit breaker using voltage, to each receptacle in that circuit. A wiring diagram would be helpful in this case. It's not unusual for one receptacle in a daisy chain of receptacles to have a bad connection internally. This is best handled by a certified RV technician.

## Shifting Advice

**Q** We have a 2003 Ford E-450 chassis with the V-10 engine in our 2004 Winnebago Minnie Winnie (31 feet) Class C. I'm especially concerned about manually downshifting on an upgrade, and what is a safe speed mechanically so as to not over-rev the engine on a long upgrade. Should I just put my foot to the floor and let the engine and transmission do whatever? We have no tachometer.

**Bill DeMont | Via email**

**A** The engine's electronic controls have a built-in limiter which should prevent you from over-revving the engine at full throttle going up a grade. The automatic transmission also is designed to prevent over-revving even if a driver selects a gear that's too low for the vehicle speed while descending a grade. Additionally, it will automatically force an upshift if the vehicle gains too much speed while in a manually selected lower gear to the point where the engine could exceed its redline.

You can determine for yourself what these speeds are in your specific motorhome. Simply accelerate at full throttle from a stop at the bottom of a long grade, with the shift selector in top drive gear. When it upshifts first, second and third gears, note the indicated speed and have your passenger write these down. These are your maximum shift points (which are at around 5,000 RPM). For a long engine and transmission life and fuel-economy reasons, I suggest you stay considerably below these points (about 20 percent) whenever possible. If you are concerned with the lack of a tachometer, you could add an aftermarket gauge, which is readily available and not too expensive.

## Tire Heat Damage

**Q** I recently purchased a 2003 Monaco Signature Series motorhome. I immediately replaced

the tires because the old ones were about 13 years old. I had not yet sold my previous motorhome and it was parked about 18 feet from the Monaco. Unfortunately, the older motorhome caught fire one night (fire originated in the engine compartment), and the coach was totaled. The Monaco was also damaged by the heat. On the side nearest the fire the paint blistered, and plastic access doors and panels melted and warped. There was no visible damage to the new tires, but I would like to know if that much heat on the tires would have compromised the integrity and safety of the tires. I have tried to find information on the internet, but so far have only come across information about the ill effects of extreme road heat on tires.

**James Edwards | McDonough, Georgia**

**A** This is indeed a rare situation, as usually when a fire destroys a motorhome, the tires go with it. I would have a discussion with the insurance adjuster, who should have experience with all types of damage caused by a fire. This should be done in a timely manner. If there was any visible damage such as blistering, it goes without saying to replace the ones showing damage. However, in this case, I suggest taking it to a respected tire dealer franchise of the brand involved for inspection. If you feel that the person doing the inspection is not an expert, don't be afraid to get a second opinion at another shop.

## Air-Brake Conversion?

**Q** We have a 2007 Holiday Rambler Vacationer 34PBD. This is a diesel pusher with a Cummins ISB-AD 300HP. It has an RSR Rail Chassis (beefed-up Workhorse) with leaf-spring suspension and hydraulic anti-lock braking system. My question is in reference to the braking system. It is very, very difficult to stop this unit. Is it possible to improve the hydraulic unit? If not, is it possible to have an air system installed and add air brakes? I know this will be a costly endeavor, but it will be cheaper

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## COACH & POWERTRAIN

than buying another motorhome. I will appreciate any information you can provide. I have taken the unit to a truck/trailer brake shop and had the brakes inspected. The mechanic said the "System is working correctly and the pads are good; it is just hard to stop."

**Michael Williams | Bakersfield, California**

**A** Converting to air brakes is out of the question; for liability reasons, it would require hiring an engineer to design a system and an expert brake specialist to install it — and it would have to be certified. Total cost might easily exceed the cost of the coach. You didn't say how many miles are on it, but motorhomes with hydraulic brakes generally need some brake service every three to four years. The pads could be hardened and glazed, and the rotors could be glazed. This would require more pedal pressure to stop.

I believe this model has Bosch brake calipers that were in the same family that the Workhorse chassis had issues and a subsequent recall with. The chassis could have sticky brake pistons, glazed pads and rotors and old brake fluid. Any or all of these items could cause brakes to underperform, but still appear to look normal. Brake fluid absorbs moisture from the atmosphere, causing the fluid to lower its boiling point, and therefore should be flushed and replaced every few years. Also, towing a car without a good auxiliary braking system could have contributed to the motorhome's glazed brakes.

I suggest you have a brake specialist go through the system and make sure the caliper pistons are not sticking, that no parts are under recall, and consider resurfacing the rotors (or replacing if needed) and installing premium brake pads at all corners. Flush, replace and bleed the brakes, and test the brake booster performance. Always break in new brakes carefully to prevent hard stops early on, which glaze linings.

### Flat Towing an HHR

**Q** I have a 2009 Chevrolet HHR that I tow flat with my 2001

Dutch Star. I have only towed it a couple of times. The owner's manual instructs to pull the No. 8 fuse (the ignition pass key switch). But when I do this and turn the ignition switch to unlock the steering wheel, the instrument panel lights up. I assume that if the ignition fuse is pulled the instrument panel would not light up. Am I missing something here? Also, due to the number of times this process is going to take place, I don't want to wear out the hook-and-loop material holding the fuse panel on. Can you recommend a better process for keeping the battery charged? On my 2009 Jeep Wrangler I mounted a battery disconnect to the negative cable under the hood and that works fine. I realize the battery in the HHR is located in the back of the car and that I would have to run a long cable to the front but I could make that work.

**Tom Ranly | Benson, Arizona**

**A** Disconnecting the battery to prevent its discharge also wipes out radio station presets and some other functions in the computer memory. Depending on the vehicle, these may also include power seat and mirror settings, and in some cases the radio may need a code input. Instead of doing this, I suggest you run a charge line from the motorhome to the HHR's battery. It must have circuit breaker protection at each end in case of a short circuit. Several companies offer kits, including RV Power Supply (Toad Charge, 888-447-4552) and Roadmaster (800-669-9690).

### KING Satellite Antenna Issue

**Q** I have a 23-foot Thor Chateau Class C motorhome. On the roof is a KING Tailgater satellite television antenna. Once the TV and satellite receiver are turned off, the antenna continues to search for a signal. I know the antenna is powered by the receiver, but is my problem normal? It's very annoying at night when we are trying to sleep.

**Larry Walters | Liberty, Texas**

**A** I spoke with a KING technician, and he told me that what is likely happening is that your unit is trying to receive software updates by satellite, even when your receiver is off. So, as long as power is applied to the receiver, it will continue searching to try to make the connection. The solution to this is to unplug the receiver from the wall outlet, which will kill the whole system. KING has a customer service number (952-922-6889) which owners can contact for technical questions.

### Towing a Jeep Scrambler

**Q** We have a 1985 Jeep Scrambler that we would like to flat tow. From what I can find on the internet, the advice for doing so runs from "Not a problem!" to "BIG problem." Apparently Jeeps can be ordered with different transfer cases, and the Scrambler came with one that is often designated as not compatible with flat towing. The local Jeep aftermarket shop said "No problem," but I remain unconvinced.

**Russ Marlowe | Land O' Lakes, Florida**

**A** All CJ-8 Jeep Scramblers were factory-equipped with the Dana 300 transfer case.

Here's what Novak Conversions has to say about it on its website: "The Dana 300 is among the best transfer cases ever built. Their strength, ease of service, compact design and excellent parts support make them a top choice in many Jeeps. The Dana 300 was the last of the cast-iron, gear-driven transfer cases to be found in a factory Jeep."

Novak is a leading authority on the subject. So, your Jeep is towable and the procedure for towing is to ensure that the front hubs are unlocked, the transfer case is in Neutral (N) and the transmission is in gear (to keep it from spinning at all). Use high gear on manual gearboxes, Park on automatics. Make sure to flush the old gear oil and refill with fresh 80W-90, API-GL5 or MT-1 rated fluid.

(continued on page 108)



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## ADVERTISERS INDEX

RS #	ADVERTISER	PAGE #
101	5 Star Tuning	10
102	Aqua-Hot	67
145	Avion Vans	85
119	Banks Power	5
103	Blue Ox	12
121	BrakeBuddy	61
104	Brazel's RV Performance	28
105	Cal-Am Properties	111
	Camping World	90-91
	Camping World RV Sales	97
106	Carefree of Colorado	41
	Classifieds	106-107
	Coach House Inc.	43
	Coast to Coast	36
107	CoverCraft	103
108	Crossing Creeks RV Resort	28
109	Custom Glass Solutions	89
151	DampRid Moisture Absorbers	44
111	Dave & LJ RV Interiors	103
	Destinations	105
112	Dethmers Manufacturing	101
113	DISH Network	82
114	EEZ RV Products	10
116	Fast Master Products	103
117	Foretravel	2
118	Furion	22
120	Geico	25
	Good Sam Extended Service Plan	109
	Good Sam Roadside Assistance	73
	Good Sam RV Loans	77
	Good Sam RV Travel Guide	79
	Good Sam Travel Assist	95
	Harbor Freight Tools	99
122	HWH Corporation	81
129	iBall Hitch Cam	34
123	Innovations Housing	40

## ADVERTISERS INDEX

RS #	ADVERTISER	PAGE #
124	King	72
148	Leisure Travel Vans	48
	Members Life Insurance	5
126	Newell Coach Corporation	112
127	Newmar Corporation	7
128	Nexus RV	19
130	Pala Casino Spa & Resort	17
131	Pleasure Way	37
132	Progressive Industries	
	/Tire Traker	46
133	Progressive Insurance	51
134	Riverside Resort & Casino	63
135	Roadmaster, Inc.	74
115	Roadtrek Motorhomes, Inc.	29
136	RV Armor, Inc.	102
	RV Marketplace	104
137	RV Roofing Solutions	94
138	RV World of Nokomis	87
110	RVibrake by Danko Mfg.	8
139	RVRoof.com	9
125	RVT.com	80
140	Safe-T-Plus	18
141	Sea Eagle	46
142	SMI Manufacturing	15
143	Source Engineering	33
	Southwire-TRC	55-57
144	Steinbring Motorcoach	54
	T-Mobile	35
	Thermacell	42
146	Thetford Corporation	69
147	Thor Industries	53
	US Money Reserve	47
149	Vogt RV Center	27
150	Winnebago Industries	11
152	Xantrex	101

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(continued from page 103)

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## Genset Quits — Comment

My letter is regarding "Genset Quits" letter in the January 2017 issue. We had a somewhat similar problem with the propane-fueled generator in our 2016 Winnebago View.

The generator would start and run, but it would eventually quit while under load. The Cummins Onan service center near Springfield, Oregon, agreed to help without an appointment. The service writer and a technician performed a diagnostic series and determined the problem was with the propane controller. A new controller was installed and we were on our way in less than an hour.

The technicians explained that the controller has two circuits, one for low-pressure appliances and one for the high-consumption generator. Apparently, the high-pressure side was faulty. Earlier in the week the service center had encountered a similar failure with similar good results after a new propane controller was installed.

I know controller is not the correct name for the device that controls propane flow but hopefully you do! Thank you for your advice.

**Dave Kuhlmann | Spreckles, California**

Thank you for sharing your experience with your LP-gas genset. The device you refer to is commonly called a pressure regulator. We don't hear of many problems with propane units, as you don't have gummed-up carburetors from storage, water in the fuel and other difficulties common with gasoline-powered units. However, once in a while oil or moisture in the propane clogs the regulator. Refer to the Onan manual for this problem. **M**

## Have a Tech Question?

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# May the Fourth Be with You

Hop aboard your Millennium Falcon and celebrate the 40th anniversary of "Star Wars" on location

By Alan Rider

If you're looking to start a long-running debate on your next road trip, just bring up the topic of the "Star Wars" movies. Pick a theme, any theme — best episode, favorite character, most memorable dialogue — and you're likely to get as many different answers as there are genuine stars in our own firmament.

And yet, like the countless different motorhomes we pilot, the bottom line here is that there's more that unites us as "Star Wars" fans than divides us. That's because these movies (and their many spinoffs) have become cultural touchstones that we all have in common.

I get to thinking along these lines every year as one of my favorite "Star Wars" traditions comes around early this month. I'm talking, of course, about "Star Wars" Day on May 4. As in, "May the fourth be with you." Dumb, I know, but it still amuses me.

What makes this year more noteworthy, however, is that — hard as it may seem to believe — May 25 marks the 40th anniversary of the release of the original "Star Wars" film. Officially referred to as "Episode IV: A New Hope," it is and forever shall be my personal favorite.

Now that I've ignited that galactic firestorm, let's take a moment to get to the real point of this story. Namely, all the different "Star Wars" locations — many beautiful or fascinating in their own right — where you and yours can mark this historic occasion.

As for setting a course for your own earthbound Millennium Falcon, I'd suggest starting where the movie franchise starts, namely, the planet of Tatooine, where we first met young Luke Skywalker slaving over two new droids on his uncle's farm. While many of the film's desert scenes were shot in Tunisia, Death Valley National Park's Desolation Canyon (where the Sand People mount their banthas to attack Luke) and Dante's View (where we get a panoramic look at that "wretched hive of scum and villainy" better known as the Mos Eisley spaceport) were both used to good effect in the original "Star Wars."

If you couldn't get enough of the, ahem, cuddly little Ewoks from "Episode VI: Return of the Jedi," I recommend you point your land speeder toward the northwest coast of California. There you can immerse

yourself in the furry little heroes' forest home (Endor in the film) amid the giant trees that make up Humboldt Redwoods State Park's Avenue of the Giants.

If you'd like to step your fandom up a notch, make plans well in advance to visit Rancho Obi-Wan ([www.ranchoobiwan.org](http://www.ranchoobiwan.org)). This appointment-only museum just west of Petaluma, California, houses the world's largest private collection of "Star Wars" memorabilia and movie props. Expect the guided tour to last between two and four hours, which should be enough to allow you to geek out to your heart's content.

By far the biggest news to hit the "Star Wars" universe though will be the upcoming opening of the new "Star Wars"-themed worlds at Southern California's Disneyland and Disney's Hollywood Studios in Orlando, Florida. The parks have been tight-lipped so far about the opening date, but rumors are they will swing open their blast doors later this year. In the meantime, you can build your own lightsaber at Tomorrowland's Star Trader shop, and even sign your young 'uns up as Padawans in the nearby Jedi Training Academy.

No matter where you go to celebrate this momentous anniversary, all we can say is — that's right, you guessed it — may the force be with you as you set out to travel The Road Ahead. **M**

**“And yet, like the countless different motorhomes we pilot, the bottom line here is that there's more that unites us as 'Star Wars' fans than divides us.”**

## A Galaxy Not So Far, Far Away ☺

Right: Redwoods State Park doubles as Endor, home to the Ewoks, in "Episode VI: Return of the Jedi." Visitors can participate in a lightsaber battle at Disneyland Resort's Jedi Training: Trials of the Temple.





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